The Grateful Dead and Their World:
Popular Music and the Avant-Garde in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1965-75

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the cultural conditions for the popular appreciation of "high" art, experimental, modernist and avant-garde elements, and the resulting incongruous mélange of genres, through a study of the history of such transgressions of aesthetic boundaries in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1965 to 1975. Based on archival research, interviews with participants, as well as the analysis of key musical works and practices that influenced and realized such boundary crossings, it offers new insights into the role of this particular time and place in creating the more inclusive musical world of today. Particularly underexplored in earlier scholarship on popular music from the Bay Area at this time is the way in which this type of performance practice has functioned to challenge distinctions between large categories of music, specifically those broadly categorized as popular that are defined, at least partly, in opposition to those considered "high art." Though undoubtedly popular in terms of performance environs, audience, and many qualities of the music performed, the use of musical elements normally understood as outside the usual purview of popular music were quite common during this period in the Bay Area. Yet, in spite of the exceptional nature of this stylistic hybridity, there has been comparatively little prior scholarship about the specific ways in which those involved negotiated between musical traditions previously understood by many people as irreconcilable, as well as detailed analyses of the techniques and practices used to realize such connections. Because the rock band the Grateful Dead is the most significant example of these various issues from the time and place that form the focus of this study, as well as the most influential, they are the primary concern of this dissertation, though the work of some other related musicians and ensembles is also discussed.

Abrégé

Cette thèse explore les conditions culturelles de l'appréciation populaire des éléments expérimentaux et avant-gardistes, et le mélange incongru des genres qui résulte, à travers l'étude de l'histoire de telles transgressions des frontières esthétiques dans la « San Francisco Bay Area » 1965 à 1975. Fondé sur des recherches archivistiques, des entrevues, ainsi que sur l'analyse d'œuvres et de pratiques musicales qui ont influencé et franchi ces frontières, il offre de nouvelles perspectives sur l'influence de cette époque dans le monde musical plus inclusif d'aujourd'hui. Ce type de pratique de la performance a fonctionné pour remettre en question les distinctions entre des catégories de musique. En particulier, celles qui sont généralement catégorisées comme populaires qui sont définies, du moins en partie, est particulièrement sous-explorée dans les études antérieures sur la musique populaire de la Bay Area, en opposition à ceux considérés comme «art haut». Bien que sans doute populaire en termes de performance, d'audience, et de nombreuses qualités de la musique, l'utilisation d'éléments musicaux normalement compris hors de la portée habituelle de la musique populaire était assez courante pendant cette période. Malgré le caractère exceptionnel de cette hybridité stylistique, il y a eu relativement peu de recherches sur les manières spécifiques dont les personnes ont négocié entre des traditions musicales auparavant considérées comme inconciliables, ainsi que des analyses des techniques et pratiques utilisé pour réaliser de telles connexions. Parce que le groupe de rock Grateful Dead est l'exemple le plus significatif de ces différentes questions de l'époque et le lieu qui forment l'objet de cette étude, ainsi que les plus influents, ils sont la principale préoccupation de cette thèse, bien que le travail de certains d'autres musiciens et ensembles connexes sont également discutés.

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation has taken a significantly longer time to finish than I had at onetime hoped. Due to various events, moods, situations, and decisions, what had seemed like a two-year project turned first into three, then four, and now five. I have, however, only myself to blame for not more successfully managing life's realities in order to finish sooner. But I would certainly not have ever finished, let alone started, it without the help and encouragement of numerous people for whom I would like to express my sincere, though wholly inadequate, thanks. This includes the many smart, talented graduate students I have been fortunate to work with, learn from, and befriend at McGill. These include (but is not limited to) Vanessa Blais-Tremblay, Eric Smialek, Jessica Holmes, Nina Penner, Mimi Haddon, Michael Ethen (with whom I was roommates 2008-09), Kym White, Erin Helyard, Cedar Wingate, Alixandra Haywood, Keith Wace, Remi Chiu, Stephanie Khoury, Sean Lorre, Farley Miller, Kevin O'Neill, Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, Catherine Schwartz, and many others whose names I forget but whose faces and words I remember. I have also benefited greatly from the many McGill faculty members I have been lucky to work with and learn from including Steven Huebner, Julie Cumming, Jonathan Sterne, Lloyd Whitesell, René Rusch, Roe-Min Kok, and Lisa Barg. Hélène Drouin, the Graduate Studies Administrative & Student Affairs Coordinator of the Schulich School of Music, has been an always patient and supportive source of answers to questions and, whether she knows or not, moral support on account of her always unwavering, helpful self. I must also thank the former head of Graduate Studies in the Schulich School of Music, Eleanor Stubley, who sadly passed away earlier this year for her help and encouragement.

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Introduction

"It is only the full unfolding of the thing (… the radicalization of defamiliarization in shock) that makes recognizable the general validity of the category."[1]

The role of events in the San Francisco Bay Area (hereafter simply "the Bay Area") in the evolution of popular music, and postwar youth culture more generally, has been widely discussed among scholars, critics and music fans since the heyday of the area in the late 1960s. Phrases such as "The Summer of Love," "The Human Be-In," and "Haight-Ashbury" have become stock phrases of cultural discourse; and sartorial styles from the time (or, rather, exaggerated examples more usually) are resources to be used for such events as high school "Hippie Days." On classic rock radio stations, songs from the time continue to be played regularly, as well as by various cover and tribute rock bands in live performance.[2] But despite the significant amount of research that has already been done on this period and place, many questions remain to be explored to the degree they deserve. Especially underexplored is the relationship between popular music norms and expectations, and the more experimental, less explicitly popular music that came out of the Bay Area in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Particularly significant about such music is the context in which it arose. The musicians and audience members who together created it understood themselves, and their relation to each other, quite differently than what had existed before within the

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[1] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 18.

[2] Whereas a cover band primarily performs songs by a wide range of other musicians, a tribute band focuses on material of a single singer or band, sometimes as specific as that from a particular album or tour. See Shane Homan, ed., *All Eras: Tribute Bands and Global Pop Culture* (New York: Open University Press, 2006), passim. For a discussion of both cover and tribute bands in terms of a contemporary "endless lifestyle loop," see George Plasketes, "Re-flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music," *Popular Music & Society* 28, no. 2 (2005), 137-61.

various scenes and genres that made up the popular music industry.[3] Profoundly shaped by the concurrent modernist-fueled experiments of the Beatles and Bob Dylan, who did the most to distinguish rock music from earlier rock & roll, a new concept in popular music began to take shape in parties and ballrooms in the Bay Area in 1965.[4] Rather than based on a strict division between performer and audience, with musicians creating music for receptive listeners or dancers, this performance conception insisted on their interdependence in the creation of transformational experiences through the highly improvised dialogic engagement of performers and audiences. Instead of music intended for the reproduction of already existing musical works, such performances foregrounded the flexible, pluralistic opportunities for which improvisation allows.[5]

Because of how those involved in it blurred the lines between performers and audiences, there is much that is significant about this kind of cultural practice. Having influenced later iterations of popular music performance practice that have challenged the divide between performers and audience (such as jambands, and rave/electronic dance music) there is still more to learn about the history and practices of this period and place.[6] One of the key arguments of this dissertation is the importance of the cultural history of

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[3] I use the idea of "scene" here in the sense elaborated by Will Straw, in contrast to the more stable relation between genre and social group he argues defines musical communities. See his "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music," *Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (1991), 368-88.
[4] On the influence of the Beatles and Dylan on the distinction between rock & roll and rock music see David Brackett, "Rock," *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Musics of the World*.
[5] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1-23. Eco discusses four musical pieces that make use of chance procedures as models of the "open work" concept. Although highly germane to such a conception of performance, Eco's concern is primarily in terms of "a fresh dialectics between the work of art and its performer," (3) whereas in the context of this dissertation such dialectics need to be extended further than Eco does to include audiences as well.
[6] On the connection of the music discussed in this dissertation to the jamband genre, see Pamela Hunt, "Examining the Affective Meanings of Interaction Settings in the Jamband Music Subculture," *The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2012), 1. On the connection to rave/electronic dance music culture, see Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 64-67. Also, Jesse Jarnow, *Heads: A Biography of Psychedelic America* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2016), 309-09.

California to the development of this type of performance practice, especially the influence of bohemian sub-cultures on popular culture. One of the key contexts of this process was that the "juxtaposition of aesthetic and social theory found in California," so defining of its bohemian character, "developed through opposition to the institution of canonical modernism after 1945," which in the United States was centered overwhelmingly on the East Coast—in New York City most of all.[7] For this postwar institutionalized high modernism, increasing abstraction, formalism, and difference from popular culture were cardinal virtues. In contrast, those who carried on the California bohemian tradition in the 1950s through 1970s did not completely reject abstraction and formalism as useful aesthetic strategies, but they did question their priority, and equally valued, and made use of their opposites. Studying the popularization of bohemian practices and ideals in the Bay Area thus helps to illuminate how aesthetic ideas and practices restricted to a small minority prior to 1960 came to have the broad social import they do today.

An example of the kind of musical practice and audience reception at the heart of this dissertation occurred on March 23, 1975, at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. In front of tens of thousands of audience members, a nine-piece ensemble performed a 37-minute, highly complex composition featuring an atonal main theme (using all 12 pitch classes), a section for percussion duo, dissonant free-form polyphonic improvisation and polyrhythmic rhythms. Such a combination of musical characteristics is virtually unheard of in such a popular context. Yet not only did the audience cheer at the piece's end, but they gave the group a standing ovation demanding

[7] Richard Cándida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), xx

an encore. Rather than something similar, however, in a paradigmatic example of a musical non sequitur, the group—psychedelic rock band the Grateful Dead (or just the Dead) with the addition of two extra keyboardists—performed a high-energy version of Chuck Berry's classic rock & roll song, "Johnny B Goode."[8]

This dissertation aims to understand the cultural conditions for the popular appreciation of this performance's "high" art elements, as well as of its incongruous mélange of genres, through a study of the history of such transgressions of aesthetic boundaries (including those between performers and audience members) in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1965 to 1975. Based on archival research, interviews with participants, as well as the analysis of key musical works and practices that influenced and realized such boundary crossings, I offer new insights into the role of this particular time and place in creating the more inclusive musical world of today in which the mixture of elements from "high" and "low" art is a defining aspect of a significant amount of contemporary cultural production. For though such music and its cultural context have been the subject of a significant amount of scholarly work, detailed analysis of specific musical examples and practices that blur the boundaries between the popular and Western art music traditions (especially in terms of the live performance context that was often so strongly foregrounded in and around San Francisco during the time in which I focus) have been fairly limited compared to more specifically historical and sociological studies.

Particularly underexplored in previous accounts of late 1960s and early 1970s rock music in the San Francisco Bay Area is the way in which this type of performance

[8] The March 23, 1975 performance at Kezar Stadium is discussed in detail in chapter five of this dissertation.

practice has functioned to challenge distinctions between large categories of music, specifically those broadly categorized as popular that are defined, at least partly, in opposition to those considered "high art."[9] Though undoubtedly popular in terms of its performance environs, audience, and many qualities of the music performed, the use of musical elements normally understood as outside the usual purview of popular music (e.g. atonality, electronic "noise," lack of steady pulse) were quite common during this period in the Bay Area. Yet, in spite of the exceptional nature of this stylistic hybridity, the specific ways in which those involved negotiated between musical traditions previously understood by a number of influential musicians, scholars and critics as irreconcilable is at this point lacking, as are detailed musical analyses of the techniques and practices used to realize such connections.[10]

This dissertation builds on earlier scholarly work concerning the development in the mid-1960s of music that makes use of popular song forms and styles but whose creators and audience simultaneously insist on its seriousness and artistic credibility. David Brackett has explored how music defined as "rock" came, in the mid-1960s, to be defined diachronically against earlier rock & roll and synchronically against pop. Although it shared many "stylistic features and social connotations" with rock & roll, it claimed "to supersede it in an evolutionary relation," while differing from pop in terms of

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[9] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993), 46-52. See also the contrast between "serious" and "popular" music in Theodor Adorno, "On Popular Music," in *Essays on Music*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 438-41.

[10] Georgina Born details the rejection by Pierre Boulez and other influential figures at the *Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* (IRCAM) of connections between the modernist avant-garde and popular culture. See her *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Avant-Garde* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 281-84. Philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno's copious writings on music are suffused with a similar rejection of such stylistic hybridity. See in particular his "On the Social Situation of Music," in *Essays on Music*, 391-436. See also critic Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961/89), 3-21.

its seriousness and "value that exceeds the purely economic."[11] Similarly, Keir Keightley argues that rock's definition depends upon its opposition to "those aspects of mass-distributed music, which are believed to be soft, safe or trivial."[12] Instead of the older process that defined art music against mass, vernacular cultures, rock is, paradoxically (at least according to this older formulation), based on an ongoing negotiation of "the relationship between the 'mass' and the 'art' in mass art."[13]

Despite the significant work that has been done to explain how and why musicians on both sides of this divide in the mid- to late-twentieth century broke from the strictures of the high/low aesthetic dichotomy, many questions remain unanswered about how this occurred in the Bay Area.[14] For example: How were the distinctions between "high" and "low" music understood by its musicians, audiences, critics and others during the mid-to-late 1960s, and how did this change over the next decade? What were these individuals' experiences with high-art, jazz and popular music? How did their different backgrounds affect their understandings and practice of music that both crossed these boundaries and stayed within older genre constraints? What was the reception history of audiences and critics for these boundary crossings? And what were some of the specific musical ways in which a blending of various musical styles and genres were realized? Because I see the musical practices of the psychedelic rock band and improvisational ensemble the Grateful Dead as the most significant example of these various issues from

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[11] David Brackett, "Rock," *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Musics of the World* (forthcoming).
[12] Keir Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, eds. Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Other important scholarly works on this topic include Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002); Eric Tamm, *Brian Eno: His Music and the Vertical Color of Sound* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995).

the time and place that form the focus of this study they are the primary concern of this dissertation, though I also discuss the work of some other related musicians and ensembles.

However, out of all the rock groups to come out of the 1960s, the Grateful Dead was not only one of the longest lasting (from 1965 to 1995), but also one of the most influential. The characteristics of an entire musical genre (or, perhaps, rock music sub-genre), referred to most commonly as "jam-bands" or "jambands," is largely defined in terms of the Dead's influence.[15] They have also been the subject of a significant amount and wide range of scholarly attention with now five edited volumes, a number of unpublished dissertations, numerous individually published articles, histories, and two monographs focused on the band's music, and the larger social phenomenon to which it gave rise.[16]

Because 2015 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Grateful Dead, there was a veritable explosion of media coverage of the band, in particular concerning what apparently were the final three performances featuring the band's four remaining members—Bill Kreutzmann, Phil Lesh, Mickey Hart, and Bob Weir—in Chicago, July 3, 4, and 5 of that year. With 60,000 mail-order requests for tickets prior to their going on general sale, the three concerts sold out in less than an hour with prices on

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[15] On the connection of the Grateful Dead to the jamband genre see Mark F. Schultz, "Fear and Norms and Rock & Roll: What Jambands Can Teach Us About Persuading People to Obey Copyright Law," *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 21, no. 2 (March 2006), 653; Pamela Hunt, "A Quantitative Approach to Studying Subculture" (PhD diss., Kent State University, 2008), 4.

[16] These include Robert G. Weiner, ed. *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead: Critical Writings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999); Nicholas G. Meriwether, ed. *All Graceful Instruments: The Contexts of the Grateful Dead Phenomenon* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007); James A. Tuedio and Stan Spector, eds., *The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010); David Malvinni, *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013); Ulf Olsson, *Listening for the Secret: The Grateful Dead and the Politics of Improvisation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2017).

secondary markets soon after reportedly reaching $116,000, causing some to call them the concert event of the year if not decade.[17]

Such interest in performances by a 50-year-old rock band is certainly not in itself sufficient reason for scholars to take the music of the Grateful Dead seriously as an object of study. Market populism—the theory that commercial success correlates with cultural worth—is certainly dubious.[18] The reverse, that cultural value and commercial success are wholly opposed, is equally fallacious though it remains one of the most persistent dogmas of artistic interpretation. It is, however, this latter belief that has, arguably, unduly limited an appreciation of the Grateful Dead's significance for understandings of how experimentalism, modernism, and the avant-garde have influenced popular music.

Though perhaps surprising today given that they are now widely known mostly for their few radio hits and the passionately dedicated deadhead subculture that was their primary audience, the Grateful Dead was composed of a highly experimental group of musicians.[19] Though these tendencies waned later in the band's history, in the first half of the 1970s they were expressed not only in significant musical ways, but also in their business dealings and live sound technologies. They were possibly the first music group to attempt to run their own independent record company completely separate from existing record labels. And over the course of 1973 and early 1974, in partnership with

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[17] http://www.rockcellarmagazine.com/2015/03/02/grateful-dead-fare-thee-well-chicago-concert-festival-very-expensive-secondary-market/; http://www.gratefulmusic.com/2015/01/editorial-more-tickets-for-fans-why_30.html.

[18] Simon Frith, "Contemporary Culture and the Academy: Notes Towards a Research Strategy," *Critical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 1993), 5.

[19] I use "experimental" here in the sense defined by Michael Nyman as musicians more interested in "the prospect of outlining a *situation* in which sounds may occur, a *process* of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a *field* delineated by certain compositional 'rules'" than by "prescribing a defined *time-object* whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance." *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

many highly talented engineers, they created a singularly unique sound system for live performance: the Wall of Sound.[20]

Along with such technological developments, the band expressed their penchant for experimentation in their music as well. By early 1968, the Dead had begun to regularly incorporate periods of overt musical experimentation in their live performances using electronic feedback, non-metered percussion and atonality alongside the collective improvisation of which they always made extensive use. On their 1969 double-live album *Live/Dead* this material was dubbed, appropriately, "Feedback" and served to link the previous minor-blues dirge of "Death Don't Have No Mercy" with the closing a cappela gospel sounds of "We Bid You Goodnight."[21] Their use of such musical techniques diminished somewhat in 1971 after the firing of second drummer Mickey Hart, but by the fall of that year they were again consistently exploring such spaces in their performances. And over the next three years they would develop their abilities in this musical vein in a number of significant ways.

These experimental proclivities influenced the group's business dealings as well. Their desire to create a wider range and higher quality of sounds with electrically amplified instruments led to innovations in amplification technology. But the considerable costs of such technical developments, together with their frustration at their record company's control, fed into a desire to receive more of the profit from their record sales to fund such experimentation by cutting out their record company middleman, Warner Brothers. In 1973, they therefore started their own. The introduction of the So What Papers, the document that laid out the plan for what became Grateful Dead

[20] See chapter three for a discussion of the Wall of Sound.
[21] See chapter one for a discussion of *Live/Dead*.

Records, makes such financial considerations explicit: "Look, for all these years we've been working for the record business," the author of the introduction, Peter Cohon, writes. "As long as our energy is generating all this money, why shouldn't we have the choice of where it goes? Why shouldn't we get as much return from our energy as possible?"[22]

It is not therefore a coincidence that the Dead's exploration of highly experimental music became a regular, and increasingly extended feature of their performances in 1972 to 1974, as they realized complete independence from record company control. In numerous histories of the Dead, 1969 is the year that the band is said to have reached their experimental apex with the albums *Aoxomoxa* and *Live/Dead.*[23] But though the country-folk styles of their two 1970 albums, *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* have suggested to many a waning of their experimental ethos, the Dead's live performances continued to foreground overt experimental elements in increasingly profound and lengthy ways. With the debut of the Wall of Sound in February of 1973, of Grateful Dead Records later that year, and the group's concurrent

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[22] "The So What Distribution Company" [Prospectus] (San Rafael, CA: Grateful Dead, 1972), Alan Trist Collections, Special Collections, University of California – Santa Cruz. Jerry Garcia makes the same point in a 1973 interview. "We've planned for over a year to form our own record manufacturing and distributing company so as to package and promote our stuff in a more human manner. A large benefit from that will be our capability of getting away from the retail list price inflation while still keeping more of the profits. We have nothing against the way Warner Brothers have treated us. They've never interfered with our music. But if the records cover a larger share of our overhead, then we can pick and choose on our live shows. We can experiment a little bit and play the really groovy shows." Cameron Crowe, "The Grateful Dead Flee Big Business," *Circus Magazine* (October 1973), https://www.theuncool.com/journalism/grateful-dead-circus-magazine/.

[23] See, for example, David Malvinni, *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Books, 2013), 167; Erin McCoy, "'Not Just a Change of Style': Reading *Workingman's Dead* as an American Commentary with Americana Roots," in *The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation*, ed. Jim Tuedio and Stan Spector (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010), 118; Michael Benson, *Why the Grateful Dead Matter* (Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2016), 117-119; Denis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside Story of the Grateful Dead* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 319.

development of increasingly expansive musical performances, the first half of the 1970s is as important for understanding the band's experimental trajectory as is the late 1960s that have so far attracted most scholarly attention in this regard.

Although some of the details of this experimentalism have been widely reported for many years, others have only recently come into public view. One such example is the involvement with the Grateful Dead of composer and keyboardist Ned Lagin who met the band when they played at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in May of 1970, where Lagin was then studying biology and music. While at MIT, guitarist Jerry Garcia, bassist Phil Lesh and drummer Mickey Hart attended a performance of an eight-channel, four-tape-recorder electronic music piece created by Lagin. Impressed, they invited him to California to continue and expand his work with the brand new 16-track tape recorders the Dead were then using.

After spending the summer in the Bay Area, during which he participated in the recording of the Dead's album *American Beauty*, Lagin returned to Boston to begin, though never finish, graduate studies in composition and musicology at Brandeis University. But his relations with the band deepened over the next couple of years. Beginning in November of 1970 he would often sit in on their performances when they performed in New York and Massachusetts. And in 1973, having dropped out of Brandeis, he moved to the Bay Area to work with Garcia, Lesh and Hart on a more permanent basis with significant, though largely unknown, musical repercussions. Besides one published interview with Lagin, the only existing scholarship on Lagin of any significant degree is by music historian Corry Arnold discussing Lagin's

performance history with the Dead.[24] This dissertation's fourth chapter builds on the published interview and Arnold's article to discuss Lagin's own music, specifically his work *Seastones*, as well as the technological processes involved in its creation. For although the 1975 recorded release of *Seastones* was not at all a commercial success, it was produced, released, and promoted with the clear intention that it could be. And it is this belief in the potential popularity and commercial success of music so outside the norms of popular culture that is, arguably, even more important than its actual commercial fate.

The Politics of Sixties' Counterculturalism

Before discussing the work of other relevant scholarship for this dissertation, a digression on the changing ways in which sixties' counterculturalism has been understood in order to appropriately contextualize its various interpretations and critiques. This section is not intended as an exhaustive discussion of the issues it raises, but instead background for a number of the issues raised throughout the dissertation.

Interpretations of the countercultural movements that came to widespread prominence in the 1960s, as well as the music that played such an important part in them, have undergone an interesting shift over the last two decades. During its ascendancy and taking of power in the 1970s and 1980s, the New Right defined itself strongly against the sixties' countercultures (more on its plurality later) that were the defining experience of the liberalism whose influence had been in decline since at least its *annus horribilis* of

[24] David Gans, "Ned Lagin [Interview]," in *Conversations With the Dead* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Books, 2002), 343-89. Corry Arnold, "August 14-15, 1971 Berkeley Community Theater, Berkeley, CA--Ned Lagin," *Lost Live Dead* (http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2010/05/august-14-15-1971-berkeley-community.html). See also Jarnow, *Heads,* 114-115.

1968.[25] In contrast to the conservatism espoused by the New Right, many liberals looked back to the sixties, and associated countercultural movements, as an almost golden age of activism and change, and as a time that had been lost but would eventually come again.

In the 1990s, however, an alternate interpretation of sixties' counterculturalism came to be increasingly popular. Rather than representing a radical break from the dominant culture, as had been commonly assumed, some argued that it was not only hardly as anti-establishment as many had claimed, but that they were in fact intimately complicit in reproducing the very dominant values they ostensibly opposed.

Two likely factors played a decisive role in this critical re-evaluation: the presidency of Bill Clinton, and the influence of post-structuralist thought, especially that of Michel Foucault. Although Clinton was elected as president of the United States in November 1992, the first baby boomer to have achieved the office, the return of the liberal triumphalism of the mid 1960s was not to be.[26] Instead, attempts to return to the goals of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society (the realization of greater social equality through a series of federal government funded initiatives of which Medicare and Medicaid are the most prominent and long lasting examples) failed with the opposition

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[25] On the New Right and its self-definition in opposition to sixties' liberalism see Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 314 and passim. The major reasons for 1968's *horribilis* status are the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy in April and June, the riots that broke out in cities across the USA following King's killing, the riot outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August and Richard Nixon's winning of the presidency of the United States in November claiming to speak for a "silent majority" explicitly in opposition to the various countercultures. However, one could push back the beginning of the waning of liberalism to at least 1966 when Ronald Reagan won the gubernatorial election of California and the Republicans made major gains in that year's congressional elections. Not only did the escalation of the Vietnam War increasingly divide the Democratic Party, but President Johnson's popularity had also suffered in significant ways due to domestic issues, in particular the urban riots that had broken out in 1964-65. Although the Democrats maintained a clear majority in the House and Senate they no longer enjoyed a super majority in either chamber.

[26] Key to this sentiment were the actions of the 89th Congress, 1965-66, which had a Democratic party super-majority for the most part in line with then Democratic president Lyndon Johnson. For a discussion of the politics of the Great Society initiative see Adam Yarmolinsky, "The 'Great Society'—Another American Dream?," *The World Today* 24, no. 5 (1968), 205-06.

Republicans taking control of both houses of Congress in 1994 for the first time since 1954. This result was the result, according to many, of the incoming Speaker of House Newt Gingrich's promise of a new "Contract for America," in contrast to the decadent liberalism that Clinton (or perhaps rather *the Clintons*, given the prominent role played by First Lady, Hillary Clinton) represented in the minds of many on the conservative right.[27] Because of these election results, universal medical insurance and the acceptance of homosexuals in the military, two policies important to many self-described liberals, were not realized. Instead, attempts by Clinton and other Democrats to enact their "liberal" agenda was blocked by Republicans, leading ultimately to the shutdown of the U.S. federal government in 1995-96, and Clinton's subsequent impeachment by the House of Representatives.[28] But in response to the seeming impotence of Clinton to seize the initiative for liberalism and return again to the promise of change of the 1960s, some began to see him as not merely weak in the face of Republican obstructionism, but actively complicit in facilitating "neo-liberal" hegemony.[29]

Such complicity could be read in (at least) two ways. On the one hand, some argued that Clinton had broken from countercultural values to become, a "postmodern president … free of any sense of contradiction … in balancing the 1960s inclination towards opportunism, compartmentalization and casual contrition with the traditional

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[27] The author vividly remembers a road trip from Alberta, Canada to Salt Lake City, Utah in the summer of 1993 during which an older white man, at the home of which he stayed one night, insisted that Clinton represented the decline and fall of the United States on account of his supposed depraved liberality. On the relationship between the 1994 Republican victory and the Contract With America see Major Garrett, *The Enduring Revolution: How the Contract with America Continues to Shape the Nation* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005), 9-10.

[28] For a history and discussion of the government shutdown see http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/debt/governmentshutdown.html

[29] Oliver Marchart, "New Protest Formations and Radical Democracy," *Peace Review* 16, no. 4 (2004), 417.

values of family, church and national heritage that belong to the cultural right."[30] On this account, it was Clinton's centrist political views, his lack of countercultural authenticity, which caused his apparent unwillingness to not more strongly fight the conservative, Republican agenda.[31]

On the other hand, others argued that Clinton's inability to enact the supposed values of his baby-boomer generation was not in spite of his claims to a rootedness in the countercultures of the 1960s but, instead, precisely *because* of it. Perhaps the preeminent exponent of this view, Thomas Frank, distinguishes, and narrates a transformation between two forms of populism that have served the political desires of conservative, capitalist elites: backlash and market. The former older variety, Frank argues, defined itself in opposition to the "'liberal establishment' and its spoiled, flag-burning children … [who] earned the people's wrath not by exploiting workers or ripping off family farmers, but by showing contemptuous disregard for the wisdom and values of average Americans."[32] This form of populism is what characterized the ascendancy of the New Right, from Nixon's appeals to the "silent majority" in 1968 to the condemnation of "liberal elites" in Newt Gingrich's 1994 "Contract with America."[33]

Market populism, in contrast, took over when the politics of the backlash had shown themselves to have lost their motivating force in the 1990s with, most obviously, the election of Clinton in 1992 and subsequent failure to convict him in the Senate on the

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[30] Otto Newman and Richard De Zoysa, "The Third Way Alternative: America's New Political Agenda?" *Contemporary Politics* 6, no. 3 (2000), 239.
[31] On Clinton's problematic relationship with the remnants of 1960s' counterculturalism see Paul Berman, "Clinton and the Counterculture,"*Dissent* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 11-12.
[32] Thomas Frank, *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 26.
[33] This backlash populism was perhaps most enduringly characterized in the character of Archie Bunker on the 1970s' hit TV sitcom *All in the Family*. See Kathleen Collins, "Citizen Bunker: Archie Bunker as Working-Class Icon," unpublished (http://www.academia.edu/download/35458128/ArchieBunker_Collins.docx).

impeachment charges approved by the House of Representatives in 1998. Rather than opposed to sixties' countercultural values, this new populism is in fact intimately linked to them. "Far from despising the sixties," Frank argues, "it [market populism] broadcast its fantasies to the tune of a hundred psychedelic hits. Its leading think tanks were rumored to pay princely sums to young people who could bring some smattering of rock'n'roll street cred to the market's cause."[34]

That Frank uses music strongly associated with the countercultures of the 1960s to make his point is telling. While many of those within and outside the countercultures of the sixties thought of such music as the "soundtrack to the revolution" (as one record company advertisement proclaimed), the manifest failure of any revolution to occur, along with the coopting of many of the rock music icons strongly identified with that decade for commercial gain, made such beliefs difficult to take seriously in the more cynical world of the 1990s.[35]

The discovery of such connections of mutual imbrication between forces, movements, or ideas previously thought to be wholly opposed is where one can see the

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[34] Ibid, 33. "Thomas Frank has detailed the degree to which advertising gurus and marketing whiz-kids were hep to the jive, rendering the counterculture but a moment in the growth of consumer capitalism." Anthony Ashbott, *A Cultural History of the Radical Sixties in the San Francisco Bay Area* (London and Brookfield, VT: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 13.

[35] On the idea of rock music as "soundtrack to the revolution" see Peter Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of '60s Counter-Culture* (New York: Cannongate, 2007), 11. Also, from a San Francisco Bay Area perspective, *The Berkeley Tribe*, an alternative newspaper published from 1969 to 1972, is filled with such sentiments. Such idealism as to the role of rock music decreases over time in the *Tribe*, however, as record companies began to boycott the paper on account of its increasingly radical editorial direction, thus depriving it of important advertising revenue, ultimately leading to the paper's demise. An interesting example is an advertisement in the August 16-21, 1969 edition, p. 14, from Warner/Reprise Records titled "28 Concerned Records Artists Join In Creating A Revolutionary New Album," under which is detailed why the musicians and Warner/Reprise are selling the two-album set for only "two bucks" (notice the colloquial word choice), having given up any profit on its sale, because "the artists in our *Record Show* [the name of the collection] are not normal artists. They want their new recordings heard. Widely. And to get that done, they are willing to give up all their royalties on this album. (Just as long as Warner/Reprise doesn't make anything either.)" This advertisement parallels Colombia Records (in)famous advertisement from the same time period (debuting in December 1968) with the headline, "But the Man Can't Bust Our Music." See Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On*, 220-21.

influence of post-structuralism, and in particular that of Foucault, on the shift in interpretations of the sixties' counterculture in the 1990s. For it is Foucault who perhaps most famously argues for a productive account of power in which its apparent oppositions mask an underlying mutual dependence.[36] About one such apparent instance—the famous sexual prudishness of 19th century Victorians—he asks rhetorically: "Did the critical discourse that addresses itself to repression come to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that had operated unchallenged up to that point, or is it not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it 'repression'?"[37]

Although conceived as a break from what has come before and motivated by altruistic, liberatory desires, as countercultural individuals generally were (and are), Foucault here points to such oppositions as in fact a "more devious and discreet form of power" than its more traditionally conceived, explicit, and repressive manifestations.[38] This is because, as Charles Taylor explains, such opposition is not conceived of as resulting from the workings of power, but instead "as science, or fulfillment, even 'liberation'", which claim to stand outside of power and are thus capable of escaping from its strictures.[39] But, Foucault argues, such seemingly independent points of

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[36] Perhaps the first hints of this position are in his 1969 book *Archaeology of Knowledge* in the section "Contradictions." There, he describes the goal of the "archaeological analysis" that he aims for to "erect…the primacy of a contradiction that has its model in the simultaneous affirmation and negation of a single proposition…[I]ts purpose is to map, in a particular discursive practice, the point at which they [oppositions] are constituted, to define the form that they assume, *the relations that they have with each other*, and the domain that they govern" [my italics]. Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 173.
[37] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, 10.
[38] Ibid, 11.
[39] Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in *Philosophical Papers: Volume 2, Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 152.

resistance *are themselves the products of power*, thus functioning as its perfect disguise precisely because of their status as seemingly self-evident, positively valenced truths.

This discussion of Foucault would be irrelevant to this dissertation if not for the fact that, as the above quotation from Thomas Frank makes clear, interpretations of the sixties' countercultures as deeply complicit in the workings of capitalism, and the reproduction of the dominant values that it presupposes, have had significant bearing on interpretations of its associated music. Understanding the background of such critiques is therefore vital to their understanding and judging given their widespread and continuing influence.

An example of a Frank-inspired variety of critique is found in one of the major musicological studies of late 1960s' popular music from San Francisco, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco* by Nadya Zimmerman. In it she argues, "that the counterculture's literary, philosophical, cultural, and spiritual influences … were as cobbled together, disjointed, and intertwined with mainstream values as the music of Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead."[40] Rather than any logical coherence to the sixties' countercultural identity, it is characterized instead by an incoherent grab bag of cultural expressions. Basing herself explicitly on the works of Thomas Frank, Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, she argues that the ostensibly countercultural movement of the 1960s in the Bay Area was in fact part of and, ultimately, wholly in line with the hegemonic values of the larger capitalist economy. Rather than offering any kind of trenchant critique of dominant values and the

[40] Nadya Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 21.

economic, political and social systems in which they were embedded, these groups ended up largely reproducing them even as they posed themselves in opposition.[41]

Similarly to Zimmerman, David Ingram argues that the goals of the sixties' countercultures were undermined by the very values their members espoused. Rather than challenging systems of hierarchy and fostering greater equality, as many see as defining of sixties' counterculturalism, its "inherent elitism, evident in its emphasis on young people as the new agents of revolutionary change, and its consequent polarization of society into the 'hip' and the 'square,' tended to allow its members to ignore their own complicity in consumer society."[42] Such systems of understanding also, he thinks, "took the place of a more potentially radical questioning of class and racial division in the United States … [and] also meant that youth culture could be easily assimilated into the conservative discourses of advertising, and the mass media in general."[43]

Furthermore, despite the avowed environmental concern of many of the musicians most strongly associated with the sixties' countercultures, their "nascent environmentalist critique … was limited and contradictory, in that rock music also stood for hedonism, individualism, egocentricity, escapism and consumerist fashion: values largely antithetical to radical forms of environmentalism."[44] For if one asserts the freedom of individuals to do as they see fit in the broadest possible fashion, with no regard for traditions and communal norms, as many countercultural individuals did, then realizing a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly life style seems difficult to imagine. And in

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[41] See Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture* (New York: Harper Business, 2004), passim.
[42] David Ingram, "'Go to the forest and move': 1960s American Rock Music as Electronic Pastoral," *49th Parallel* 20 (Winter 2006-07), 1.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

an adaptation of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel's critique of Hegelian Idealism in *The German Ideology*, Ingram finds fault with "rock culture's adherence to a pastoral ideal of nature [that] mystified questions of technology and economics."[45] Relying on a "naïve faith" in rock music and LSD to transform society, such idealistic mystifications not only distorted the reality of the countercultures and their opposition, but also in so doing "prevented the emergence of a more trenchant, materialist understanding of American society."[46]

Although a more general reflection on the youth culture of the 1960s and its descendants, Charles Taylor also points out the problems with the primary emphasis of many members of the countercultures on self-gratification. Such privileging of individual satisfaction, he argues, "generates the notion that the only associations one can identify with are those formed voluntarily and which foster self-fulfillment."[47] But in the context of a dominant liberal-capitalist regime in which individual self-fulfillment is one of the main drivers of the interpellation of individuals as consumers endlessly re-creating themselves through what they buy, such voluntarism and desire for self-fulfillment hardly make for a radical political praxis. Rather, "this bit of the 'counter-culture' fits perfectly into the instrumental, bureaucratic world it was thought to challenge"; not only does it not oppose such a world, "it strengthens it."[48]

There are important truths in such critiques. It is undeniable that those within the sixties' countercultures were often not as radical as they claimed to be and that many did

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[45] Ingram, "'Go to the forest and move'," 1. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel, *The German Ideology* (http://www.cwanderson.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/The-German-Ideology.pdf), 3-5.
[46] Ingram, "'Go to the forest and move'," 1.
[47] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 508. Taylor is, however, quite clear that the desire for self-fulfillment is an overall positive good that cannot be ignored but must be recognized in any convincing account of human identity.
[48] Ibid.

end up, unwittingly or not, reproducing aspects of the dominant culture to which they defined themselves in opposition. Following Foucault, there is a sense in which socio-political oppositions are never "outside" what it is they oppose no matter how much they claim to the contrary. Since power requires opposition to articulate itself, what claims to be opposed to power is ultimately complicit in its workings: there is no outside standpoint, an indubitable claim of truth, from which to critique or stand in opposition to power or the injustices that are inseparable from it.[49]

Although I think Foucault is in broad terms correct, the aforementioned critical analyses of sixties' counterculturalism, which to varying degrees presume his viewpoint, suffer from limitations of their own, most especially a recognition of the diversity of subjectivities of those involved. That is, they insufficiently reflect how countercultural ideals, use of pastoral tropes, and desire for self-fulfillment were articulated in a number of divergent ways. This dissertation aims to add to existing scholarship through a consideration of such a diversity of countercultural articulations. It also furthers related scholarly understandings by focusing on the performative dimension of the music, as well as the different roles and meanings it takes on within an improvised performance practice.

For members of the Grateful Dead, as well as much of their audience, live performance was the primary locus of their musical practice rather than the officially released recordings on which analyses of their music have largely been based. Although

[49] "[C]ontrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits … nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its own régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true," Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 131.

the group's studio recordings are useful for understanding the formal musical qualities that make up the Dead's songs, diachronic considerations of their live realizations, i.e. how they developed over time, are equally as important. The discussion of the song "Eyes of the World" in chapter three is an example of such a consideration of the evolution of a song in live performance.[50]

Another way in which this dissertation adds to existing scholarship is suggesting new ways to think about invocations or evocations of the natural world in countercultural-related music or broader discourse. For many scholars "nature" and "the natural" can only be ideological mystifications intended to provide cover for unjustifiable forms of oppression.[51] Although the use of nature as environment within aesthetic discourses is conceptually distinct from debates within the biological and social sciences over the role of nature versus environmental nurturing in the development and shaping of human beings, it is not uncommon to find the aesthetic use of nature interpreted as offering implicit support to those who emphasize the influence of nature on human development, and criticized accordingly.[52] But given the continuing influence of the natural world on contemporary society, its aesthetic expression is hardly so necessarily nefarious as is sometimes assumed. Not only can such expressions serve to make people aware of their dependence on nature, and of themselves as natural beings, but they can

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[50] "Live music performance has become the exception of musical perception and experience, to the extant that our retelling of popular music history often tends to be reduced to familiar and verifiable dates of 'important' recordings … the end result has been to withdraw attention from music-making as an immediate theatrical act and to refocus it on music making as a phased industrial process … Only rarely has it been considered as an opportunity for reciprocal exchange between those on the stage and those in front of it … [that] can have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences for both the production and the consumption of music, and for its shifting form and content." "History, Place and Time: The Possibility of the Unexpected," in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, ed. Ian Inglis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), xii, xiv.

[51] For a recent discussion of the history and continuing influence of the antagonism towards nature-, rather than culture-, based explanations see Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), passim.

[52] Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope*, 91-124; Ingram, "'Go to the forest and move,' passim.

also serve to inspire a welcome ethically grounding sense of humility and inter-environmental dependence, in contrast to liberal-capitalism's ideology of atomistic individualism. Chapters two and three of this dissertation are a response to dismissals of the aesthetic use of evocations and invocations of "nature" and "the natural."

Against the overly cynical interpretation of 1960s' counterculturalism mentioned above, historian Michael Kramer offers one of the better replies. In contrast to Frank's depiction of rock music fans as dupes of record company machinations (seconded by Zimmerman and others), Kramer notes the "growing cognizance of the ironies of the counterculture's relationship to mass culture" within the very same publications that printed the aforementioned advertisements from record companies proclaiming their fealty to the "revolutionary" youth movement.[53] Rather than wholly radical or entirely compromised, "rock … wound up being neither pure commercial product nor pure political revolution."[54] It was, instead, the medium through which many at the time considered how they "might reshape mass society through the formation of a new public collectivity," new forms of social relations could be developed in reaction to the atomized liberalism that had shaped the 1950s.[55] In contrast to those who see sixties' counterculturalism as primarily expressive of political dissent, Kramer's work points to the importance of the creation of such new forms of civic culture as perhaps its most lasting and influential aspect.

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[53] "Far from being passive recipients of advertising, rock fans were often quite sensitive both to the music's complicity in capitalism and to record companies' desires to exploit youth culture." Michael Kramer, "The Civics of Rock: Sixties Countercultural Music and the Transformation of the Public Sphere" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 21-22. See also his *Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19.
[54] Ibid, 22.
[55] Ibid, 22.

It is not, however, a question of either/or but of both/and. A common problem with a number of scholarly treatments of countercultural elements in the 1960s is a singular and too reductive understanding of "the counterculture." Rather than a unity, as many suggest when they refer to "*the* sixties' counterculture", it is more accurate to think of a plurality of *countercultures* to reflect the diversity within and differences between various countercultural groups. While opposition to a perceived "mainstream culture" was and is a common countercultural denominator, the perception, attitude towards, and proffered alternatives to it have differed in significant ways among self-identified countercultural groups. Treating such groups monolithically buys into a constructed memory of a countercultural unity in the sixties that never actually existed even though many have tried very hard to construct it *post-facto*. As American Studies scholar Kai Weber notes, "the symbolic singular of *the* one counterculture serves to idolize that which it stands for: the vague, yet widely shared notion of individual liberation from social restraints and categories and of a fraternal community among all people."[56] Such idolization, however, tends to efface most of the real complexity that would otherwise complicate its easy dismissal. Weber again: "In short, the counterculture did not exist as a coherent culture, but as a certain sociocultural ideal that characterizes the late Sixties."[57] Recognizing countercultural diversity—for which *counterculturalism* seems a more accurate term—allows for better appraisals and analyses of its cultural interventions, musical or otherwise, than those who think in terms of a unified countercultural movement.

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[56] Kai Weber, "'Could be an illusion, but I might as well try': Ideals and Practices of the Grateful Dead and the Woodstock Nation," in *The Sixties Revisited: Culture, Society, Politics*, eds. Jürgen Heideking, Jörg Helbig and Anke Ortlepp (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2001), 139.
[57] Ibid.

The original plan for this project was to cover the period of 1965 to 1975 relatively equally, with the first few chapters covering the period up to 1970 and the last few up to 1975. In the course of my work, however, the latter half of my chosen period, 1970 to 1975, grew substantially in importance. Not only was there a much greater amount of existing scholarship on the earlier five years, but the later five year period exhibits to a greater degree the issues and kinds of musical, and more broadly aesthetic relationships that motivate this project. Although there is still worthwhile work to be done on the music from 1965-70 (for which this dissertation's first chapter is a small but hopefully significant addition) far more is necessary on that which came after the turn of the 1970s, a lacuna that continually drew my attention.

In the summer of 2016 I was therefore lucky to discover a musicological text that explores in great detail, using many of the same sources I had planned to use in my own research, the relationship between popular music and the avant-garde in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1965 to 1970, and to some degree after: Sarah Hill's *San Francisco and the Long 60s*.[58] I am indebted to Hill for doing a great deal of the work I had originally intended as part of this project. Although I do not agree with all of her conclusions and interpretations, her work provided me with further justification for concentrating more on the period post-1970 given her thorough treatment of what had come before.

[58] Sarah Hill, *San Francisco and the Long 60s* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016). I am indebted to David Brackett for telling me about Hill's book.

But despite the "long 60s" in her book's title, Hill gives little attention to music after 1970.[59] Only the work of composer John Adams is discussed in any detail along with some general remarks on what has resulted from the intermingling of psychedelic and high art music in the works of such composers as Steve Reich and Pauline Oliveros.[60] This dissertation, in contrast, discusses music from 1970 to 1975 in great detail with five of its six chapters about music from these five years.

Hill's work and this dissertation also differ in terms of structure. At the end of her chapters, each covering a year from 1965 to 1969, she gives a three or four-page contextualization and analysis of two popular songs from the Bay Area from that year. For 1968, for example, she chose "Summertime Blues" by Blue Cheer, and "The Fool" by Quicksilver Messenger Service. Combining archival documentation with formal analysis, Hill provides illuminating insights into songs that are now largely forgotten today—or in the case of "Somebody to Love," a 1967 hit for the Jefferson Airplane, of its earlier 1966-recorded version by the Great Society.[61] In contrast to Hill's approach, in this dissertation musical examples and analyses are, for the most part, integrated into the overall narrative. My goal in doing so is to more clearly show the connections between the music's historical context and its specific details.

Bernard Gendron's *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club* is another important background text for this dissertation and upon which it builds. In it, Gendron explores, in exemplary fashion, various examples from late 19th century Paris to New York in the

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[59] The two final popular music recordings she analyzes, Sly and the Family Stone's "Everyday People" and It's A Beautiful Day's "White Bird," were released, respectively, in late 1968 and 1969. Hill, *San Francisco and the Long 60s*, 261-68.
[60] Ibid, 288-97.
[61] Ibid, 110-13. Singer Grace Slick had been in the Great Society before joining the Jefferson Airplane in late 1966 to which she brought "Somebody To Love," a song she composed.

1980s in which high art and popular culture have influenced each other in the creation of new forms of musical creativity. Using Pierre Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production and the genealogical approach of Michel Foucault, Gendron explores the ways in which "high and "low" art musicians have interacted during this 100 or so years in pursuit of the accumulation of cultural capital, i.e. social prestige. But though he does discuss music from the Bay Area in the late 1960s, it is a brief mention in terms of how other rock musicians reacted to the musical innovations of the Beatles, with the so-called "San Francisco Sound," a common media phrase at the time, as the "major aesthetic counterpoise."[62] While noting the musical and other performative characteristics that broadly characterized this so-called "Liverpool of the West," Gendron does not, as this dissertation does, delve into its own history, evolution, or internal differences.

There are a number of other (than the aforementioned Kramer's) unpublished dissertations that are relevant to this dissertation. But although there is a wealth of information in them on music from the Bay Area in the late 1960s, only one, Michael Ethen's "A Spatial History of Arena Rock, 1964-79," is specifically musicological in focus. As its title indicates, its overall focus is not on music from the Bay Area — although its third chapter, and to a lesser degree its fourth, do deal with San Francisco rock musicians, especially the Grateful Dead. There are, therefore, a number of overlapping issues between Ethen's work and mine despite our divergent approaches and choice of attention given that live performance was a key context in which the musicians and the audiences I study negotiated the relationship between popular music and that

[62] "The rest of the rock field, in danger of being left behind, was in need of a separate array of accreditory discourses with different aesthetic narratives." Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 204.

conceived of as in some way "high" art. Although not arena rock at first, by the early 1970s some Bay Area rock musicians were regularly playing in large sport arenas.

Michael Kaler's ethnomusicology dissertation, in contrast, focuses on the religious dimensions of the Grateful Dead's music. Despite the different foci, however, there are some points of connection. Kaler argues that given the Dead's strongly collectively improvised musical practice one can legitimately think of them along side such famous experimental, improvisational musicians as Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey. In doing so, "we might find it possible to nuance, develop or even alter any number of standard scholarly tropes, especially ones having to do with the interaction of extended improvisation and commercial and popular success."[63] The lack of, sometimes-even antagonism towards, popular success by many musicians who strongly foreground improvisation has, together with the still widely pervasive Romantic myth of the perennially misunderstood and unappreciated artist, led to a widespread assumption that highly improvised, experimental music cannot be popular. The Dead show this is not correct. In this dissertation I aim to explain further this possibility but focus on the interplay between music, experimentalism and the avant-garde rather than its religious dimensions à la Kaler.

In his dissertation "Psychedelic Music in San Francisco: Style, Context, and Evolution" Craig Morrison develops a seven-stage model of stylistic evolution for psychedelic music, of which the Bay Area was arguably the most important early center: Creation, First Wave, Commercialization, Fade Out, Dormancy, Revival, Stability.[64] He

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[63] Michael Kaler, "Ensemble Stuff: The Grateful Dead's Development of Rock-Based Improvisational Practice and its Religious Inspiration" (PhD diss., York University, 2014), 11.
[64] Craig Morrison, "Psychedelic Music in San Francisco: Style, Context, and Evolution" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2000) 162-63.

applies this model to psychedelic music to account for its birth in the mid-1960s through its decline around 1970 and then later revivals and on going examples. Morrison discusses a wide number of musicians and groups associated with psychedelic music both in the Bay Area as well as in other areas it influenced in significant ways (e.g. the rock band the United Empire Loyalists in Vancouver, British Colombia).

Although there is some overlap between his work and this one, there are also significant differences. I do not concern myself with the history, definition or development of psychedelic music as a genre. Nor do I range as far afield in geographical scope. Although much of the music I discuss is widely characterized as psychedelic, I am more concerned with how musicians during the period of time of this study connected such music with more traditional popular music forms and styles rather than its relations to psychedelic music per se. Furthermore, Morrison's song analyses eschew musical notation, are only of studio recordings, and are quite brief explications of their psychedelic characteristics.[65] Often, he analyzes the symbolism of the record covers rather than the music they contain. In contrast, I make extensive use of traditional musical analysis, focus on both studio and live performances, and discuss fewer musical examples than Morrison but go into significantly greater depth concerning them.

Geoffrey Bradshaw's dissertation, "Collective Expressions and Negotiated Structures: The Grateful Dead in American Culture, 1965-1995," in contrast, is primarily anthropological with extensive ethnographic accounts of fans of the Dead on tour in the

[65] Morrison briefly discusses the Grateful Dead's live album *Live/Dead* but only the symbolism of its front and back covers. He says nothing about its music (Ibid, 235). He also briefly discusses the Jefferson Airplane's live album *Bless Its Pointed Little Head* but also concerns himself primarily with the symbolism of its record cover. The only sonic aspect of the album he mentions is from the album's beginning where the sounds of an "audience cheering, booing, and hissing at it watches *King Kong*" are followed by a spoken excerpt from the film ("it wasn't the airplane, it was beauty killed the beast") that functions as an introduction to the first song (Ibid, 228).

mid-1990s along with a history of the group.[66] Although Bradshaw sometimes discusses the group's music he does not do so in any detail. This dissertation has an ethnographic dimension as well given the some first-person accounts from some relevant musicians and audience members. But such ethnographic work is meant to complement my archival and analytical work rather than be the focus of this work.

Kaler's placing of the Grateful Dead alongside Braxton and Bailey as improvisational innovators points to another important contextual association for understanding the development of the Dead's musical style. Braxton is a long-time member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and there are a number of intriguing parallels between this organization and the Dead. They both began, coincidentally, in 1965, and their members found similar inspiration, as well as developed original ways of inter-personal musical interaction. But while the Dead were based in the San Francisco Bay Area and made up entirely of Euro-Americans, the AACM has always been based in Chicago and made up entirely of African-Americans. And whereas the Dead were a relatively small, self-contained musical group of anywhere from five to seven members, the AACM is not a musical ensemble but a social, political, and musical organization aimed at the advancement of its members (who performed solo and in a wide variety of different groups) aesthetically, politically and commercially.[67]

One could certainly write an entire dissertation comparing the Grateful Dead and the AACM, and though I hope that one day somebody will do this, such a project is not

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[66] Geoffrey Bradshaw, "Collective Expressions and Negotiated Structures: The Grateful Dead in American Culture, 1965-1995" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1997).

[67] For undoubtedly the most thorough discussion of the AACM see George Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). For an exploration of arguably the most famous group of AACM members see Paul Steinbeck, *A Message to Our Folks: The Art Ensemble of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

this one. Some specifically musical comparisons are, however, perhaps called for. Both the Dead and members of the AACM strongly emphasized improvisation as a core music making function while also making use of highly complex forms with clearly arranged parts. Both the Dead and members of the AACM also embraced uncommonly wide stylistic genres, making use of "high" art musical elements and those that are explicitly popular, rejecting their more usual separation.

But along with these similarities there are also substantial differences with race as undoubtedly the most important. Although among the members of the Dead only guitarist Bob Weir came from an affluent upbringing, the rest came from working or lower-middle class backgrounds, but their position as white people in the Bay Area was certainly much more privileged than the African-Americans from the South Side of Chicago who primarily formed the AACM. The genre associations of their music were also very different. Although the members of the Dead were highly influenced by African-American music, their status as whites in the mid-1960s gave them a degree of social capital within the popular music industry far above that which would have been possible for members of the AACM given its members' avant-garde leanings. Furthermore, having formed in response to the popularity of white rock & roll bands at this time, primarily the Beatles and Rolling Stones, for whom the use of vocal-based popular song forms were central, the Dead were self-consciously a rock & roll band. Although in the 1950s rock & roll had to some degree been open to both whites and blacks (e.g. Chuck Berry, Little Richard), by the mid-1960s the color divide in popular music had become stronger with rock & roll largely associated with whites, and rhythm & blues (R&B) as

the de facto genre for popular African American performers.[68] Members of the AACM, in contrast, were overwhelmingly coded as jazz on account of the largely instrumental character of their music, instrumentation (horns and percussion with some strings), self-conscious artistry, and racial make up. Its members had little chance of being signed to major labels in the 1960s, an opportunity that was, in contrast, available to many white rock musicians in the Bay Area.[69]

On Improvisation

One particularly important focus of my dissertation is on improvisation as one of the key ways through which musicians in the San Francisco Bay Area bridged the divide between popular and high art music. As various scholars have pointed out, musicology has traditionally neglected improvisation and the broader performative dimensions of music of which improvisation is a part in favor of a focus on notated music. For "as the etymology of the term suggests, to be a 'musicologist' is to think of music as text," a synchronically stable structure of notes on a page rather than the transitive, ephemeral, constantly changing realization of organized sounds in time that a focus on performance and improvisation implies.[70] Lydia Goehr argues that the privileging of the unchanging score as the locus of musical understanding reflects a fundamental change in the ontological status of music around 1800 under the primary influence of Beethoven,

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[68] See Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock'n'Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 239

[69] In the 1970s, Anthony Braxton did record for Arista records, which happened to also be the Grateful Dead's label from 1976 to 1995.

[70] Nicholas Cook, "Making Music Together, or Improvisation and Its Others," *Jazz Research Journal* 1 (2004), 7. See also Theodor C. Grame, "An Historical View of Musicology and Performance," *Ethnomusicology* 7, no. 3 (1963), 201; and Richard Taruskin, "On Letting the Music Speak for Itself: Some Reflections on Musicology and Performance," *The Journal of Musicology* 1, no. 3 (1982), 341-42.

specifically the rise of the *Werktreue* ideal of notational fidelity.[71] In the second half of the 20th century John Cage gained great renown for challenging the role of traditional musical notation as the mediator between composition and performance through the use of chance procedures, graphic notation and deliberate indeterminacy of compositional elements. Many other art music composers embraced these practices as well. But even though this renewed interest in the "real-time generation of musical structure" was undoubtedly influenced by the improvisational tradition of African and African-American music, particularly that of jazz, this influence was largely denied in favor of theorizing such practices, improviser and musicologist George Lewis notes, as "emanating almost exclusively from a generally venerated stream of European cultural, social, and intellectual history—the 'Western tradition.'"[72] Renowned improvising saxophonist Anthony Braxton similarly argues that terms such as "indeterminacy," "aleatoric" and "experimental" were used to "bypass the word improvisation and as such the influence of non-white sensibility."[73]

But despite such denials, the shared interest in real-time, improvisatory music making in the Western art and jazz music worlds in the 1950s provided a common avenue by which a younger generation of musicians with affinities for both were able to overcome the barriers between them. David Brackett has pointed out that when the Beatles and Bob Dylan merged modernist aesthetics with popular music through their musical and lyrical innovations in the mid-1960s, the common foregrounding of

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[71] "The ideal of *Werktreue* emerged to capture the new relation between work and performance as well as that between performer and composer. Performances and their performers were respectively subservient to works and their composers." Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, revised edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 231.
[72] George Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (1996), 92.
[73] Anthony Braxton, *Tri-Axium Writings, Vol. 1* (Dartmouth: Synthesis/Frog Peak, 1985), 366.

improvisation within contemporaneous Western art music and jazz became prime fodder for other popular musicians' attempts to justify their music as art rather than mere "pop" music. For though "'improvisation' has been relatively undervalued compared to 'composition' … the types of music with which improvisation was most associated during the mid-1960s—jazz, classical Indian music, Western avant-garde—nonetheless still possessed greater cultural prestige than popular music."[74] Its evocation was thus of substantial importance to the symbolic and cultural accreditation of popular music and perhaps nowhere so much as in the Bay Area beginning in the late 1960s. There is, therefore, still a great deal to be learnt about the history of improvisational music practices in this area in the early 1960s in order to understand the experiences and backgrounds of those who later made use of it so extensively within popular contexts.

A particularly interesting development in the history of improvisational music is the practice of the Grateful Dead of improvising not only within established, pre-composed structures, but as the method of realizing novel transitions between them as well. Rather than discreet songs or pieces, separated by verbal addresses to audiences, the Dead created, in many cases, lengthy, continuous musical sequences through such collectively spontaneous creations of segues. Although the destinations of these transitions would sometimes be planned in advance, more interesting are instances when it is clear that they either were not known or there was disagreement within the ensemble as to what they were, leading to audible conflict, as musicians pulled in different directions.[75]

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[74] David Brackett, "Rock," *The Encyclopedia of Popular Musics of the World: Genres (International),* 10 (London: Continuum, forthcoming), 23.

[75] A notable example of such audible conflict as to musical direction is from the Grateful Dead's April 26, 1972 performance in Frankfurt, Germany where coming out of "Turn on Your Lovelight" most of the

Such structural, as opposed to merely melodic, improvisations were clearly influenced by the free and modal jazz that came to widespread prominence in the United States around 1960, both of which developed increasingly extended and elaborate forms through the following decade. But it was also motivated by the Dead's self-understanding as accompanists for dancers. Despite the sometimes highly experimental music that they were beginning to play around this time, they notably did not follow the usual path taken by popular musicians strongly influenced by modernist aesthetics (for example, bebop jazz musicians in the mid-1940s, and many progressive rock musicians of the mid-to-late 1960s) for whom the repudiation of their music's functional relationship to dancing was of prime importance in asserting their cultural accreditation as "serious" artists.

There has been little scholarly discussion of such improvised transitions, despite the fact that in the contexts in which they occur they are foregrounded as performance highlights: moments of heightened intensity, and one of the most telling sign of a group's skills on account of the experience of an uncertainty of destination mixed with a strong sense of directionality that characterizes their realization. Rather than audience members observing obviously pre-planned musical sequences, through their collective involvement in the improvisational process they are themselves integrated into the constitution of the

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group moves into "Not Fade Away" while lead guitarist Jerry Garcia instead chooses "Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad," leading to an interesting polyphony of songs as they are played concurrently. For a discussion of a similar process of conflicting musical directions negotiated through collective improvisation in the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago see Paul Steinbeck, *Message to Our Folks: The Art Ensemble of Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 92-105. And although tangential to my dissertation's focus it is an interesting historical parallel that around the same time a similar practice developed within a quite different music context: the DJ-led dance club. Pioneered by DJ Francis (Francis Grasso) in 1969, beat-matching (using two turntables, headphones and a mixer) enabled DJs to connect songs together to create a continuous flow in order to keep people dancing and, thereby, build up energy through a non-stop musical sequence rather than have it dissipate between the end of one song and the beginning of the next. As *the* key technique of the modern DJ it would be difficult to overestimate its importance over the last four decades to dance music and to popular music more broadly. For a discussion of the history of beat-matching (or beat-mixing), and of Grasso's influence in particular, see Stephen Webber, *DJ Skills: the Essential Guide to Mixing & Scratching* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2008), 24.

performance, engaging with the performers as they risk possible failure through the creation of novel ways of moving from one song to the next with the specific destination experientially, if not in actuality, uncertain.

Modernism/Postmodernism and the Avant-Garde

The boundary crossings that I focus on in this dissertation point to issues in the debate over the meaning of the avant-garde and its relation to aesthetic modernism's demand for continual progress in the expansion of artistic autonomy. According to many scholars, one of the key characteristics of postmodernism, is the fundamental questioning of the value of progress or of any "meta-narratives" that posit its necessity.[76] But what then becomes of the avant-garde in such circumstances given its status as precisely that which defines artistic progress through its exploration of new forms and experiences? After the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp, the radical pitch organization of Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, the combines and single color paintings of Robert Rauschenberg, the chance pieces of John Cage (*4'33* most notoriously) and the nearly impenetrable writing of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (among other paragons of artistic modernism), what rules are there left to break or taboos still to be ignored? Can there be a future for the avant-garde when seemingly all sonic, literary, visual, dramatic possibilities have *already* been legitimized as art? Has modernism's relentless pushing of the boundaries wholly exhausted itself or is there some way to hold on to some role for artistic radicalism in a seemingly postmodern world?

[76] "I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives … The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal." Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

Such questions have led in recent decades to extensive scholarship and heated debates about what the avant-garde in its classic early 20th-century forms (e.g. Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism) was, whether it survived its increasing institutionalization post-World War II, and if it can still be thought to exist today. Peter Bürger has been one of the key figures in this process, arguing against those who would conflate modernist art with the avant-garde—as became common in the mid-twentieth century.[77] Instead, he contends that what defined the historical avant-garde in its early twentieth-century manifestations was an attack on the very institutionalization and autonomy of art from praxis (i.e. the socio-political dimensions of life) that modernism has, for the most part, celebrated. "The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men."[78] On this account, modernist art and the artistic avant-garde are not only not the same but are, in fact, fundamentally opposed to each other. Even though they share specific practices and forms, the celebration or resigned acceptance of ever-increasing artistic autonomy by modernist artists and critics is precisely the *target* of the historical avant-garde's radicalism. Andreas Huyssen agrees with Bürger, noting modernism's insistence on "the autonomy of the art work, its obsessive hostility to mass culture, its radical separation from the culture of everyday life, and its programmatic distance from political, economic, and social concerns."[79] Yet, as soon as such a divorce between art and life arose, the

[77] For example, Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1939/1989), 3-21.
[78] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 49; and Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 7-8.
[79] Huyssen, *After the Great Divide,* vii.

historical avant-garde developed in response as some artists sought to reintegrate art and life despite the claims of progress used to justify their growing separation.[80]

Bürger's argument, though influential, has aroused no shortage of controversy. Some have pointed to his too-limited view of the historical avant-garde, based primarily on Dadaist, Surrealist and post-revolution Russian examples, and failure to take into consideration other contrary avant-garde art movements from the early 20th century.[81] Rather than the relatively unified avant-garde essence Bürger assumes, they argue, one should instead conceive of multiple and in some ways contradictory avant-*gardes* some of which, such as French cubism and German expressionism, very much *celebrated* artistic autonomy and their freedom from practical or commercial concerns.[82]

Despite such limitations, however, Bürger's work is significant in pointing to the importance, among at least some of the early 20th century avant-gardes, of challenging the autonomy and formalism that increasingly came to define modern art through the first half of the 20th century and subsequently dominated it in the 1950s and '60s. Although Bürger is arguably wrong to define the avant-garde as narrowly as he does, he is right to point to the important role that an anti-formalist aesthetic—the desire to reconnect art with life—played for at least some of the early 20th century avant-gardes and to thereby make plausible an anti-formalist *neo*-avant-garde in the 1960s and '70s.

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[80] Ibid.

[81] See Dietrich Scheunemann, ed. *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives: Avantgarde, Avantgardekritik, Avantgardeforschung* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 7-8; and Max Paddison, "Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-Garde," in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Max Paddison and Irene Deliege (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2009), 224.

[82] See Walter Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 15-19. Although in Ernst Bloch's defense of Expressionism against Lukács' attacks on it Bloch notably stresses its connection to historical popular art. See Ernst Bloch, "Discussing Expressionism," in *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Georg Lukács* (New York: Verso, 2007), 23-26.

Since Bürger's work is based almost entirely on the European experience of modernism and the avant-garde, Dennis Raverty helpfully supplements it by bringing to light the parallel contemporaneous, and now often forgotten, debates *within* American modernism between anti-formalists and formalists from around the turn of the century until the triumph (at least temporarily) of the latter in the 1950s. The connection of these debates between modernist formalists and anti-formalists to this dissertation is that the musicians (and their music) it focuses on from 1965-75 were, I argue, part of a larger continuation of this intra-modernist battle among the self-conscious artistic avant-garde that began in the early 20th century. More specifically, the breakdown of barriers between art forms and styles previously understood as incompatible, on account of their very different "high" or "low" art associations, can be understood as reflecting an inter-generational battle over aesthetic value. With formalism by the late 1950s having captured all institutions of "high art" in the United-States—wholly claiming the heritage of the avant-garde in the process, despite the incongruity of its institutionalization—many of the younger generation of artists found in a turn towards an experiential anti-formalism a justification for practices that would define them against the older, institutionalized generation.

Pierre Bourdieu describes just such a process in his analysis of cultural production as a relational field.

> The structure of the field of cultural production is based on two fundamental and quite different oppositions: first, the oppositions between the sub-field of restricted production and the sub-field of large-scale production … and secondly, the opposition, within the sub-field of restricted production, between the

> consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde, the established figures and the newcomers, i.e. between *artistic generations*, often only a few years apart, between the 'young' and the 'old, the 'neo' and the 'paleo', the 'new' and the 'outmoded', etc.; in short, between cultural orthodoxy and heresy.[83]

These oppositions are key to understanding changes within the field of cultural production. Bourdieu's model thus provides an important framework for this dissertation in theorizing the changes in musical practices on which it focuses.

The modalities of how such oppositions operate, however, depend crucially on genre as the social articulation of their defining boundaries and debates. Because this dissertation focuses largely, though not completely, on music within the broad genre field of popular music the more obvious avenue for it to take would be to focus on how it came to be constructed through negotiations *within* this field. For example, to trace its influences from, and relations with, folk, country, rock & roll, rhythm & blues, and pre-bebop jazz. Given the importance of such connections, tracing their influences is an important part of this dissertation. As its sub-title—"Popular Music and the Avant-Garde in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1965-1975"—suggests, however, it is more concerned with how this music was constructed in relation to movements, tendencies, and ideas within modernist and post-modernist music; "high" art more broadly. Especially significant about the popular music discussed in this dissertation is, precisely, these influences and the way in which their use was negotiated. Although obviously commercial and popular, such music foregrounds elements that are sonically

[83] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature,* ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993), 53.

indistinguishable from the most self-consciously avant-gardist streams of 20th century art music.

There are, however, at least two ways to understand such combinations. On the one hand, they constitute a position taking within the field of popular music, where explicit appeals to popular success are rejected (as well as the economic capital that attends the realization of such success) in favor of the accumulation of cultural capital, i.e. the fame and prestige of recognition as "serious" artists.[84] On the other hand, such unusual mélanges of musical material and genre can be understood within the field of "high" art, as a response to movements and tendencies internal to *its* history. Although the music discussed in this dissertation was generically coded as popular (though of a less commercial, autonomous kind) it is my contention that it was also substantially in dialogue with the artistic debates within modernism and the avant-garde discussed earlier in this section: formalism vs. anti-formalism, functionalism vs. anti-functionalism, the necessity for progress vs. renewal of the changing same.

As Bernard Gendron and others have shown, the use of popular culture to intervene in these debates has a history stretching back at least to the 19th century, and arguably to the 1600s with the famous *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.[85] What is unusual about the Bay Area in the 1960s and early 1970s is that it was substantially,

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[84] Although the accumulation of cultural capital is dependent on the rejection of economic motivation, over time it can be exchanged for direct financial returns as the artistic status of those who have accumulated it is increasingly recognized, and rewarded by patrons and legitimating cultural institutions. The MacArthur Foundation's Fellows Program, popularly known as "genius grants," is one of the more notable contemporary examples of ways in which artistic cultural capital is parlayed into financial return. It "awards unrestricted fellowships to talented individuals who have shown extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction … Each fellowship comes with a stipend of $625,000 to the recipient, paid out in equal quarterly installments over five years." https://www.macfound.org/programs/fellows/strategy/.

[85] Gendron, *From Montmartre to the Mudd Club*, passim; Herbert M. Schueller, "The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns," *Music & Letters* 41, no. 4 (Oct., 1960), pp. 313-330.

though not exclusively, those from a popular or "low" artistic background doing so rather than, as has almost always been the case, those based in "high" art borrowing elements from the "low." Prior to the 1960s such a possibility would have been likely unimaginable given the lack of knowledge about "high" art that would have largely characterized those involved in popular culture, undergirded by little class mobility. The generation growing up in California in the 1950s, however, benefited from possibly the most well-funded, and best quality primary through post-secondary public education system that had ever existed.[86] And the proliferation of various forms of mass media in the postwar era allowed for an exceptionally wide social diffusion of knowledge about "high" art culture.[87] It should not, therefore, be surprising that it was in California such a process occurred.

On Irony

Ever since the widespread emergence of countercultural forces in the mid-1960s those of a less explicitly political kind have faced persistent critiques from both the radical left and the conservative right. While for the latter, the countercultural opposition to traditional moral norms is widely seen as dangerously subversive, the former's criticism has mostly been in terms of its supposed jejune, naïve character.

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[86] "The period between 1945 and 1970 represented the peak of investment in mass high education in California … of all the states, California boasted the highest per capita expenditure on students." John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 286-87.

[87] "A reigning assumption in the academy is that popular sources merely reflect a watered-down version of 'high' culture and intellectual social theory. At least in the case of television, this thesis does not accurately describe the situation … While social scientists were interested in measuring television's effects and audience viewing habits in the 1950s, and while such studies did find their way into popular sources, the popular culture did not merely reflect the voices of intellectuals. In fact, the popular sources often directly debated with the 'high' theories of 'European intellectuals." Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 191, e.n. 12. See also Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation Of Taste*, revised ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 22-26.

Artistic practices that combine elements of high-art modernist experimentalism and popular culture are commonly interpreted in one of two ways. If done with a sufficiently ironic distance—the proverbial Warholian wink and knowing smile, indicating that nothing should be taken very seriously—then its artistic bona fides are maintained, perhaps even amplified, with such irony taken as evidence of its eminently modern, perhaps even postmodern, character.[88] If, on the other hand, it lacks such ironic distancing, then it is almost certainly fated to, at best, be denigrated as inauthentic, as fatally compromised by popular and commercial demands, and therefore be dismissed derisively as kitsch. What would seem to be inconceivable for many is for such an artistic synthesis to be realized in such a manner that both its elements, high-art experimentalism *and* popular culture, are done in complete seriousness as part of a modernist or postmodernist, experimental, even avant-garde goal. And yet, this is precisely this dissertation's interpretation of the music of the Grateful Dead.

Such an argument is important because although they were one of the longest lasting, and most influential, rock groups to come out of the 1960s, and performed highly experimental, modernist music for possibly more people than any other musicians in history, they have faced, and continue to face, a widespread dismissal from music scholars and critics. Robert Weiner notes, "The Grateful Dead is the most loved and hated band in the world," and even though I would temper such hyperbole with the qualifier "one of the most" his statement does capture the critical extremes that the band

[88] See, for example, Judith A. Peraino, "Plumbing the Surface of Sound and Vision: David Bowie, Andy Warhol, and the Art of Posing," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 21, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2012), 154-55.

elicits from many: fanatical devotion or dismissive opprobrium.[89] This dissertation aims to steer a middle course between these two extremes.

The sincerity and supposed lack of irony in the Dead's music, as well as of their famously loyal "deadhead" audience, has been one of the primary reasons for its oft-times critical depreciation. Since at least the emergence of glam and punk rock in the 1970s such sincerity has been for many rock critics a, if not *the*, major obstacle to appreciating the band. As one journalist notes,

> there's something embarrassing to nonfans about the devotion of Deadheads. The emotional commitment between the band and its following is passe – it's too sincere. In the late '70s, when bands such as Talking Heads and the B-52's were at their mocking best, irony became the dominant rock-music sensibility. No one got too serious. The Dead, however, continued on their hippie-rock track. You'd never hear them goofing on sexual roles, for instance, or on rock music itself."[90]

But though members of the Dead do not affect the kind of ironic distance from explicitly popular musical elements and styles that typifies, say, the Velvet Underground and David Bowie, their music is not lacking in irony. Rather than an irony of parody or satire, however, that of the Grateful Dead is characterized more by a wizened realization of connections between different musical styles and histories brought into intimately

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[89] "Introduction," *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead: Critical Writings*, xvii. Weiner goes on to list a number of polarized statements about the band from Dave Marsh calling them "the worst band in creation" to John Wasserman's belief "that the Grateful Dead is one of the great rock ensembles of all time." Ibid, xviii-xix. For an example of the continuing vitriol directed at the band, Joe Queenan writes, "The Grateful Dead and the Four Seasons are the only American bands that I unreservedly loathe." "Please, Grateful Dead, Don't Keep Truckin' On," *The Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 30, 2015), (http://www.wsj.com/articles/please-grateful-dead-dont-keep-truckin-on-1422635696).

[90] Matthew Gilbert, "The Grateful Dead: Business as Usual," *Boston Globe* (July 8, 1990), 47 (http://gratefulseconds.blogspot.ca/2017/06/five-years-of-mass-dead.html).

unexpected relation. Critics and scholars have rarely appreciated this more subtle form of irony in understanding the Dead's music.

A recent example of such lack of appreciation is in a recently published book: *Rock, Counterculture and the Avant-Garde, 1966-1970*.[91] In it, Doyle Green focuses on the Beatles, Frank Zappa, and the Velvet Underground as key examples of the intermingling described in its title, along with a brief concluding discussion of the broader "Avant-Rock Movement."[92] Although he includes the Dead's 1969 live album *Live/Dead* within his selected discography, he is otherwise dismissive of the group's avant-garde credentials, as he is of Bay Area counterculturalism more generally. Discussing the Velvet Underground's 1966 West Coast tour, Greene focuses on the Velvet's performance at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco in order to stress the differences between them and those who made up the Bay Area music scene, characterizing the latter as conservative, even reactionary naïfs.[93]

There is, however, significant tension between Greene's celebration of non-hierarchical performance models, and his privileging of the Velvet Underground and the Mothers over the Bay Area aesthetic exemplified by the Dead. While extoling the bridging of the divide between performer and audience as a, if not *the*, crucial avant-garde strategy, elsewhere he celebrates an overt antagonism between performers and audiences.[94] While the latter defines itself in opposition to popular taste, celebrating artistic autonomy and formalistic experimentation, the goal of the former is to overcome

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[91] Doyle Green, *Rock, Counterculture and the Avant-Garde, 1966-1970: How the Beatles, Frank Zappa and the Velvet Underground Defined an Era* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc., 2016).
[92] For "The Avant-Rock Movement" see Ibid, 182-84.
[93] Ibid, 148. Incorrectly, Greene states that this performance of the Velvet Underground was at the Fillmore West, a venue that did not open until June of 1968.
[94] Ibid.

such formalist autonomy in order to reintegrate art and life through the merging of performers and their audience.

That Greene does not more clearly differentiate these aesthetic strategies is understandable given that partisans of both claim an avant-garde genealogy, and both are widely understood to define the avant-garde. But despite their common claim to such a lineage they exist in significant tension with the other. As noted earlier in my discussion of Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, they, and their accompanying practices, reflect opposing goals from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

An insufficient appreciation for the differences in motivation and practices of these avant-garde strategies has often hindered an appreciation of the musical aesthetic the Grateful Dead championed. Although, as I will show, creating music of a highly challenging nature was not foreign to the band, the intention in doing so was rarely of the antagonistic—vis-à-vis the audience—kind that Greene celebrates in performances by the Mothers or the Velvet Underground. It was intended, largely understood, and realized as a collaborative experience of heightened, even transcendent, aesthetic experiences realized through the temporary merging of performers and audience members. Crucially, however, the responsibility for creating the conditions of such a possibility depended not on the audience, but on the musicians themselves. As Dead guitarist Bob Weir notes in a 1973 interview:

> *I figure it's the musician's responsibility to reach people*. If he feels he's got something worthy of presenting to people, it's his responsibility, to a certain extant at least, to make himself musically accessible to the people … If it's to a point where only other musicians can understand or appreciate it, you're losing

> not only your audience, but also the excitement a larger audience can create. If you're looking to expand the horizons of music, you want all the help you can get … and a big audience giving positive feedback is certainly an asset.[95]

Weir's placing the onus for making art meaningful to a broad audience on artists themselves, and insisting on the importance of doing so, is a far cry from what has been typical of self-consciously modern artists since at least the late 19th century. Instead, "avant-garde artist" has usually meant the precise opposite: isolated, perennially misunderstood because they are "ahead" of society, creating art that is too radical, too different to be understood at the time of its creation, but that history will later vindicate as having forged new directions for society to follow and appreciate. And it is this understanding of "avant-garde" that has proved the most influential on modernist artists and critics, for whom ever-increasing abstraction and formalism has been consequently overwhelmingly privileged.

But given the goal of what Bürger calls the historical avant-garde, to reintegrate art and life, a different answer necessarily results. Although increasing abstraction and formalism are useful qualities, they cannot make up the entirety of an artist's vocabulary because it is the transformation of *the present* rather than the future that is the primary goal. It then has to be, at least to a significant degree, through *the means* of the present, i.e. forms of widely accepted aesthetic discourses, through which such a process occurs. For while the practices and products of some supposedly prophesied future can function in powerful ways to suggest, and help realize, new forms of experience (especially as ways of connecting different historic styles) the modernist avant-garde trope of artists as

[95] Cameron Crow, "Ghost Stories from the Dead: Semi-Startling Conversations with Bob Weir," *Rolling Stone* (June 30, 1973), 19. Italics by the author.

necessarily "ahead" of the rest of society, towards whom everyone else must work to catch up, fails as either a sufficient or necessary condition of artistic production.

Indeed, some of the manifestations of the historical avant-garde challenge the very idea of progress that underlies this notion of the artist-as-truth-finder. Although Futurism, as its name makes clear, is obviously highly progressive in its ideological commitments, Dadaism and Surrealism are, to a significant degree, defined by their rejection of the very idea of progress. Rather than heralding the promise of the future, many dadaists and surrealists questioned not only the progressive belief in the future as savior to the present but the so-called "Whig Interpretation of History," in which the present is the inevitable outcome of overcoming the problems and limitations of the past.[96] For these self-conscious avant-gardists, art is meant, rather, to reveal the meaningless and futility of progress.[97] From such a standpoint, time is not an arrow with a têlos towards which it unavoidably moves. Instead, it is a circle, in which the same patterns and processes are repeated again and again though in constantly changing details. As I discuss in this dissertation, such a circular sense of temporality has important parallels with some of the structures of live performance practices that developed in the Bay Area during the period of this study.

A rejection of progressive notions of time also arguably connects to the unusual musical diversity that characterizes some of these performances: from folk ballads to

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[96] The origin of this phrase is Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell, 1931). "The Whig interpretation of history" is a kind of anachronistic form of historical narrative. In its application, Maarten Doorman notes, "the past is smoothly modeled *on* and hence *taken from* the present." *Art in Progress: A Philosophical Response to the End of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Sherry Marx (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 17.

[97] "No matter how much the innovations in avant-garde art were presented and defended in terms of progress, it remained exceedingly difficult for the defenders of that art to substantiate their claim … In the first place, art was no longer an autonomous institution in the eyes of the avant-garde, whereby it lost its identity; in that case, developments could only be seen in a broader perspective and no longer as an advance in or of art." Doorman, *Art in Progress*, 58.

electro-acoustic soundscapes. As Bürger notes, the historical avant-garde is the point at which "the totality of artistic means becomes available as means."[98] If everything is possible, at least theoretically, then artistic progress becomes moot. Prior to this historical moment, in contrast, "artistic means had been limited by the period style, an already existing canon of permissible procedures, an infringement of which was acceptable only within certain bounds."[99] During the period of one style's dominance, "the category 'artistic means' as a general one cannot be seen for what it is because … it occurs only as a particular one."[100] The crucial break made by the various historical avant-gardes is their lack of stylistic definitions.[101] Instead, "these movements liquidated the possibility of a period style when they raised to a principle the availability of the artistic means of past periods." Only when *any* style is available for use "does the category of artistic means become a general one."[102] That is, the ability to reflect on a style as a means to a specific aesthetic goal, rather than a necessary formal limitation, is made possible by the a priori rejection of formal stylistic limitations.

The lack of such limitations has an important productive capacity, especially in terms of the relatively unmediated context of live performance. As one of its scholars points out, "it may be that it is the very unpredictability generated by these tensions – the possibility of the unexpected – that lends the live performance the energy and excitement lacking in 'mediatized' performance."[103] And it is precisely the turn towards live

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[98] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 18.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] "It is … a distinguishing feature of the historical avant-garde movements that they did not develop a style." Ibid
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ian Inglis, "Introduction: History, place and time: The possibility of the unexpected," in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), xv.

performance as the primary locus of a popular, yet also experimental, music practice that this dissertation is principally concerned.

Chapter 1:
The Art-Popular Musical Dialectic in San Francisco, 1965-1970

The majority of this dissertation focuses on the years 1970-75, a relatively understudied period of music in the Bay Area. Given the degree to which these five years were influenced by the preceding decade this first chapter will explore them in order to contextualize what came after. I begin by discussing some academically trained composers who despite their musical pedigree realized significant points of connection between their compositional and performance practices, and musical genres then commonly considered as of a lower, more popular aesthetic provenance. I then discuss the January of 1966 Trips Festival, perhaps the most important meeting point of the high art and popular music worlds in San Francisco during this time, and its aftermath in the Bay Area. The chapter finishes by exploring popular music from the Bay Area that makes use of high art elements.

The San Francisco Tape Music Center

Undoubtedly the most significant influence on the development of a uniquely Bay Area musical style in the early to mid 1960s was the San Francisco Tape Music Center. Founded by composer Ramon Sender in 1961 he was soon joined by a number of other local composers—Morton Subotnick, Pauline Oliveros, and William Maginnis among those most involved—quickly making the center the locus for their individual and combined activities. In the first half of the 1960s the Tape Center gained significant renown within the Bay Area as the home for a peculiar amalgam of musical styles. Although it was a center dedicated to "tape" (i.e. recorded music), live performance was

common at its various concerts. Noted John Cage collaborator David Tudor, for example, performed at the Center as part of a "Tudorfest" dedicated to his work, which also featured pieces by Cage, Oliveros, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Alvin Lucier and George Brecht from March 30 to April 8, 1964.[1] Compositions by Terry Riley were the focus of a later performance on November 4, 1964 that included the tape pieces *Music from The Gift*, *I*, *Shoeshine*, and *In Bb or Is It Ab?*, as well as *Coule*, "a piano improvisation upon a mode," and the premiere of *In C*, which has become one of the most widely performed art music pieces from the second half of the 20th century.[2]

The Tape Center was situated within the paradoxical avant-garde tradition of Western art music.[3] It was (and is) paradoxical because those who claim the title of avant-garde have generally defined themselves *in opposition to* traditions and institutions. And yet, by the 1950s "avant-gardism" had become the dominant, and most prestigious, artistic current within the United States. In contrast, the Tape Center existed outside of any legitimating cultural or academic institutions. Furthermore, it had numerous connections to the emerging rock music community in San Francisco—a community that had little cultural legitimation at the time.

The Charlatans, for instance, perhaps the city's first original rock group (as opposed to earlier rock & roll), sometimes rehearsed at the Tape Center's building at 321 Divisadero.[4] Sender also made the acquaintance of members of another early San Francisco rock group, Big Brother & the Holding Company, as they lived close by the

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[1] David Bernstein et al., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2008), 25.
[2] Ibid, 27.
[3] For a discussion of a similarly positioned, contemporaneous musical collective, the ONCE Group in Ann Arbour, Michigan, see Richard S. James, "ONCE: Microcosm of the 1960s Musical and Multimedia Avant-Garde," *American Music* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1987), 359-390.
[4] Bernstein, *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 75.

Center.[5] And though Janis Joplin had not yet joined Big Brother as their lead singer (with whom she would become internationally famous due to the band's performance at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967) her and then boyfriend Peter de Blanque, an electrical engineer, were for a time regular visitors. De Blanque even worked at the Center briefly as its engineer before being fired for seemingly drug-fueled incompetence.[6] Future Jefferson Airplane singer Grace Slick also attended Tape Center performances.[7] Phil Lesh and Tom Constanten, both future members of the Grateful Dead, were not only regular visitors at the center, but joined (along with Jon Gibson) Steve Reich's "Music Now Koncerts" that featured collective improvisations along with their own original compositions.[8] According to Sender, such connections between the high art world the Tape Center represented (unorthodox and lacking in institutional legitimacy though it was), and the rock music community was a key component of the emerging Haight-Ashbury community that exploded to international prominence in 1967 as the most prominent center of "hippie" youth culture.[9]

In the first half of the 1960s, however, such prominence would have been little but a pipe dream. And yet, many of the seeds of the Haight-Ashbury community can be found in the practices of the Tape Center during this time. One of these is a focus on process and change rather than the fixity of stable musical works. In a 1964 interview with Sender, Subotnick, and Tony Martin in which they discuss the practices of the Tape

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid, 76.
[7] Ibid, 104. In my discussions with composer Ned Lagin (discussed in detail later in this dissertation), he explained Slick's involvement on his 1975 *Seastones* LP as a result of their shared love of the work of James Joyce and of the historical avant-garde more broadly. That Slick attended performances at the Tape Music Center in the mid-1960s suggests that this interest was more than a passing phase.
[8] Ibid, 275. For a first-person discussion of these performances and the personnel involved see Tom Constanten, *Between Rock & Hard Places: A Musical Autobiodyssey* (Eugene, OR: Hulogosi Press, 1992), 53-56.
[9] Bernstein, *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 75

Center, Sender explained that as composers he and Subotnick were interested more in the "continual process of becoming" than finished, stable, repeatable works. They wanted to get away from the idea of composers as "masterpiece machines," and thereby contribute to "new directions" by having concerts in which pieces would be presented anonymously in order to emphasize the immediately experiential nature of the music. In doing so, they hoped to counteract the "personality-centering syndrome" and "competitive scramble that typifies much of the musical activity of today."[10] Martin concurred by stressing how the ephemerality of his light projections parallels that of the music to which it was the visual accompaniment. Rather than a fault, its transiency was a welcome, desired quality.[11] And though their usage of tape recording, given its fixity, might be seen to contradict such a processual kind of poietic practice, Subotnick thought that a positive effect of their usage of tape and electronic music was to liberate them from "the constraints of traditional formal musical parameters," thereby allowing them to question the traditional Western art music emphasis on fixed, finished works.[12]

Another connection between the Tape Center and the later Haight-Ashbury community was an emphasis by the Center's members on the communal, collaborative nature of their activities. In his 1964 "Report" on the Tape Center, Sender laments the isolation of young composers and the need for them "to choose between writing within the accepted 'avant-garde' traditions for performances aimed at some sort of musical in-

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[10] The latter two quotations in this sentence are not from the interview but instead come from Ramon Sender, "The San Francisco Tape Music Center—A Report, 1964," in Bernstein et al., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 42.

[11] Glenn McKay, a light-show artist who later worked with the Jefferson Airplane, expressed the same appreciation for the lack of permanence of light shows. "It's ephemeral. You can't own it. You can't take it home. And I don't have to store it. I don't have to be responsible for it." Quoted in Jeff Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!: The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane* (New York: Atria Books, 2003), 147.

[12] Tony Martin, Ramon Sender, and Morton Subotnick interviewed by Myron Bennett, College Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, Ohio, for WGUC-FM, July 13, 1964. Mills College, Center for Contemporary Music Archives. Call no. 780.904 M65CD1.

group, or 'going commercial.'"[13] This was, for Sender, a false and pernicious dichotomy, but one that overwhelmingly characterized musical composition in the United States in the early 1960s. Instead, he proposed the Tape Center as a "community-sponsored composer's guild" that would give young composers "a place to work, to perform, to come into contact with others in his field, all away from the institutional environment."[14] There was for Sender, then, a connection between the desire for and realization of such a "community enterprise" (a phrase used by Pauline Oliveros in the title of her own later account of the Center), and a rejection of the institutional environments, primarily the university, in which musical composition existed at the time in the United States.[15] In a much later interview discussing the center, Oliveros explained that the direction of the Center, described in Sender's 1964 report, "came about pretty organically," partly because Sender "had a deep interest in community," but also through what those most involved with it "were actually doing."[16]

A virtuoso accordion player originally from Texas, Oliveros moved to San Francisco in the early 1950s to study composition and develop as a musician. Beginning in 1954, Oliveros attended a composer's workshop at San Francisco State University taught by Wendell Otey in which she was the only woman out of around 25 students. Otey's pedagogical method was to play through students' work on the piano followed by a discussion of the piece with the class. When it came time for Oliveros' music, however, in a troubling demonstration of the casual denigration of women artists so prevalent at the

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[13] Sender, "The San Francisco Tape Music Center—A Report, 1964," in Bernstein et al., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 42-43.
[14] Ibid, 43.
[15] Pauline Oliveros, "Memoir of a Community Enterprise," in David Bernstein et al., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 80-94.
[16] David Bernstein and Maggi Payne, "Pauline Oliveros," in David Bernstein et al., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 103-04.

time, most of the class would walk out. Those who did not included Terry Riley and Loren Rush with whom she became friends. All three also had, or were, studying composition with another Bay Area-based composer, Robert Erickson. Partly because of his encouragement, and partly because of Riley's need to produce a soundtrack for a film for which he lacked the time to compose a traditional score, in 1958 they began an improvisation ensemble. Stuart Dempster, Ramon Sender, and Morton Subotnick, who were also students of Erickson, later joined them.[17]

Oliveros explained that they quickly learned that attempts to guide or structure their improvisations ahead of time "would likely fall flat." Far more successful for them was to play first "without talking about it," after which they would listen to its recording; in this way, their "improvising would improve naturally." Their embracing of such practices was, she thought, a form of liberation "from unnecessary controls" in order to "develop … trust in process through spontaneity." And this process itself "was new: play and record, listen to the recording, enjoy, talk, judge, criticize, and play again." At the time, they were, as far as they knew, "the first in avant-garde art music to engage in 'free improvisation.'"[18]

Whether they were in fact the first to do so is a question I will not try to answer here. But their turn towards free improvisation was undoubtedly significant and influential. The discovery of the value of improvised music making had lasting effects on the Tape Center, and because of its links to many of the rock music groups from San Francisco who championed improvisation, it seems difficult to imagine that these were not in some way influenced by Oliveros and company's discovery. The Trips Festival,

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17 Author interview with Oliveros,

[18] All quotations in this paragraph from Oliveros, "Memoir of a Community Enterprise," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 81.

discussed later in this chapter, in which members of the Tape Center performed alongside a number of San Francisco-based rock groups, was not only a manifestation of such connections, but undoubtedly served to further propagate practices that had been developing in the Center.

Given the power and influence of pre-compositional procedures within avant-garde art music composition at the time, serialism most of all, one cannot help but think that these were, at least partly, the "unnecessary controls" from which Oliveros says they were trying to free themselves even though when asked about this link she demurred: "we were just enjoying playing with sound."[19] Still, it would be hard to imagine a more different form of musical making than the serial and post-serial practices of the leading avant-garde composers at the time such as Stockhausen and Boulez. For them, composition was a wholly individualistic affair, the worth of which was to a significant, perhaps even greater degree dependent not on how a piece *sounded* but on the *analysis* of the procedures that produced the score. With Oliveros and company, in contrast, there was no score. Or, perhaps rather, the recording *was* the score, and, in a way, the ideal kind because it captures every dimension of the music rather than merely its tones, rhythms, and dynamics. Instead of the *prescriptive* character of the traditional musical score, a recording is *descriptive*, creating a sonic duplicate of music in time.[20]

Oliveros and company's use of recordings as post-playing guides also points to their functioning as a score of sorts. Rather than doing their best to match their playing with the dictates of a written score, here it acts as a document of an event; not to be

[19] Author interview with Oliveros.
[20] Timbre, a musical dimension largely absent from traditional notation, is, in contrast, evocatively captured through recording. For a discussion of the importance of timbre to musical sound see Stephen McAdams, "Perspectives on the Contribution of Timbre to Musical Structure," *Computer Music Journal* 23, no. 3 (Fall 1999), 85-102.

repeated exactly but instead learned from in order to know later what to do or not do. The Grateful Dead would adopt this very practice, consciously or not, and it undoubtedly was one of the major reasons for the success of their improvised musical practice. When asked when it was that band members started listening to recordings of their live performance, their first sound man Owsley Stanley answered, "We listened from the beginning … We thought it might be good to hear what it really was like … [since] the only way you could find out what you had done was to listen to it later. In the heat of the show, no one can tell."[21] Kidd Candelario, a long time roadie for the Grateful Dead, explained that during the years in which he was in charge of taping their concerts, he would set up a tape deck in a hotel room after every performance as a post-performance listening room for the band.[22]

Returning to the Tape Center, such reliance on recording improvisations in order to allow their later listening is another manifestation of its eponymous "tape" centeredness. According to Oliveros, the Center's concerts "always included a live improvisation … Mort played clarinet, I played horn, Ramon played piano." At first such improvisations were separate from tape and electronic music performances. But they quickly began to incorporate tape and electronic music with their live improvisation to great effect, much to the amazement of *San Francisco Chronicle* music critic Alfred Frankenstein. The first such example, which took place as part of the Center's Sonics II concert on March 24, 1962—appropriately titled "Stimulating Sounds Too New to Be Named"—was, he thought, "remarkable."[23]

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[21] Light Into Ashes, "Bear at the Board," *Grateful Dead Guide: An ongoing series of articles on songs & performances of the early Grateful Dead* (http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2010/07/bear-at-board.html).
[22] Kidd Candelario talk, *So Many Roads: The World in the Grateful Dead* (November 10, 2014).
[23] Alfred Frankenstein, "Stimulating Sounds Too New to Be Named," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 26,

A later combination of live instruments and tape loops, Sender's *Desert Ambulance* (1964) features at times an almost rock-like beat over which orchestral string excerpts are layered, along with voices and a variety of electronic sounds. It was, in Sender's words, "a vehicle of mercy sent into the wasteland of (academic) modern music."[24] Frankenstein referred to it as "aural pop art"—drawing explicit comparisons with Andy Warhol's concurrent visual art work in which famous images, whether of people or things, are represented in comic book-like fashion on mass-produced silk screens.[25]."Aural pop art" is, in many ways, a good description of much of the later rock music from the Bay Area. Unlike earlier mainstream popular music (e.g. Tin Pan Alley and pre-bebop jazz), rhythm & blues, country & western, and rock & roll, rock musicians and their audiences considered it a serious art in spite of its obviously mass-marketed, popular character. Although distinct from "mere" popular music on account of its claimed artistic bona fides, partisans of rock music in the Bay Area also insisted on its difference from institutionalized high art music. Although influenced by it, and willing to sometimes engage with it as equals, Bay Area rock partisans simultaneously asserted its populist, folk authenticity in contrast to the intellectualism and elitism of art music. In early 1966, however, a merging of high and low art worlds happened in spectacular fashion in the Trips Festival that took place in San Francisco's Longshoreman's Hall, January 21-23, 1966.

1962), 40.

[24] David Bernstein, "The San Francisco Tape Music Center: Emerging Art Forms and the American Counterculture, 1961-1966," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 37.

[25] Frankenstein, "Electronic Music–Mysterious, Romantic," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 5, 1964), 43. Warhol's first series of Pop Art, "Marilyn Monroe," is from 1964 as well.

The Trips Festival as Rock Concert Paradigm

The Trips Festival was the template for much of what happened later in that city's rock music renaissance. It was, David Bernstein notes, "a crucial moment in the evolution of the American counterculture … [and] a watershed event in the history of the underground arts scene in San Francisco."[26] Bringing together art-music composers, rock bands, dancers, electronic music innovators, radical thespians, social theorists, and visual artists, the Festival was a showcase for the avant-garde artistic energies that had been brewing in the city over the previous few years. Originally conceived by Ken Kesey, author of the best-selling novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and leader of the LSD-proselytizing Merry Pranksters, Kesey invited Stewart Brand (later of *The Whole Earth Catalog* fame), who in turn asked Sender, to help organize it. Although Sender's plans to run the sound of the live bands through the Buchla Box (a modular synthesizer built by Don Buchla for the Tape Center) and slowly "turn up all the ring modulators until the whole thing would be way out in space" did not work out, he did perform on the Box along with the live bands.[27] Oliveros was another Tape Music Center composer involved in the Trips Festival, performing her *A Theater Piece* a final time as a "Side Trip" on January 23.[28]

But the Festival may not have happened if not for the involvement of a more prosaic figure: Bill Graham. Having already made a name for himself within the San Francisco underground for putting on two benefits for that city's Mime Troupe, for whom he had worked as a manager, Trips Festival organizers Ramon Sender and Stewart Brand

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[26] "The San Francisco Tape Music Center: Emerging Art Forms and the American Counterculture, 1961-66," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 5. See also Anthony Ashbolt, *A Cultural History of the Radical Sixties in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Brookfield, VT: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 95-96.
[27] "Ramon Sender and William Maginnis: Interviewed by David W. Bernstein and Maggi Payne," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, 76.
[28] Ibid.

asked him to manage the event.[29] Although Graham, "carrying a clipboard and wearing a cardigan sweater that would have been appropriate on a golf course," was clearly out of his element, annoying many of the participants with his attempts to enforce admission rules and keep the event on schedule, he clearly saw further potential for such a mixture of artistic creativity.[30]

Within weeks of the Trips Festival, Graham was promoting a concert at the Fillmore Auditorium, for which he had acquired a managing lease, as "Jefferson Airplane, with sights and sounds of the Trips Festival"—even though the Jefferson Airplane had not at all been involved in the festival. For Phil Lesh, bassist of the Grateful Dead who *had* performed at the Festival, this apparent co-opting was not at all welcome given its obvious commercial implications: "Now who's gonna reap the harvest of what the acid test has sown? The Jefferson Airplane and Bill Graham? Who's gonna clean up now?"[31]

Reflecting a few years later on the relations between the Acid Tests, the Trips Festival, and the many later rock concerts that were influenced by them, Grateful Dead guitarist and singer Jerry Garcia remarked that "The Acid Tests have come down to playing in a hall and having a light show … It's watching television, loud, large television." Although Garcia and Graham would later be good friends, with Graham as one of the Dead's most important concert promoters until his death in 1989, in 1969 Garcia blamed Graham for superficially copying the earlier events without understanding the reality of what they had been about. "That form, so rigid, started as a misapprehension anyway. Like Bill Graham, he was at the Trips Festival, and all he saw

[29] Ibid, 77.
[30] McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 126-27.
[31] Ibid, 128.

was a light show and a band. Take the two and you got a formula. It is stuck, man, hasn't blown a new mind in years." In comparison, Garcia pointed out that "what was happening at the Trips Festival was not a rock and roll show and lights, but that *other* thing, but if you were hustling tickets and trying to get a *production* on, to put some of the *old* order to the chaos, you couldn't feel it."[32]

At the time, Graham tried to dismiss such claims of misapprehension and exploitation. In an April 1966 newspaper article on a series of performances at the Fillmore Auditorium that featured the Jefferson Airplane, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and Muddy Waters, Graham insisted, "I'm trying to present the best sounds, the best lights, and the best groups available. If I was in it just for the money I'd never have presented the Airplane and Butterfield on the same bill." His stated goal was indeed in line with what the Trips Festival had been: "to turn the Fillmore Auditorium into a total theatre where I can present anyone with something valid to say." Though recognizing commercial imperatives—"it must be marketable"—he insisted that he had standards of quality that he would not compromise: "A promoter has to like what he puts on stage … I will never be connected with what is called a concert and should be a dance." What he meant, presumably, was that whereas at concerts audiences merely observe the performance, at a dance they are active participants in it. Furthermore, Graham argues, this distinction applies, *a fortiori*, to the passivity and one-dimensional experience of listening to recorded music: "It's a crime you can't look at and dance to the Beatles or the Stones anymore; your only connection is through a record." Finally, in a finishing

[32] Michael Lydon, "Good Old Grateful Dead, *Rolling Stone* (August 23, 1969), http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/good-old-grateful-dead-19690823.

rhetorical flourish, Graham insisted, "I'm proud of the Fillmore. I'm proud that we move, we swing, and that we wail."[33]

Such invocations of swinging and wailing may well have been spontaneous. But given how canny and far-sighted a business man Graham later proved himself to be one might well wonder if they were not premeditated to appeal to one person in particular for whom such connections to the swing era of jazz would have found particular resonance: Ralph Gleason.[34] As a music critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Gleason was the first such writer at a major American newspaper to treat classical, jazz, folk and popular music with an equal degree of critical respect. As someone just getting started promoting musical performances in San Francisco, Graham would have undoubtedly sought Gleason's endorsement.

Whether his approval was consciously desired or not, however, Gleason found much to like about what was happening at the Fillmore. A few months later in his regular "On the Town" article in the *Chronicle,* he celebrated its goings-on, reporting, "San Francisco has a new center for the Performing Arts without even being aware that it has happened. I'm speaking of the Fillmore Auditorium (or Ballroom if you prefer) where the most interested things in the performing arts in San Francisco are taking place these nights." Describing it first as "basically a ballroom where rock bands play for dancing on the weekends" he then calls it "the general headquarters for the artistic revolution that is taking place here [in San Francisco]." Discussing a performance by the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead, he notes "they loaded the place to capacity with a crowd

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[33] Mr. Jones, "Something's Happening: Rock 'n' Roll Paraphernalia," April 1966 (Grateful Dead Archive [hereafter GDA] MS 332, ser. 4, box 1).
[34] Graham could well have been paraphrasing the title of the 1956 Louis Prima swing jazz song, "Jump, Jive an' Wail."

whose diversification in dress was characterized only by a departure from Ivy League or Montgomery Street orthodox." Given the apparent necessity for the police to block off Fillmore Street at the corner of Geary because of crowds, one can only conclude that there were indeed hundreds of people inside for "a half hour long rendition of Wilson Pickett's 'Midnight Hour' performed by the massed band and sung by Marty Balin (from the Airplane), Pig Pen (from the Dead), Joan Baez and Mimi Farina. That's right, the Big Sur Go-Go Dancers. It was," he added, "quite a night."[35]

This event was apparently by no means unique. A "happening" the following Sunday at the Fillmore as a benefit for the Artists Liberation Front, a "group of SF artists and writers which was formed early this summer as a direct action 'art commission'," could seem to hardly better substantiate Gleason's claims as to the stylistic diversity of performances at the Fillmore.

> Allen Ginsberg will read his recently published "Wichita Vortex Sutra" … the Committee and the Mime Troupe will perform, Garry Goodrow will be master of ceremonies, members of the Dancers workshop will participate, the Musa Kaleem jazz group and the Bob Clarke Quartet will play. The Composers' Forum will provide avant guarde [sic] music of one kind and The Sopwith Camel and The Outfit will provide avant guarde [sic] music of another.[36]

As a demonstration of "artistic revolution" in 1966, it would be difficult to outdo this combination of Beat poetry, radical theatre, modern dancers, and various genres of

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[35] Ralph Gleason, "On the Town: An Old Joint That's Really Jumpin'," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 15, 1966 (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 1).
[36] Ralph Gleason, "On the Town: New Front Opened by the Artists," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 18, 1966 (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 1).

modern music: jazz, high art, *and* rock— "avant-guarde" rock since The Sopwith Camel and The Outfit were, as their names suggest, rock bands.

Such artistic combinations challenging barriers between different art forms and the genres they contained were not uncommon in San Francisco in 1966. A front-page article in the February 25, 1966 edition of the *Golden Gater*, the student newspaper of San Francisco State College, discussed a new "Talk Back" theater at the college, "in which the audience converses with the actors [that] will be used as a means of community organization and change." Furthermore, the theater's productions would result "from surveys of the college community to discern what people are thinking, doing, having fun with and crying about," and would be "presented so that the theater becomes a center of political awareness." But such explicit political motivations would avoid didacticism through the theater's productions refusal to explicitly say "this or that is wrong." According to one of the organizers, Bruce MacKey, "there is a great danger in pointing the finger all the time." Al Bauman, its other organizer, similarly insisted that "the radical theater is not necessarily a theater of issues," but instead one that gave "people an opportunity to change."[37]

One can see in MacKey and Bauman's responses wariness towards the promotion of any specific political agenda, and preference instead for a more personal and localized form of political transformation. Many within the San Francisco countercultural ethos would share such sentiments—often contrasted to the more traditional leftist activism of the "politicos" across the Bay in Berkeley.[38] Describing a party and performance by the

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[37] Kathy Ellery, "New theater lets audience 'talk back' to the actors," *Golden Gater* 92, no. 15 (February 25, 1966), 1.

[38] "[M]any student activists at Berkeley tended to feel bitter about the seekers in the Haight-Ashbury, seeing them as cop-outs who were escaping by drugs and abandoning political reform." Helen Perry, *The*

Grateful Dead at Olompali, just north of Novato, California, in the summer of 1966 where the Dead were then living, journalist John Morgan notes a similar rejection of traditional political activism. "Politics belong to a middle-aged, whiskey-drinking group. The new politics, which excludes civil rights marches and Viet Nam demonstrations, since these are with the framework, grows from a new psyche." The goal, instead, was to "Create a new people and inevitably the Johnsons, Nixons and Kennedys can be seen to belong to an age of unenlightenment. A new purity of insight as well as sensation is a consequence of a 'trip,' however mild, on LSD."[39]

As the Altamont concert debacle on December 6, 1969 outside of San Francisco would later so brutally show, such beliefs in the automatically enlightening power of LSD were, to say the least, naïve.[40] But they do point to the wariness, suspicion, and difference from even the *New* Left (who differentiated themselves from the Communist Party-associated Old Left) of many of those in the Bay Area. Despite such faith in LSD to change people's consciousness for the better, Morgan points out that the "Acid Rockers were careful to establish that their musical and imagic [sic] performances were not the product of LSD." Their goal at such venues as the Fillmore Auditorium and Avalon Ballroom were, rather, to merely simulate a "trip," i.e. LSD experience.[41]

Human Be-In (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 31. Also see discussion of the involvement of "students and ex-students, graduate students and young faculty" from Berkeley in the Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park and their dialogue with the hippies of Haight-Ashbury that subsequently led to the anti-war and pro-civil rights San Francisco Spring Mobilization at Kezar Stadium on April 15, 1967. Ibid, 58-60. Phil Lesh uses the term "politicos" in his discussion of the Human Be-In: "We even had some leftist politicos from Berkeley ranting, the only bring-down of the day." Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 97.

[39] John Morgan, "The Rock is Acid at Party given by the Grateful Dead," *Record Searchlight* (Redding, CA: October 19, 1966), (GDA MS 332, series: 4, Box: 1, GDR: Press clippings 7-10, 1966).

[40] For a detailed, recent history of Altamont, see Joel Selvin, *Altamont: The Rolling Stones, the Hells Angels, and the Inside Story of Rock's Darkest Day* (New York: Harpers-Collins, 2016).

[41] Morgan, "The Rock is Acid at Party given by the Grateful Dead."

Future New Journalism superstar Hunter S. Thompson provides further context for the disavowal of traditional politics in a 1967 feature article on the Haight-Ashbury community. He discusses Ed Denson, who at the age of 27 was the manager of Country Joe & the Fish, one of the major rock groups in the Bay Area, having already released an album on Vanguard Records, *Electric Music for the Mind and Body*. Although "deeply involved in the hippy music scene ... [he] insists he's not a hippy."[42] The reason for his disavowal of the label was his pessimism as to its future, likening it to various past youth movements that had come and gone with little effect on the direction of society.

> Right now it's good for a lot of people. It's still very open. But I have to look back at the Berkeley scene. There was a tremendous optimism there, too, but look where all that went. The Beat Generation? Where are they now? What about hula-hoops? Maybe this hippy thing is more than a fad; maybe the whole world is turning on but I'm not optimistic. Most of the hippies I know don't really understand what kind of a world they're living in. I get tired of hearing about what beautiful people we all are. If the hippies were more realistic they'd stand a better chance of surviving.[43]

Although those involved in the youth culture of the Haight-Ashbury in 1966-67 have often been criticized for their naiveté, Denson's responses reveal that at least some were well aware of the realities they faced, and were under no illusions as to its future potential.

Thompson also pointed to the political context of the time as having shaped the Haight-Ashbury community. Although the divide between the "politicos" of Berkeley

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[42] Hunter S. Thompson, "The 'Hashbury' is the Capital of the Hippies," *New York Times Magazine* (May 14, 1967).
[43] Ibid.

and the "hippies" of the Haight had existed prior to the 1966 election, its results, he thought, further solidified it. The election of Ronald Reagan as Republican governor of California, along with the Republicans gaining 50 seats in the House of Representatives, showed that "most of the electorate was a lot more hawkish, hard-nosed and conservative than the White House antennae had indicated." For the hippies in San Francisco these results served as confirmation of their existing wariness of traditional politics. Having "never really believed they were the wave of the future, [they] saw the election returns as brutal confirmation of the futility of fighting the establishment on its own terms." Although "the radical-hippy alliance had been counting on the voters to repudiate the 'right-wing, warmonger' elements in Congress … instead it was the 'liberal' Democrats who got stomped." It was, therefore "no coincidence that the Haight-Ashbury scene developed very suddenly in the winter of 1966-1967 from the quiet neo-Bohemian enclave that it had been for four or five years to the crowded, defiant dope fortress that it is today." The election showed that whatever leverage they thought they might have had was largely illusory.[44] The "Great Human Be-In" just over two months after the election on January 14, 1967 in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park was intended as a "gathering of the tribes," i.e. an attempt to bring the various counter-cultural groups in the Bay Area together in order to overcome these real or perceived divisions. But though it was, for many accounts of those who attended, a spectacularly successful event, it did not bridge the divide between the hippies of the Haight and Berkeley politicos even if it was a temporary respite from the conflicts that flowed from it.[45]

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[44] All quotations in this paragraph ibid.

[45] For a discussion of the Human Be-In, including that of the divide between various countercultural groups see Nicholas Meriwether, "1/14/67: The Great Human Be-In, Polo Fields, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California," in *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium, Vol. 1*, ed. Michael M. Getz and John R.

Because of his later association with *Rolling Stone* magazine, Gleason is undoubtedly the best-known San Francisco-based newspaper writer who championed the-then emerging rock music scene. But he was not the only one. R.B. Read, in an article about the Family Dog, an artistic cooperative that promoted rock music performances in San Francisco, had a similar estimation of its artistic value. "This metamorphic association of free spirits [The Family Dog] has, in one year of operation, added a new dimension to our societal fabric." Provocatively blending elements of the usually disparately associated high and popular arts, he continues, arguing the Family Dog "had evolved a mass art, enlisting its public as participants and fusing such diverse media as music, dance, film, song and speech into the hip generation's own totally-involving Thing – a true Cossa Fan Tutti."[46]

There is, here, on the one hand, an explicit articulation of the value of the mass public's participation; on the other, the "Total Art" dream of so many artistic avant-gardists since at least Richard Wagner now apparently realized as the "totally-involving Thing" of the up and coming "hip generation." Not only did this "Thing" involve the synthesis of pre-existing art forms, but also the creation of new forms of media as well: "the light-show, which projects fluorescence and flicker and rhythmically manipulates colored oils over mirrored spotlights … [and] a new graphic art – the bizarre yet beautiful posters which spread the word about these events."[47] But despite the obvious planning that such light-shows and posters would have required, Read claims that such events were "in the beginning … randomly scheduled." Although I have been unable to find any

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Dwork (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1998), 126-35. See also Ashbolt, *A Cultural History of the Radical Sixties*, 162-166.

[46] R.B. Read, "These Are the Boys…," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle* (November 20, 1966), 12.

[47] Ibid.

evidence to back up his claim as to the supposed randomness of earlier such happenings, that he writes as if it were the case at least points to the value of randomness and improvisation to those who made up the then emerging San Francisco artistic community.[48]

As Read goes on to make clear, such events were intended as "the expressive mechanism for a whole generation" for whom spontaneity and artistic expression were what stood them apart from the bureaucratically banal predictability that many young people felt characterized their parents' generation. In contrast, "the public dance as psychedelic experience [meant a] soul-freeing … amalgam of arts."[49] "To visit the Avalon Ballroom today," he writes, "is to inhabit an ambiance of strictly sensuous charisma, of extraordinary goodwill – that Everpresent Fullness which is the name of one of the bands."[50] And drawing parallels with an influential burst of artistic creativity earlier in the 20th century, Read concludes, "Not since Montparnasse has serious art – here, conveying in two-dimensional visual terms the multi-dimensional experience of an evening with the Family Dog – served commercialism with such coruscating originality."[51] Serious art and commercialism, then, are not necessarily opposed, as

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[48] The only random events that might plausibly fit Read's description are the free concerts that primarily the Grateful Dead, but sometimes other San Francisco-based rock bands, occasionally played, usually in Golden Gate Park, from the summer of 1966 through a final farewell to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, March 3, 1968 on a Haight Street closed to traffic. For a discussion of these free performances, and their motivations, see McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 163-64, 251-52. But there is no supporting evidence, that I am aware of, that the performances promoted by the Family Dog at the Avalon Auditorium, or those by Bill Graham at the Fillmore, which are the subject of Read's article, were ever "randomly scheduled." Certainly the Acid Tests and the Trips Festival, which were their clear progenitors, were planned in advance even if what happened at them, especially at the Acid Tests, was largely improvised.

[49] "It is the public dance as psychedelic experience – public dance meaning an amalgam of arts, a Happening, and psychedelic meaning simply 'soul-freeing,' without chemical reference." Read, "These Are the Boys…," 14.

[50] He also includes Graham's Fillmore Auditorium within the compass of what he describes but "to a lesser extent" than the Avalon because, according to him, it belongs to the "teeny-boppers."

[51] Ibid, 14.

partisans of musical modernism and the avant-garde have generally maintained; instead, at least for the "hip generation," they thoroughly compliment each other.[52]

Such complementarity is evident in the aforementioned Morgan's description of the Dead's performance at Olompali.

> The Dead assaulted the senses with noise. A film played on a wall behind them. On the film, green and scarlet shapes, bounding, exploding, were refracted from lights high in the hall, the shapes created by oil and ketchup. A strobe light flickered over all violently. Girls' breasts were painted in patterns like those on the wall by a man whose face was painted half-white, half-black. A girl with an iron cross painted on her forehead explained that it was a red indian symbol.[53]

Morgan here conveys the intersection of different forms media that was such a defining characteristic of artistic performance in the Bay Area in the 1960s. Although as the first media listed music is here arguably privileged, there is nothing else to note its pre-eminence. It is but one of a number of artistic expressions happening concurrently. And though there is no explicit connection between them, there certainly is the assumption that they are in fact connected and dependent on one another even if the exact manner is not clearly understood or made explicit.

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[52] On the opposition of serious art and commercialism in the postwar avant-garde, see, among others, Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961/1989), 3-6; Theodor Adorno, "Kitsch," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 501-05. The entirety of Adorno's writings on art depends upon, and reproduces, this aesthetic distinction.

[53] Morgan, "The rock is acid at party given by the Grateful Dead."

Jazz & Rock

A number of critics in 1966-67 noted the overcoming of divides between two musical genres in particular: jazz and rock. Although jazz was then not as distant from rock as the latter was from Western art music many yet remarked approvingly on the burgeoning connections between rock and jazz in the Bay Area at the time. Describing a shared billing at the Fillmore Auditorium, Gleason wrote, "The jazz world and the rock world got together Sunday night at the Fillmore Auditorium for a benefit for the jazz club, The Both/And, and proved they go together like bagels and lox." It was, he thought, "the most successful show since Bill Graham has been operating at the Fillmore Auditorium. A record crowd of 2,800 paid $2.50 each to attend the long show, which began at 6 p.m. with the Jim Young Trio and ended at 2 a.m. with the Grateful Dead." Although the influence of jazz on the Dead's music was at this time rudimentary, Gleason still found points of comparison. Describing the group's version of Wilson Pickett's "Midnight Hour," he recounts Ron "Pigpen" McKernan "sang for almost 20 minutes, stabbing the phrases out into the crowd like a preacher, using the words *to riff like a big band*, building to climax after climax, coming down in release and soaring up again."[54]

Discussing another benefit performance at the Fillmore, for which jazz singer and pianist Jon Hendricks was the master of ceremonies, featuring the James Cotton Blues Band, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Johnny Talbott and De Thangs, and the Grateful Dead, Gleason notes that Hendricks recorded "two songs with the Grateful Dead which are now at Colombia for consideration."[55] "Hendricks' efforts with the Grateful Dead,"

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[54] Ralph Gleason, "On The Town: All That Jazz and Rock Paid Off," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 11, 1966), (GDA MS 332, series: 4, Box: 1, Press clippings 10, 1966).
[55] The two songs are "Sons and Daughters" and "Fire in the City": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Knik7SFf1II; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16VLBmF8kXc.

he thought, "and his appearance at Monterey with the Jefferson Airplane are only two of the more visible aspects of the inter-action between jazz and rock bands that is now underway." Where there had been hostility between rock and jazz groups before, there was now collaboration and mutual respect: "[Cannonball] Adderley bought the Jefferson Airplane LP [*Takes Off*] in NY prior to his West Coast trip because of the way bassist Jack Cassidy sounded when Adderley heard one of the tracks on the radio."[56]

For some partisans of rock, however, such equality of respect between jazz and rock did not hinder trenchant criticism of jazz. For music critics Richard Goldstein, "jazz started out as dance music, and ended up dead as something to listen to … If you can't get your effects live, the music's not alive." In emphasizing the importance of physical engagement with music Goldstein here echoes Bill Graham's earlier mentioned contention that he would never be involved "with what is called a concert and should be a dance." These remarks point to an interesting historical reversal from the 1940s to the 1960s. In the 1940s bebop jazz musicians, influenced by the anti-functionalism of modernist aesthetics, struggled to assert the value of their music independently of its use as accompaniment for dancers, using breakneck tempos, angular rhythms, and increased harmonic dissonance to dissuade those who might try.[57]

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[56] "Lively Arts: The Inter-Action of Jazz and Rock," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 20, 1966), (GDA MS 332, series: 4, Box: 1, GDR: Press clippings 7-10, 1966).

[57] "There is no doubt that the differences between bebop and the jazz that preceded it were far from trivial. Radical changes in the rhythmic foundation, in particular the more aggressive and polyrhythmic role of the drummer, make bebop distinct, much as genres in traditional West African music are differentiated by characteristic rhythmic relationships. In many other essentials, both musical and extramusical (its relationship to dance and popular song, for example, and its claims to a kind of 'chamber music' autonomy), bebop was such a departure that to consider it a new type of music, deriving from jazz but separate from it, was not out of the question." Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no.3 (Literature of Jazz Issue, Autumn 1991), 538. For an account of the hostility of bebop musicians to their music's subservience to dancing, see Al Levitt's recollections of Charlie Parker around 1950 in Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop: An Oral History of the Transition in Jazz in the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 295-96. Steven B. Elworth offers another perspective on the changing role of the body in jazz from the 1930s to the 1950s. "If the dance music of the

In the mid-to-late 1960s, in contrast, rock musicians in the Bay Area emphasized the opposite: that their ideal performance situation was to play for dancers. In a 1967 feature article on the Grateful Dead marking the release of the group's first album Gleason notes,

> At dances at the Fillmore and the Avalon and the other, more occasional affairs, thousands upon thousands of people support several dozen rock 'n' roll bands that play all over the area for dancing each week. Nothing like it has occurred since they heyday of Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, and Tommy Dorsey. It is a new dancing age.[58]

He then goes on to recount Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia's observation, "that our function is as a dance band and that's what we like to do; we like to play for dancers."[59] Rather than defining rock music's newfound artistic seriousness in opposition to its functional accompaniment for dancing, as had occurred in the transition from swing to bebop jazz in the 1940s, in the Bay Area of the mid-to-late 1960s such an accompanying role was instead a defining component of its avant-garde character as a manifestation of the interaction between musicians and their audiences, and thus of bridging the divide between them. Although such an accompaniment role of rock bands in relation to dancers has an obvious lineage to earlier rock & roll dances, the difference here is the explicit

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white [swing] bands was a commodified trace of this [black] celebration of the body," he writes, "bop returned to the importance of the dance in only a symbolic sense by centering the bodies of the musicians." He points particularly to Thelonious Monk whose "stage antics … and the movements evoked by his music represented a negative image of the earlier social dancing [associated with white swing music]." No longer would "community [be] created by the dance"; instead, "Monk's music created a community of listeners and musicians who expressed themselves in their own restricted movements as they watched Monk's unique physical motions." This kind of community, he thinks, "is emblematic of bebop's earlier attempt to create a counterpublic sphere apart from the corrupted social sphere." See his "Jazz in Crisis, 1948-58: Ideology and Representation," in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 61.

[58] "Dead Like Live Thunder," *San Francisco Chronicle*, reprinted in *The Rock, Pop and Soul Reader*, ed. David Brackett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 233.

[59] Ibid, 243.

role that improvisation plays in the performance, both in terms of how what the bands perform is understood to be informed by their engagement with their audience, as well as the individualistic, free-form kind of dancing practiced by audience members.

Notably, such sentiments differed substantially from those of other contemporaneous progressive-minded rock musicians. In a May 1967 interview on the BBC2 program *The Look of the Week*, Syd Barrett and Roger Waters of the English rock band Pink Floyd notably downplay the function of their music as accompaniment for dancers. When the interviewer, Austrian musician and critic Hans Keller, asks them whether they were "a group accompanying dancers," Waters responds with a less than enthusiastic, "you could say that." Then, discussing the two concerts the group had by that time played, Waters insists on the band's preference for such performances in which "people came and sat and actually listened to what we do because dance halls generally speaking are not very good places to actually listen to the music." Instead, in the ballrooms that had been their primary type of performance venue, "the music for most of them [the audience] has been … a background noise that they can jig about to." Barrett then adds, "The music we play isn't directed at dancing necessarily like normal pop groups have been in the past."[60] The difference from Garcia's aforementioned remarks, typical of rock music in the Bay Area, is obvious. For Pink Floyd, and more generally the primarily English progressive rock genre with which they would come to be widely identified, rejecting relations between their music and dancing in favor of its presentation

[60] All quotations in this paragraph are from "Pink Floyd 1967 full interview (Syd Barrett & Roger Waters)," *The Look of the Week*, BBC2 (May 1967), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otyfo2KuaNQ.

as concert music to be listened to while sitting, was key to its serious artistry.[61] What, then, explains this divide within Anglo-American progressive-minded rock music about the relationship between musicians and their audiences? Why did artistic seriousness and progress mean for some late-1960s' rock musicians the rejection of audience dancing, while for others they were highly compatible?

As discussed previously in this dissertation's introduction, the relationship between modernist aesthetics and the avant-garde is hardly as self-evidently one of agreement as is widely believed. While modernist art is defined by ever increasing formalization and autonomy of art from life, and the concomitant rejection of art's functionality, the primary goal of some important strands of the historical avant-garde (e.g. Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism) was precisely the opposite: the *overcoming* of such autonomy in favor of a reintegration of art and life. Literary scholar Jochen Schulte-Sasse notes, "the autonomous status and the concept of the work of art operative in the bourgeois institution of art imply separation from social life … For such an aesthetic project, a concept of the work of art as being a closed, albeit 'complex' unity is appropriate."[62] Given that much of the historical (i.e. pre-World War II) avant-garde, in

[61] According to scholar of progressive rock Bill Martin, the genre is "a form of rock music … that is no longer dance music" and is instead "music for listening." *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock, 1968-1978* (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), 84. On the English character of the progressive rock genre, see Ibid, 104-12.

[62] Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "Forward," in Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxxix. In a treatise on the ontology of music, philosopher Bruce Ellis Benson argues that given the various levels of incompletion of musical creations prior to their performance, "piece"—as in a part of a whole—is a preferable, more accurate term than "work." See his *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 132. The same argument applies *mutatis mutandis* to the fragmentary creations of the historical avant-garde, and its later manifestations.

contrast, "aimed to intervene in social reality," such separation of art from life was, to say the least, problematic.[63]

For the historical avant-garde, the primary solution to the increasing modernist separation of art from life was to reject the concept of the work of art as a closed, finished unity. Instead, art works—or perhaps more accurately art *pieces*—were intentionally conceived and realized as fragmentary in order to "open themselves to supplementary responses."[64] Their intended purpose was to challenge their "recipient[s] to make it an integrated part of his or her reality and to relate it to sensuous-material experience."[65] And there could be few better realizations of such aesthetic fragmentation and relation to such experience than physically engaging, i.e. dancing, with music that calls for such responses. Foregrounding the importance of dancing thus serves as a marker of such an anti-formalist, more communitarian variety of avant-garde sensibility.

Despite the European pedigree of the historical avant-garde, it is not surprising that its various early 20th-century attempts to reconnect art and life would have found a welcome reception in the Bay Area in the 1960s. Given the dominance within the United States at the time of cultural institutions committed to a formalist High modernism, centered overwhelmingly on the East Coast, anti-formalism in the Bay Area served to differentiate and justify a parallel rejection of its authority. In addition, surrealism, one of the major movements of the historical avant-garde, undoubtedly had the greatest resonance in the Bay Area of any of the early twentieth-century avant-garde movements on account of the relations between its evocatively distorted visions and the psychedelic experience that had such a profound influence on nearly all of those involved in the

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

various Bay Area countercultures. Furthermore, although those who made up the rock music scene in the Bay Area were overwhelmingly white, Euro-Americans, they had a closer, more appreciative understanding of the influence of African-American music styles such as the Blues and R&B, as well as of the kind of overt physical engagement so commonly associated with them, than their English counterparts.

For the largely English musicians who made up the genre of progressive rock in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in contrast, their connection to popular African-American musical genres was considerably more limited. Their pursuit of a synthesis of rock music with the Western art music tradition was, for some, an explicit attempt to reject the influence of African-American music, along with its dance-based rhythms, in favor of that of a musical tradition closer to home.[66] And as a number of scholars have noted, they largely came from a relatively privileged middle- and upper-class English background in which exposure to the Western art music tradition in their upbringing was, for the most part, more substantial than what those who made up the Bay Area rock music scene experienced.[67] Furthermore, the large-scale, fixed formal structures that so define English progressive rock presume the distinction between musicians and their audiences in a way that the more flexible, improvisational musical forms championed by bands in the Bay Area challenge.

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[66] "We improvise like a blues group, not blues you know … the basic policy of the group is that we're a European group, so we're improvising on European structures. Improvising can be around any form of music, so we're taking European work. We're not American negros, so we can't really improvise and feel the way they can." Keith Emerson quoted in Barry Miles, "Two Thirds Nice," *International Times*, no. 55(April 25, 1969), 9.

[67] Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 147; Martin, *Listening to the Future*, 111-12.

The Jefferson Airplane

The Jefferson Airplane was the first rock band from San Francisco to be signed by a major label and to release a full-length album: *Takes Off* in August of 1966 on RCA Records. Only a few weeks after the Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park, on February 1, 1967, RCA released the band's second album *Surrealistic Pillow*, which would become the most successful album of 1967 (indeed of the 1960s) from any San Francisco-based rock group. Although its first single, "My Best Friend/How Do You Feel," only managed to make it to #103 on *Billboard*'s singles chart, the second one, "Somebody to Love/She Has Funny Cars" peaked at #5, and the third, "White Rabbit/Plastic Fantastic Lover" made it to #8. Such success in the singles market drove sales of *Surrealistic Pillow* all the way to #3 on *Billboard*'s album charts setting Jefferson Airplane on course to become the most commercially successful rock band from San Francisco in the 1960s.[68] Although the album had many characteristics plausibly interpreted as psychedelic—the Phrygian-mode inflected, and *Alice in Wonderland*-influenced "White Rabbit" perhaps most of all—its songs avoided any explicit invocation of 20th century musical modernism.

But despite—or perhaps because—of its success, *Surrealistic Pillow* was not immune to criticism from the then emerging rock press. In his "A Report on San Francisco," published in the July-August 1967 issue of *Crawdaddy*, perhaps the first publication dedicated to taking seriously the legitimacy of rock music as art, Paul Williams heralds the Jefferson Airplane's first album *Takes Off* as "glow[ing] with the beauty of the first trip, the birth cry of a new era in music." *Pillow*, in comparison, he thinks "is a definite bringdown; certainly the worst lp to come out of the current Bay

[68] Jeff Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!: The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane* (New York: Atria Books, 2003), 127.

Area scene." What he disliked was its lack of unity: "it's not an album; it's a collection of tracks that neither feel good nor sound comfortable together." Despite its lack of cohesion, however, he felt that many of its individual songs were quite good: it "has half a dozen fine tracks which prove that the group is better, even if their lp is worse."[69]

In comparison, the next Airplane album, *After Bathing at Baxter's*, released in December of 1967, fared much better under Williams' critical eyes.[70] It was, he thought, "the best Jefferson Airplane album, in terms of both overall quality and the extent to which it reflects the life style of the group." Two words, in his estimation, conveyed the extant of the band's accomplishment: "complexity and kinetics." The first, because "there's a lot going on, all the time"; the second, because "the listener is caught up in the motion of the songs." Literary scholar Lawrence Chenoweth similarly notes the "jumbled, frantic tempos and dissonant chord progressions … in contrast to the generally soft melodies" on *Pillow*. And the more "graceful meter of the group's lyrics" on *Pillow* were "abandoned for a rapid, free verse style" on *Baxter's*.[71]

The beginnings of the two albums signal their differences. Whereas *Pillow* starts with an eminently danceable beat from drummer Spencer Dryden for the song "She Has Funny Cars," *Baxter* begins with piercing guitar feedback. And though joined 14 seconds in by what Williams calls "Memphis bass & drums" the song, "The Ballad of You and Me and Pooneil," composed by rhythm guitarist Paul Kantner, is much more complicated than any song on *Pillow.* Though made up of three similarly repeated sections, it also

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[69] Despite his criticisms, Williams later defends Jefferson Airplane by writing that "sometimes progress is not reflected in quality" and that "this is often the fault of the a&r man more than the group." Paul Williams, "The Golden Road: A Report on San Francisco," *Crawdaddy*, no. 10 (July-August 1967), 7.
[70] "The word 'Baxter,' [guitarist Paul] Kantner has explained, was Airplane code for acid [LSD], and rather than titling the album something as obvious as *After Taking LSD*, they named it *After Bathing at Baxter's*. Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!*, 155.
[71] Lawrence Chenoweth, "The Rhetoric of Hope and Despair: A Study of the Jimi Hendrix Experience and the Jefferson Airplane," *American Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1971), 37.

hints at a sense of through-composition in the continual variation and development in each repetition. At its end, the ending of the final A section fades into electronic feedback, which then segues into the beginning of the *musique concrète* sound collage, "A Small Package of Value Will Come to You, Shortly."

Created by drummer Spencer Dryden, the title taken from a fortune cookie's "fortune," with help from band associates Bill Thompson and Gary Blackman, "A Small Package…" was influenced by Frank Zappa's similar sound collage "The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet" on the Mothers of Invention's 1966 album *Freak Out!*[72] Only 1:40 in length it is, fitting Dryden's role as drummer in the band, made up largely of percussion instruments (drum kit and xylophone perhaps most of all) over which assorted vocals, run through varying levels of tape delay, speak, shout and scream a variety of words with varying degrees of intelligibility.[73] From 0:56-59 tubular bells play the first two bars of the Christmas carol "Joy to the World." And between 1:04-06 a piano part suggests the third and fourth bars of Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk." Near the piece's end, Blackman twice yells "No man is an island!," referencing John Donne's poem of that name, before Thompson responds, "He's a peninsula," ending the track with laughter, forming a segue into the following song, a Marty Balin ballad-of-sorts entitled "Young Girl Sunday Blues."[74]

"Spare Chaynge" [sic] is both the longest song on *Baxter's* and its one instrumental featuring only guitarist Jorma Kaukonen, bassist Jack Cassady, and Dryden. Apparently recorded on Halloween of 1967 when none of the band's vocalists had shown

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[72] Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!*, 154.
[73] For a partial transcription of the lyrics see Chenoweth, "The Rhetoric of Hope and Despair," 37.
[74] For recording details see Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!*, 154. Donne's "No Man is an Island" is available here https://web.cs.dal.ca/~johnston/poetry/island.html.

up at the recording studio, it is a free-form improvisation, although the A Phrygian mode the bass and guitar largely make use of gives it a quasi-exotic, Eastern sound.[75] Its genesis was, as Kaukonen has made clear, a product of his having recently witnessed a performance in San Francisco by the English rock super-group Cream that influenced him immensely.[76] Cream is notable as perhaps the first commercially successful rock group to foreground lengthy improvisations in their music. Bassist Jack Bruce and drummer Ginger Baker had extensive jazz training, and guitarist Eric Clapton had become legendary in London as an electric blues guitar player. Cream greatly influenced the Bay Area music community, but the members of Cream were also strongly influenced by their experience in the Bay Area as biographers of the group attest.[77]

Country Joe and the Fish

Although not nearly as commercially successful as *Surrealistic Pillow*, the debut album of Country Joe and the Fish, *Electric Music for the Mind and Body*, released by Vanguard Records in May of 1967, was widely influential on the then-emerging genre of psychedelic rock music even if it did not achieve great commercial success.[78] In comparison to his criticisms of *Surrealistic Pillow* Paul Williams praised it as "a sacred work" and that it "seem[s] distantly removed from anything that has been previously

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[75] Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!*, 154.

[76] "When I saw Cream, I thought they were the most incredible performing band I had ever seen in my life. That might still be true. And, of course, as a guitar player I wanted to be able to do stuff like that." Ibid, 151.

[77] Dave Thompson, *Cream: How Eric Clapton Took the World by Storm* (London: Virgin Books, 2012), chpt. 15.

[78] "In spring 1967, *Electric Music* ... was still way ahead of the competition." *The Mojo Collection: The Ultimate Music Collection*, 4th ed., ed. Jim Irwin and Colin McLear (Edinburgh, UK: Canongate Books, 2007), 98.

associated with rock and roll."[79] In particular, the instrumentals "Section 43" and "The Masked Marauder," as well as the song "Grace," foreground sonic and compositional experimentation to a significant degree. And in contrast to some of the other notable Bay Area rock groups of the time who largely eschewed explicit political commentary in their music in favour of a more abstract "politics of the mind" based on the potentially life-altering experience of psychedelic drugs, Country Joe and the Fish wrote songs directly attacking the politics and politicians of the time along with more abstract, psychedelic ones.[80] The opening lines of the song "Super Bird," for example, make it clear that it is explicitly a criticism of President Lyndon Johnson and his role in involving the United States in the Vietnam War: "Look up yonder in the sky, now, what is that I pray? It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a man insane, it's my President LBJ." Country Joe and the Fish therefore makes for an interesting comparison to other groups from the Bay Area in the late 1960s in exploring how these different understandings of politics were reflected in their music.

The track on *Electric Music* that certainly most differs from popular music conventions of the time is "Section 43." At 7:26 long, it is over twice the length of a single side of a 45-rpm single. It is also entirely instrumental, shifting between sections of a medium-tempo 4/4 groove, overtop of which the lead guitar and electric organ, and a drum- and percussion-less section in a slow 8/8 time (divided 3+3+2) with a descending arpeggiated pattern on electric guitar backed by electric organ. Williams called it

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[79] "When the Country Joe album arrived at the Crawdaddy! Office, it was immediately inscribed 'This record is to be played on special occasions only,' and certain suggested that it would be in poor taste to even review such a sacred work." *Crawdaddy*, no. 10 (July-August 1967), 8, 11.

[80] On the "politics of the mind" see "Changes," a discussion between Gary Snyder, Timothy Leary, Allan Watts, and Allan Ginsberg, *The San Francisco Oracle* 1, no. 7. Reprinted in Allen Cohen, ed., *The San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition* (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 1991), 152-79.

"without question a midsummer thundershower" and "simply the most satisfying, evocative piece of music I know; I could wander its paths forever."[81] Rather than emphasizing a sense of dynamic progression or continuous narrative, the concatenation of its dissimilar sections suggests an LSD-inspired circular temporal flow in which the past, present, and future blend into a single synergistic moment.[82]

The Grateful Dead: 1967-69

Though not so laudatory as his review of *Electric Music for the Mind and Body*, Williams thought more highly of the Grateful Dead's eponymous first album, also released in the spring of 1967, than he did of *Surrealistic Pillow.* He also discusses it in greater detail. It is, he thought, "pure energy flow"; its first side "rolls with a motion so natural that one suspects the musicians have never listened to the Who or the Kinks or even the Four Tops." It has "so much in common with The Rolling Stones Now! [released in February of 1965] as to be almost a sequel."[83] In fact, the producer of *The Grateful Dead* had been one of the engineers on *The Rolling Stones Now!* —one of the primary reasons that the Dead chose him as producer.[84] Although Williams liked all of its songs he thought, "only 'Viola Lee Blues' has any of the fantastic 'this is happening now! quality of a good Dead performance" as the only song on the album that "takes you away as far as the long time

[81] *Crawdaddy*, no. 10 (July-August 1967), 11. For another discussion of "Section 43" see Hill, *San Francisco and the Long 60s*, 83-85.
[82] See appendix A for a partial transcription of and further analytical details about "Section 43."
[83] Williams, *Report on San Francisco*, 7.
[84] Given the release date of *Rolling Stones Now!* and its American chart success, reaching #5 on the *Billboard* charts, it seems likely that this album was an important motivation for Ron "Pigpen" McKernan's urging of Jerry Garcia to form an electric blues and R&B band, "on the model of his favorite new rock band, the Rolling Stones," which turned into the Grateful Dead. See McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 76. Williams goes on "to point out the fascinating similarities in the impact of their music and in the music itself—play '[Good Morning, Little] Schoolgirl' after listening to [the Rolling Stones'] 'You Can't Catch Me' to appreciate the extent to which the Dead resemble the Stones in their concept of what music is and how a rock band should perform." Williams, *Report on San Francisco*, 8.

Dead fan has grown accustomed to being taken."[85] It is also, not surprisingly, by far the longest song on the album (at 10:01 it is almost twice the length of the next longest, "Good Morning, Little School Girl"), featuring two verses followed by a dramatic build in musical energy—dynamics, tempo and texture—from 2:56 to 8:48 before a final verse.

The Grateful Dead's Anthem of the Sun

Although "Viola Lee Blues" hints at the Grateful Dead's penchant for musical experimentalism second album, it is on the band's second album, *Anthem of the Sun*, released in April of 1968, where it was for the first time fully on display in recorded form. In contrast to the discrete, individual songs of their first album, *Anthem* features continuous music throughout each of its sides. Although different tracks are listed and formal divisions are fairly obvious, the two sides are clearly conceived and realized as musical wholes. Even in the one case where there is a brief pause rather than a segue, between "New Potato Caboose" and "Born Cross-Eyed" on side one, the pause is clearly composed rather than a mere break between unrelated music: the D major chord at the beginning of "Born Cross-Eyed" functioning as the tonic resolution of the A major chord with which the instrumental coda of "New Potato Caboose" ends.

In discussions of *Anthem* upon its release, many critics pointed to the presence of such practices of through-composition as one of its most notable qualities. Ben Blumenberg, for example, argued that it was "an important album in the history of jazz, rock, and modern music in general," precisely because of the use of its between-songs transitions. "Jazz musicians and critics have long believed," he wrote, "that to survive

[85] Williams, *Report on San Francisco*, 8. Given that the group played its first performance in the spring of 1965, and did not adopt the Grateful Dead as a name until November of that year, it is curious that Williams, less than two years later, refers to "long time Dead fan[s]."

and endure rock music must acquire two characteristics. First, it must develop a great freedom in the use of time and beat, enabling it to grow beyond a strict blues or rhythm-and-blues framework."[86] This condition had "been accomplished for some time"—presumably by the Beatles on *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper* and the Beach Boys on *Pet Sounds.* The second development that "the jazz people" apparently believed rock musicians needed to realize was "the ability to bridge and make transitions." What this would mean is that "the time and travel between chords or melodic passages will be as important and interesting as the skeleton elements themselves." Although "this ability to make transitions has rarely been heard in rock … it arrives full-blown with this album by the Grateful Dead."[87] He notes, "the cover lists three songs for Side 1, and two songs for Side 2." Despite these apparent divisions, however, "the transitions are so subtle and well-integrated with the major themes that it is impossible to consider each side anything but one continuous piece." Furthermore, the music's continuous quality means that usual "time patterns are all but gone. The familiar shifting of gears from verse to chorus, and melody line to expanded break, has virtually disappeared." Although "this lack of familiar references points makes *Anthem* … challenging" it also makes for a "well-rewarded listening experience."[88]

Blumenberg also noted the Dead's "tasteful use of a 'classical' electronic instrument as an additional instrument with those usually found in a rock band," which "makes this album doubly significant and rewarding." And though "the Dead's use of understatement, the soft, and the subtle, gracefully form every moment. Their free use of

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[86] Ben Blumenberg, ""Records: Grateful Dead: smooth and manifold," *Boston After Dark* (Sept. 18, 1968), p. 27.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

time, complex, intelligent bridging, and their use of straight electronic music, make the GD virtually unique in the world of rock."[89]

Indeed, some thought to divorce the Grateful Dead from popular music all together. "The Dead are not a rock and roll band trying to make it in the world of popular music," one critic wrote. "On the contrary, they are an important force in the SF underground and play a comparable role in the national hip scene."[90] Key to distinguishing them from popular music, for this reviewer, was a characterization of them in highly romanticized, organic ways "They live together in a Victorian mansion on Ashbury St., where their music *plays a part in their everyday lives*."[91] There is in this description both the celebration of a break from the nuclear family for voluntary forms of collective habitation, as well as the drawing of an intimate connection between music and the musicians' day-to-day existence.

Other reviewers remarked on what would be a consistent theme of discussions of the Dead and their music throughout the band's existence: the thoroughly collective nature of the group and its attendant musical practice. Although by the time of the album's release the band was no longer living together, as they did from early 1966 to late 1967, their domestic and musical closeness was for many very much related. Such relations are amply demonstrated on *Anthem of the Sun*. Rather than a collection of individual songs, the album was clearly conceived and realized as a continuous whole, a musical homology of the group's collective identity, for which the album's cover art is a

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[89] Ibid.
[90] "Recordings by Trescott: *Anthem of the Sun*," (September 27, 1968), (GDA MS 332, series: 4, Box: 1, GDR: Press clippings, 1968). "Hip scene" here refers to the widely defined youth-oriented, counterculture of the 1960s.
[91] Ibid. Author's italics.

visual depiction: a quasi-mandala in which each band member is represented as an extension of a six-armed central bodhisattva-like figure (see figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

The first side of *Anthem of the Sun* is made up of a suite of three connected pieces: "That's It For The Other One," "New Potato Caboose," and "Born Cross-Eyed." The first, "The Other One" itself has four sections—1) "Cryptical Envelopment"; 2) "Quodlibet for Tenderfeet"; 3) "The Faster We Go, the Rounder We Get"; 4) "We Leave the Castle."[92] Although naming these sections was done for the sake of publication and royalty purposes they reflect fairly obvious formal divisions even if the precise ending of one section and the beginning of another is not always clear.[93] Such blurring of boundaries characterizes the album in various ways. Not only are its formal boundaries often unclear, but as a hybrid of studio and live recordings it is also neither wholly a studio album nor wholly a live one. And its specific musical characteristics feature an

[92] The various track listings on the original LP disagree as to the number of sections for "That's It For The Other One." On the record itself only the first three are mentioned. It is only on the record sleeve's track listing that the fourth, "We Leave The Castle," is listed.
[93] "The named parts of 'That's It For The Other One' were made up mainly by Tom Constanten for publishing purposes," http://jerrygarcia.com/album/anthem-of-the-sun/.

unusual array of diverse elements that further suggest a continuous blurring of stylistic boundaries.

"Cryptical Envelopment" begins with what Jim Miller, the album's reviewer in *Rolling Stone*, refers to as "an eminently memorable quasi-country melody" played on electric guitar and sung by Jerry Garcia, backed by B-3 organ, bass and drums (see example 1.1).[94] Rather than the verse-chorus form that has most typified rock music since the 1960s, its AABA form evokes the older popular song tradition emanating from New York City's Tin Pan Alley, in which this song form was standard.[95] But in this case each A section is ten bars long rather than the more usual eight, giving a total length of 38 instead of 32. Also unlike Tin Pan Alley conventions is the highly modal character of the A section. Structured by a melody that begins in an E Mixolydian mode over a I-IV-I progression, it then shifts to A Mixolydian through the introduction of a G major chord, followed by its alternation with A major. Following a repetition of the A section, a descending chromatic line from G down to E realizes a modulation to the key of E minor, a distinction in form supported by a *rallentando* in the song's tempo.

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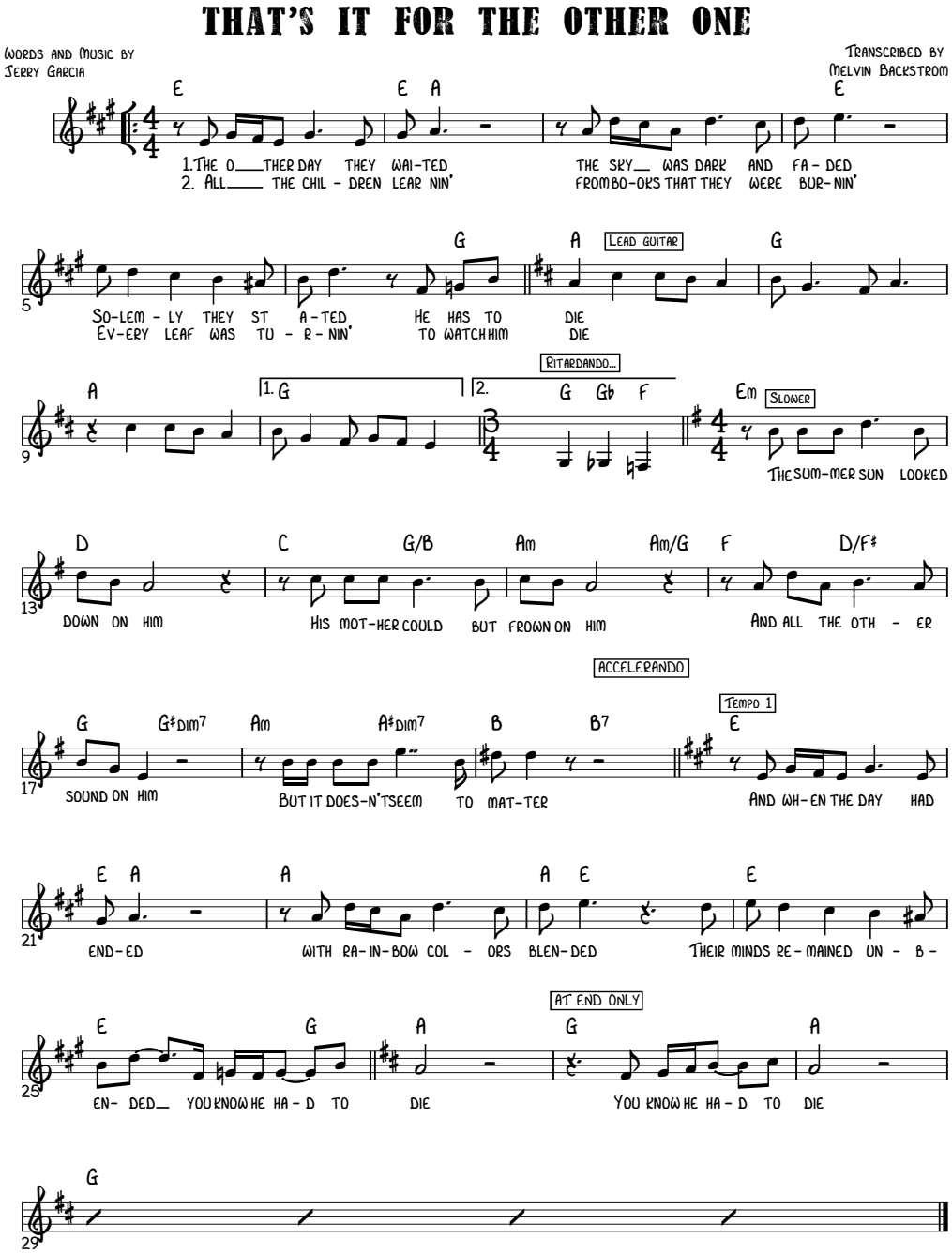
[94] Jim Miller, "The Grateful Dead: Anthem of the Sun," *Rolling Stone* (September 28, 1968), http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/anthem-of-the-sun-19680928.

[95] "Almost every song from the golden age [of Tin Pan Alley] is built upon the same musical pattern of a thirty-two-bar chorus structured in four eight-bar units, usually in an AABA sequence." Philip Furia, *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley: A History of America's Great Lyricists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13.

Example 1.1



The A section's movement from E Mixolydian to A Mixolydian parallels the B section's shaping by a similar modulatory sequence. Beginning with a i-VII-VI-III_6-iv movement in E minor in its first four bars, the iv chord, A minor, is then used as a pivot

chord to shift to the key of A minor for a VI-V/VII-VII-#vii^{o}-i progression. A minor is then used to pivot back to the piece's home key by being re-interpreted as iv followed by a vii^{o}7/V to V7 progression—a dominant chord at last!—which then resolves to I, E major, for the third A section.

After Garcia's final "you know he had to die" line, a brief double drum solo changes the rhythm to a quick 12/8 time, which crescendos to the beginning of the next section of the suite: "Quodlibet for Tenderfeet," more commonly known as "The Other One" (hereafter TOO). Lesh describes the group's goal of the overlaying multiple performances (four to be exact) for the beginning of TOO as being able to "suddenly … see all the possibilities at once, and hear time from the standpoint of eternity, as if the music had broken through into a higher dimension of awareness." But this feeling of transcendence is only temporary, lasting "just long enough to engender a feeling of disorientation."[96] Three of the performances then fade out, "allowing the core performance [from February 14, 1968, at the Carousel Ballroom in San Francisco] to emerge, as if this one, this particular musical universe, had evolved inevitably out of the probabilities generated by the many" heard previously.[97] Here again is another example of music suggesting the blending and overcoming of differences between a diversity of elements.

TOO is perhaps the song that lasted longest in the Dead's performance repertoire from 1967 to 1995.[98] Its distinctive triple rhythms, in 12/8 time, were obviously enjoyed

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[96] Phil Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 128. The February 14, 1968 performance can be listened to here https://archive.org/details/gd68-02-14.sbd.kaplan.15640.sbeok.shnf/gd1968-02-14new-d2t02.shn.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Although its earliest versions have alternate lyrics than those codified on *Anthem*. See "The Annotated 'That's It For the Other One," *The Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*, http://artsites.ucsc.edu/GDead/agdl/other1.html.

by band members. For the most part in an E Dorian mode, it features two verses over a i-bVII vamp, which are followed by a repeated descending i-bVII-bVI-IV-V-III pattern for its chorus. After its second time the group segues back into "Cryptical Envelopment" for a repeat of its final verse. After a pronounced repetition of its final line, "And you know he had to die!" the song's coda begins with a dramatic build in intensity as multiple recordings of the same piece of music are woven together to create a sonic amalgam of fade ins and outs. Building in intensity and dynamics it is eventually taken over by less traditionally musical sounds associated with the avant-garde. "Prepared piano and a wide variety of electronically manipulated sounds coalesce and finally explode and decay, clearing the way for the opening figure of [the next song] 'New Potato Caboose.'"[99]

As Brent Wood goes on to point out about this section, it shows the influence of then Grateful Dead keyboardist Tom Constanten, whose experience with avant-garde art music of the time is clearly evident in its creation.[100] In his autobiography Lesh describes its creation as a combination of part of an electronic tape piece Constanten had created while studying in Europe, and Constanten's prepared piano, à la John Cage. He "had set this one [piano] up so that it sounded as if three gamelan orchestras were playing at once, each about a quarter-tone out of tune with the others."[101]

Prepared piano can perhaps first be heard from 5:26-33 when some out-of-place tinkling sounds move through the stereo field from right to left. Then, beginning around

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[99] Wood, "The Musical Imagination of Phil Lesh," no page numbers (http://www.popular-musicology online.com/issues/04/wood-01.html).

[100] "The prepared piano and electronics work that I did on that album [*Anthem*] was my first real musical collaboration with the band. It seemed to me to come naturally out of what I'd been doing before, and their musical explorations were challenging, to say the least. So I didn't feel any decompression, polarization, or *anything* unusual in the transition from 'serious' to 'pop.' Aside from the inherent absurdity of such categories, it seemed simply a case of musicians of like mind pursuing paths of interest to them." Constanten, *Between Rock & Hard Places*, 71.

[101] Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 126.

6:36, lower pitch gamelan-like sounds fade-in to the musical field as the live band recordings slowly fade out. A clearly electronic sound begins at 5:51 and grows louder overtop the gamelan-like ones as brief glimmers of the band occasionally poke through. The gamelan sounds slowly fade out in favor of more electronic ones leading up to perhaps the most dramatic event of all so far: what sounds, "like an axe and a chainsaw combined … [or] a portcullis being lowered at a medieval castle" from 6:35 to around 7:00.[102] Much to the shock of the band's then recording producer—who thought something, likely the piano, had been destroyed—Constanten created it by forcefully applying a spinning toy gyroscope to the soundboard of the prepared piano.[103] Perhaps, following Lesh's above quoted description, the fourth section of "That's It For The Other One," "We Leave The Castle," comes from this event: a sonic evocation of a gate being closed, a sign that the music cannot go back but must instead continue forward.

This soundscape that forms the segue between "That's It For the Other One" and "New Potato Caboose" makes for an interesting contrast with, in Wood's words, the "wildly goofy psychedelic collage" 'A Small Package of Value Will Come to You Shortly,' the second track on the Jefferson Airplane's *After Bathing at Baxter's* album, recorded only a few months before *Anthem.* Although there is an obvious self-conscious wit involved in the realization of this unusual transitory soundscape on *Anthem*, it lacks the comedic element that is so obvious in the Airplane piece. "Here," Wood notes, "the modernist high-art musique concrète of Edgar Varèse has been put into a pop-art context which, unlike the analogous work of Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention on

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid, 126-27.

Absolutely Free (1967), also of the same vintage, is neither ironic nor comic."[104] For Zappa, despite his identity as a popular musician, manifestations of popular culture were almost always ironic and comic; those of high art, in contrast, only sometimes found themselves presented in these ways. He repeatedly stated that the more popular parts of his repertoire were simply the necessary commercial vehicles by which he could produce the serious high art that he was genuinely interested in creating.[105]

For the Dead, in contrast, intellectual and physical enjoyment were not opposed but instead thoroughly complimented each other. Even their most abstract, sonically challenging moments—such as the soundscape that forms the transition between "That's It For The Other One," and "New Potato Caboose"—function not as ends in themselves but instead as passageways *between* other more grounded, less abstract, musical materials. Such use suggests an understanding of these more abstract forms of expressivity in order to realize the incorporation of the widest possible range of organized sound. However, because of a widespread lack of familiarity with such forms of musical abstraction, they arguably have a limited communal expressive capacity. Used on their own, audiences more attuned to conventional musical sounds would likely think of them as the *negation* of music, rather than an expansion of its possibilities. Contextualized as bridging material, however, such material is not only rendered more palatable for a larger audience, but also helps realize an exceptional diversity of musical textures, as well as a sense of resolution upon returning to more familiar forms and sounds.

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[104] Wood, "The Musical Imagination of Phil Lesh," no page numbers (http://www.popular-musicology-online.com/issues/04/wood-01.html).

[105] "[Zappa] frequently dismissed his popular material as silly and irrelevant, claiming that fan appeasement was merely a means of funding his more serious work." Andre Mount, "'Bridging the Gap': Frank Zappa and the Confluence of Art and Pop," PhD diss. (University of California – Santa Barbara, 2010), 2.

About the following piece on *Anthem*, "New Potato Caboose," Brent Wood points out that it

> showcases some of Lesh's most important musical aesthetics: irregular-length phrases, non-repeating passages, subverted harmonic expectations, circuitous routes between tonic and dominant, and the compacting of a large number of musical ideas into a single composition by exploring several possible paths from a given starting point over a series of iterations.[106]

Although these characteristics of "Caboose" mark its formal complexity, they are also likely the reason why the band performed the song for only two years, from the middle of 1967 to the middle of 1969.[107] In an interesting early interview Jerry Garcia discusses its difficulties:

> We have this song called 'New Potato Caboose' and it's not on the record or anything, it'll probably be on the next album. It's a very long thing and it doesn't have a form, in that it doesn't have a verse-chorus form … It has two or three

[106] Wood, "The Musical Imagination of Phil Lesh," no page numbers (http://www.popular-musicology-online.com/issues/04/wood-01.html).

[107] There is disagreement as to when the Dead first performed "New Potato Caboose." Some say January 27, 1967 at the Fillmore Auditorium, in San Francisco (available to be listened to here: https://archive.org/details/gd67-01-27.aud.hanno.16744.sbeok.shnf/gd67-01-27t02.shn.) But in an essay on the song (including discussion of every known performance), the pseudonymous music historian Light Into Ashes casts doubt in its veracity, as well as a later supposed performance on May 5, 1967 at the Fillmore Auditorium, also in San Francisco (https://archive.org/details/gd67-05-05.sbs.yerys.1595.sbeok.shnf/gd67-05-05d1t04.shn). He argues that the "earliest performance we have is from 8/4/67 [August 4, 1967]" at the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto (https://archive.org/details/gd67-08-04.sbd.hanno.16752.sbeok.shnf/gd67-08 04t1.shn). See "New Potato Caboose," *The Grateful Dead Guide: An ongoing series of articles on songs & performances of the early Grateful Dead* (August 22, 2009), http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2009/08/new potato-caboose.html. According to Lesh, its primary composer, he "had pecked [it] out" on a studio harpsichord while the Dead were recording their first album in January of 1967. Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 125. It therefore seems unlikely that the "January 27" recording is in fact from that date. May 5 is more likely. Despite the song's difficulties Garcia describes, all of these performances are remarkably accomplished.

> recurring elements, but it doesn't have a recurring pattern. It just changes continually, off of itself and through itself in lots of different ways.[108]

In other words, "New Potato Caboose" is a through-composed song. Other such examples from the history of rock music exist but are rare, including "Good Vibrations" by California surf rockers the Beach Boys, "Stairway to Heaven" by hard rockers Led Zeppelin, and "Bohemian Rhapsody" by the English rock group Queen. In the Grateful Dead's repertoire "Caboose" is perhaps most similar to another Lesh composition (also with lyrics by Bobby Petersen) "Unbroken Chain," from the 1974 album *From the Mars Hotel*. Garcia continues:

> Rhythmically and the tonality of it and the chord relationships [means] there's a lot of surprises in it, a lot of fast, difficult kind of transitions. And there are transitions that musically are real awkward. They're not the kind of thing that flows at all but we're trying to make this happen by trying something that's just jarring and making it not jarring. Making it so that it happens without anybody losing their mind when it happens! And just to see if we can do it. And the thing, as it is, is a little stilted because we aren't [there] yet, we aren't really able to get with it. 'Cause it's all so utterly, so odd. But it has its points and I think that's like one direction that we'll be able to move successfully in."[109]

On the one hand, it seems obvious that the Dead did *not* "move successfully in" the direction "New Potato Caboose" leans. Around the time that it disappears from their repertoire in early-to-mid 1969 is precisely when influences of country & western began to appear prominently in their performances. Immediately following what was likely its

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[118] Ralph J. Gleason, "Jerry Garcia, the Guru," in *The Grateful Dead Reader*, ed. David G. Dodd and Diana Spaulding (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31.
[109] Ibid.

final performance on June 8, 1969, the Dead played the Western ballad, in fast 2/4 time, "Me and My Uncle."[110] And only two days before, the Dead had performed, for possibly the first time, "Green, Green Grass of Home," a recording of which, sung by Porter Wagoner, had reached No. 4 on the country charts in 1965, and had then been a No. 1 popular music hit for Tom Jones in 1966.[111] This last version of "New Potato" does not show any obvious sign of the group tiring of the song, however, as it is quite polished even though the last time they may have played it was three months before on March 1.[112]

For the reviewer of *Anthem* in *Rolling Stone*, its final song "Caution" was one of the album's most impressive sections: "the album's most curious track, which ranges from a white-imitation blues riff vamp-until-ready to 60-cycle hum and microphone feedback." As the end point of the album, it is also where the more extreme side of the Dead's experimentalism is first heard on record. Because of his publicized characterization of Varèse as "the idol of my youth," Frank Zappa is undoubtedly the

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[110] I qualify this performance of "New Potato Caboose" as "likely" its last because I have been unable to find a later one among the band's voluminous recorded archive. But given that some of the Dead's performances from this time were not recorded it is possible that there was a later performance. The Dead had been playing "Me and My Uncle" since late 1966. December 1, 1966 at The Matrix in San Francisco is one of its earliest performances by the Dead. It can be heard here: https://archive.org/details/gd66-12-01.sbd.sirmick.26968.sbeok.shnf/gd66-12-01d1t09.shn. Note the significantly faster tempo than later versions, around 130 beats per minute.

[111] The Grateful Dead's June 6, 1969 version of "Green, Green Grass of Home," sung by guitarist Bob Weir, can be heard at https://archive.org/details/gd69-06-06.sbd.jupile.9494.sbeok.shnf/gd69--06d1t02.shn.

[112] Light Into Ashes, "New Potato Caboose," *The Grateful Dead Guide: An ongoing series of articles on songs & performances of the early Grateful Dead* (August 22, 2009), http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2009/08/new-potato-caboose.html. And this accomplished performance of "New Potato" is despite the fact that most of the band had accidentally ingested an abnormally large amount of LSD. This is apparently the performance Lesh describes in his autobiography in late spring of 1969 when the band, prior to taking the stage, drank from "an innocuous looking … bottle of apple juice" in which various dealers had dumped large amounts of LSD. "I was launched into outer space: worlds and universes orbiting past, time stretching into eternity, laughing archetypes manifesting cosmic jokes, and then some soft words in my ear—'Phil, it's time to play the set.'" Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 147.

rock musician most strongly associated with the composer Edgar Varèse.[113] But as the reviewer of *Anthem* for *Rolling Stone* points out, parts of "Caution" bear strong resemblance to Varèse's work—arguably more than most music by Zappa. "The mixture of electronic and serious music achieved by Edgar Varese [sic] on 'Deserts' stands as one of the most impressive achievements in this area; on their own terms the Dead have achieved a comparable blend of electronic and electric music."[114] Here again, the importance of blending a variety of heterogeneous elements is foregrounded as a core characteristic of the Dead's music. And such processes function not only as sonic homologies of the album's cover art depiction of the band's musicians united as a single bodhisattva-like being, but—as the aforementioned critical discourse around the band at the time expresses—the group's bridging of the divide between themselves and their audience.

The Grateful Dead's Aoxomoxoa

The conspicuous experimentation of *Anthem* continued on the Grateful Dead's following studio album, the palindromic *Aoxomoxoa* (1969). But along side a resolute iconoclastic experimentalism on the album is the paradoxical evocation of tradition and the past. Unlike *Anthem* it was entirely a product of studio recording rather than a mélange of studio and live recordings.[115] *Aoxomoxoa* was also the first main flowering of the Jerry

[113] Frank Zappa, "Edgar Varèse: The Idol of My Youth," *Stereo Review* (June 1971), 61-62. Available online: http://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/Edgard_Var%C3%A8se:_The_Idol_of_My_Youth
[114] Miller, "The Grateful Dead: Anthem of the Sun," *Rolling Stone* (September 28, 1968), http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/anthem-of-the-sun-19680928.
[115] Notably, it began as an 8-track recording but when band members managed to acquire one of the first 16-track tape recorders from Ampex, they decided to very expensively re-record them using the 16 track recorder leaving them afterwards in considerable debt to their record company, Warner Bros.

Garcia-Robert Hunter song-writing partnership; together, they co-wrote every song. As Tony Sclafani points out,

> the ideas they first brought to *Aoxomoxoa* would shape the band for most of their career … With this album, Hunter and Garcia took tentative steps back toward the traditional music they'd played in bluegrass and folk ensembles, and blazed a path that would lead to the group's next two breakthrough efforts.[116]

As Scalfani suggests, on account of their simple arrangements of a lead vocal accompanied by acoustic guitars, "Rosemary," and "Mountains of the Moon" in some ways prefigure the folk-country styles of their following studio album *Workingman's Dead*. But rather than the early-to-mid 20th-century evocations of *Workingman's*, the past evoked in these and other songs on *Aoxomoxoa* are for the most part of a still older variety. The only instrument other than an acoustic guitar on "Mountains of the Moon" is a harpsichord—perhaps the most iconic instrument of the 17th-to-mid-18th century Baroque period. And though there is no such comparable instrumental signifier on "Rosemary," it still manages to have, one writer notes, "a particularly medieval tone … seem[ingly] reminiscent of ancient Arthurian ballads."[117]

Because avant-garde composer and keyboardist Tom Constanten had formally joined the band in late 1968, in the early stages of the recording sessions for *Aoxomoxoa*, the significance of his contribution to its conspicuous experimentation may be assumed. But he demurs: "I wasn't as much of an influence as some might think." "It's easy," he points out, "to overlook the fact that the band members' tastes already tended toward the

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[116] Tony Scalfani, *The Grateful Dead FAQ: All That's to Know About the Greatest Jam Band in History* (Milwaukee: Backbeat Books, 2013), 90.
[117] Light Into Ashes, "Rosemary," *Grateful Dead Guide: An ongoing series of articles on songs & performances of the early Grateful Dead* (http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2012/02/rosemary.html).

far out."[118] Such "far-outness" is not surprising in the case of Lesh, who originally became friends with Constanten while they were both studying music at the University of California – Berkeley, but clearly he was not the only one enamored of such musical experimentalism.

Nowhere is such a penchant for the experimental more obvious than on the album's strangest song: "What's Become of the Baby?" As the penultimate track, as well as the longest at 8:32, it occupies an obviously important position in the album's overall form. But it is a far cry from the conventions of popular music. Besides the monophonic lead vocal (heavily processed with phasing, pre- and post-echo), other recognizable instruments on it include organ, various percussions sounds, piano, various cymbal washes, and electronic feedback. According to band historian Dennis McNally, "Garcia wanted the sound of the entire band to come out of one voice, which required voltage-controlled amplifiers, filters, and pitch followers, which had not yet been invented."[119] Garcia explained what he thought the ideal circumstances were to listen to it: "If you want to make 'What's Become of the Baby' work, I'll tell you what to do: get a tank of nitrous oxide. All of a sudden it works!"[120] Relying on such a situation for listeners to make sense of an 8+ minute song seems strange, to say the least. Constanten recounts that the song "was mainly Jerry's [Garcia] project" although he helped create many of the sounds that permeate the sound field around the sung melody.[121]

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[118] *Between Rock & Hard Places: A Musical Autobiodyssey* (Eugene, OR: Hulogosi, 1992), 78.
[119] *A Long Strange Trip*, 303.
[120] Interview with Blair Jackson, 1978, http://alanpaul.net/2015/03/grateful-dead-1969-the-making-of-aoxomoxoa-and-live-dead/
[121] *Between Rock & Hard* Places, 78. Constanten goes on to state that the "trans-Moogrifications and pre-echoes of the vocal track, the freely-freaking accompaniment – in its original form it's a bit busy in places, not necessarily 'my' style of experimental, but I still like it, and don't make any apologies."

But though interesting in many ways, the conspicuous experimentation on *Aoxomoxoa* was not the direction the Dead would continue to follow. Only three of its songs, "St. Stephen," "Dupree's Diamond Blues," and "China Cat Sunflower," lasted in the band's performance repertoire post-1970.[122] And the extensive studio time band members took recording the album, and its subsequent low sales, left them heavily in debt to their record company, Warner Brothers. As a way to escape the financial hole they had dug, as well as to finally capture on record the live performances that were their primary focus, their next recorded release, *Live/Dead*, was recorded entirely live. But along with the financially pragmatic reasons for its creation, it also points to the group's subsequent directions in fashioning a cohesive, large-scale musical narrative out of a wide variety of styles, textures, and lyrical references.

Progressive Rock and The Grateful Dead

One of the, if not *the*, key tropes of rock music discourse in the period of 1965-69 was that of progress. During this time the expansion of musical parameters and possibilities dominated the concerns of many popular musicians and music critics. It would be difficult to overstate the influence of the musical and lyrical innovations of the Beatles and Bob Dylan (as well, though to a lesser extent, the Beach Boys, in particular the album *Pet Sounds*) on this process. The Beatles' trifecta of albums—*Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*—released one a year from 1965 to 1967, radically reshaped the sonic possibilities of popular music, with each building on the innovations of the one before. *Sgt. Pepper* in particular was widely heralded upon its release as a landmark success, reflecting the unprecedented musical innovations in which

[122] "Cosmic Charlie" was revived in 1976 but was only performed a few times before disappearing again.

the Beatles had engaged.[123] Although filled with highly accessible popular songs, it is suffused with a previously unmatched (within popular music at least) combination of timbres, sophisticated orchestration, lyrical profundity, use of non-traditional sounds, and sense of cohesive unity (marked most notably by the penultimate track's altered reprise of the opening song). There is also a sense of continual variation within the album as each song speaks to or reflects various aspects of, and moments within, human existence.

Dylan's mid-1960s' trifecta in contrast—1965's *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and 1966's *Blonde on Blonde*—did the most to expand the *lyrical* depth of popular music, marrying the depth, purpose and self-conscious artistry of modernist poetry with songs in explicitly popular guise.[124] A notable example is "Desolation Row," the final song on *Highway 61 Revisited*, the penultimate verse of which features a veritable smorgasbord of literary and historical references.

> Praise be to Nero's Neptune, the Titanic sails at dawn/Everybody's shouting, "Which side are you on?!"/And Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot fighting in the captain's tower/While calypso singers laugh at them and fishermen hold flowers/Between the windows of the sea where lovely mermaids flow/And nobody has to think too much about Desolation Row.

With the exception of some of Dylan's own earlier songs (e.g. "Mr. Tambourine Man") nothing comparable exists within the history of Anglo-American popular music. There is here both the constant implication of meaning along with its simultaneous erasure. Nero,

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[123] For a discussion of the critical reaction to *Sgt. Pepper* see Oliver Julien, *Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles: It was Forty Years Ago Today* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 9.

[124] Although the instrumental sound of these Dylan albums are more conservative than the Beatles' *Revolver* or *Sgt. Pepper*—created by guitars, keyboards, and drums—the unusual length of some of the songs on them did expand the possibilities of popular music. "Like A Rolling Stone" on *Highway 61 Revisited*, for example, is over five minutes long, and "Desolation Row" is over 11 minutes. Not until *Sgt. Pepper* would the Beatles release a song over five minutes in length.

Roman Emperor from 54 AD to 68 AD, committed suicide after a rival claimed the imperial throne, ending the Julio-Claudian dynasty, whereas Neptune is the Roman god of the sea.[125] But why then the praise to "Nero's Neptune" for the Titanic's sailing? Is it for its counterfactual safe passage on its infamous maiden voyage, or an ironic commentary on the inefficacy of divine pleas? The following "Everybody's shouting, "Which side are you on?!" is both related to the preceding lines of the verse, but also an autobiographical commentary on Dylan's own position in 1965 after having "gone electric," given how many on the political left—for whom this line was a popular slogan, and the name of a song expressing commitment to left-wing causes—thought he had betrayed them by doing so. But if, as the verse's final line says, "nobody has to think too much about Desolation Row," then perhaps it is not intended to make any greater sense than the sounds of its melody, words, alliterations, rhymes and meter. Dylan captures here an ideal expression of modernist poetic verse: suggesting great profundity yet simultaneously putting any such meaning itself into question.

The Grateful Dead's Live/Dead

Released by Warner Brothers Records in December of 1969, the Grateful Dead recorded their final album of the 1960s, and their first completely live album, *Live/Dead*, in January and February of 1969 at the Fillmore West Auditorium and Avalon Ballroom. For critic Ben Champion it was "one of the watershed albums in rock … wherein a promising group that has been trying to get it together finally does." He singled out its first track, "Dark Star," as "the culmination of what the Dead are into now." But for him

[125] The Julio-Claudian dynasty refers to the first five emperors of Rome: Augustine, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, covering the period 27 BC to 68 AD.

its significance transcended the limitations of rock music drawing comparisons to both jazz and Western art music. "Their performance is long (over 23 minutes)," but rather than a fault its length reflected its quality since he thought it "contains improvisation that would be the envy of any jazz musician." Furthermore, "at times during the song the Dead can reach a dynamic level that sounds as full and complex as a symphony orchestra."[126] In this review are a number of the hallmarks of late 1960s' critical discourse on progressiveness in rock: the expansion of formal boundaries, and comparisons to jazz and classical music in the context of a sense of struggle and challenge followed by its successful overcoming.

A number of music scholars have discussed the music from *Live/Dead*. Finding in its version of "Dark Star" an ideal example of the group's improvisational fluency, Graeme Boone demonstrates its motivic and harmonic development through his transcription and analysis of large segments of its music.[127] Nadya Zimmerman has discussed *Live Dead's* version of "The Eleven" as an exploration of "uncharted territory in its array of eclectic features," but one that relies on a "mythologized yet tangible connection among nature, LSD, and spiritual/revelatory insight."[128] And David Malvinni argues, among other things, that the album's larger formal suite made up numerous individual songs, but with "Dark Star" as its initial anchor "had less to do with harmonic continuity and more to do with a contrasting tempo and atmosphere."[129]

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[126] All quotations in this paragraph from Ben Champion, "Rock Column," *Oklahoma City Journal* (Dec. 26, 1969), (GDA MS 332 ser. 4, box 1).
[127] Graeme M. Boone, "Tonal and Expressive Ambiguity in 'Dark Star'" in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. John R. Covach and Graeme M. Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 171-210.
[128] Nadya Zimmerman, "Consuming Nature: The Grateful Dead's Performance of an Anti-Commercial Counterculture," *American Music* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 206, 211.
[129] *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 90-94.

But though the tempo and atmosphere of the various tracks on the album are certainly quite different from each other there is in fact a harmonic continuity that connects not only the first two songs—"Dark Star" and "St. Stephen"—but the rest of the album as well. Garcia hints at such connections in explaining the group's intentions for the album. "We were after a certain sequence to the music. In the sense of it being a serious, long composition, musically, and then a recording of it."[130] The album's sequential quality is obvious: rather than discrete songs with clear divisions between them, the tracks, with one exception, flow into each other as a continuous suite of music. One reviewer of *Live/Dead* noted that with the Dead, "it is not so much 'here's one tune, it's over; here's the next tune.'" Instead, "whole hours can melt into one; with tune A and B so intermingled, that the change is inaudible, until all of a sudden, a lyric shocks you into the reality that this is 'Turn On Your Lovelight" and not "Saint Stephen."[131] How might the group have gone about go about composing the sequence that makes up the album?

One of the ways would be through the creation of larger formal harmonic relationships. In the Western art music tradition, since at least the Baroque period, movements from a beginning tonic major key to the key a perfect fifth above, the dominant, has been one of the primary formal structuring devices in tonal music, with the simpler binary AB form in the Baroque giving way to the greater complexity of sonata form in the Classical period. As musicologist Charles Rosen notes, the modulation up a perfect fifth increases musical tension by creating a large-scale, structural dissonance in

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[130] Garcia, Reich, Wenner, *A Signpost to New Space*, 67.
[131] Joe Klee, "Diggin' Discs: The Grateful Dead – *Live Dead*" (March 1970), (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box. 1.)

relation to a piece's home tonic key.[132] The inverse movement, up a perfect fourth or down a perfect fifth, in contrast, causes a relaxation of harmonic tension, a weakening of the tonic, as it implies the tonic's reinterpretation as the dominant of the subdominant.[133]

On *Live/Dead* the tonal relationships of the various songs support the dynamic and stylistic progression of the album's musical sequence as well as its overall unity. Though not in any traditional form derived from Western art music (e.g. Binary, Sonata, Rondo), its songs are connected by a clear progression of tonal centers that narrate a development of increasing structural dissonance, in relation to the album's "tonic" of A major, paralleled by a build in intensity and tempo, followed by its relaxation and eventual final resolution to the same tonic pitch, A, on which the suite began.

As shown in table 1.1, there is a palindromic-like form to the key centers of the songs on *Live/Dead*. Although the album begins with a fade-in to a short improvisational passage in D minor, the first song, "Dark Star," begins and ends on A major.[134] The next song, "St. Stephen," is quite clearly in E major, though like "Dark Star," it is given a Mixolydian inflection with prominent usage of its bVII, D major. At its end there is a transitional section centered on B major—usually referred to as the "William Tell

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[132] "Modulation in the eighteenth century [transforming the dominant into a temporary second tonic] must be conceived as essentially a dissonance raised to a higher plane, that of the total structure. A passage in a tonal work that is outside the tonic is dissonant in relation to the whole piece, and demands resolution if the form is to be completely closed and the integrity of the cadence respected." *The Classical Style* (New York: Norton & Co., 1972), 26.

[133] Ibid, 24.

[134] In the concert from which this recording of "Dark Star" comes from it was preceded by "Mountains of the Moon," which ends with a coda improvisation in D Dorian. And though I do not include this key change within the album's palindromic-like form it is interesting that it is also up a perfect fifth, D to A, the same intervallic relationship that the following two modulations realize as well. For an extensive and detailed analysis of this version of "Dark Star" see Graeme Boone, "Tonal and Expressive Ambiguity in 'Dark Star,'" in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, eds. John Covach and Graeme Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 171-210. The entire concert is available for online streaming at https://archive.org/details/gd69-02-27.sbd.16track.kaplan.6315.sbeok.shnf.

Bridge" on account of its lyrics—to the following "The Eleven," which also begins on B major.

Song Title	Key Centers
(Intro>)Dark Star	(Dm >) A >
St. Stephen(>William Tell Bridge)	E > B >
The Eleven	B > A > Em >
Turn On Your Lovelight	E >
Death Don't Have No Mercy	Em >
Feedback>We Bid You Goodnight	Atonal > A[135]

Table 1.1

Mirroring these various movements up a perfect fifth (D>A>E>B), and their increasing harmonic dissonance relative to the album's introductory and concluding A major tonality, is a corresponding increase in tempo and polyphonic intensity. The climax of this movement is the first three minutes of "The Eleven," after which the B blues modality in 4/4 time gradually gives way to repeated I-IV-V-IV progressions in A major in 11/8 time—hence the song's name. The song's lyrics and composed melody are set to this repeating cycle and along with its predictably familiar harmonic progression realize a diminution in the ensemble's polyphonic intensity mirroring the decrease in structural dissonance dropping from B to A, the overall "key" of the album-long suite, as the song's tonic pitch.

[135] On *Live/Dead* "We Bid You Goodnight" is actually a quartertone or so sharp of A=440 Hz. Other recorded examples of performances of the song by the Dead make clear however that A, not Bb, is, for the group, the proper tonic pitch for the song. This pitch anomaly is likely because it is sung a cappela, the starting pitch of which came from guitars rendered out of tune by the previous sonic experimentation of "Feedback."

Just after the 8:00 mark, however, after finishing the song's verses, the band modulates up a perfect fifth, returning to E as their central pitch for a minor blues dominated jam, once again raising both the polyphonic intensity as well as the structural dissonance relative to the suite's A major bookends. The harmonic centrality of E continues into the next two songs, "Turn On Your Lovelight" and "Death Don't Have No Mercy." Whereas the former is an up-tempo R&B song largely characterized by the bluesy alternation between two dominant-seventh chords a perfect 4th apart (E7-A7), the latter is a dirgeful 12/8 minor-blues in E minor. Despite their shared tonic pitch these two songs could hardly be more different in affective meaning.

"Turn On Your Lovelight" is an invocation of 1960s' Rhythm & Blues with vocalist Ron "Pigpen" McKernan leading the band through a dynamic, 15-minute-long, sometimes rap-like ode to the power of love and sexual desire. It begins with the musicians continuing with the high dynamics of "The Eleven," though no longer as polyphonically dense because of the necessary subordination of the instruments to McKernan's vocals, and the song's harmonic progression. After the first time through the song's form the band realizes a slow decrescendo until around the 9:00 mark with the vocals and lead guitar in dialogue over an understated rhythm section. From there they gradually build the song's dynamic and textural intensity matched by McKernan's increasing vocal intensity, further aided by guitarist Weir's ecstatic background vocals. Finally, just after 14:00 they reach the song's musical climax with the band finally

returning to the song's instrumental refrain before ending with a *tutti* crescendo and cut-off on E major.[136]

On the original LP release of the album the change to the next song, "Death Don't Have No Mercy," would have required a third change of the record (to the B side of the second of the two records that make up the album), and it is the first time on the album there is not an obvious inter-song segue. Perhaps the band thought the dramatic shift in mood from ecstatic celebration to mournful resignation (recrimination?) required at least a few seconds of silence. Still, the continuance of E as the tonic, though changed in mode, provides some sense of continuity between the two songs. And despite their obvious differences "Turn On Your Lovelight" and "Death Don't Have No Mercy" are also linked because of their similar origins: both are covers of songs by African-American songwriters and performers.[137] They therefore provide a significant shift in genre associations from the "folk-baroque" of the earlier three songs on the album.[138] Along with the next "song" entitled, appropriately, "Feedback" there could hardly be greater evidence against Frank Zappa's belief (at least according to Zappa scholar Ben Watson), that the Grateful Dead "provided a kind of pastel wallpaper to the hippie lifestyle" with their "anthemic, folk-based meanderings … [that] had little relationship to

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[136] For a discussion of McKernan's significance within the Dead's blues and R&B music, see Michael Kaler, "Jamming the Blues: The Grateful Dead's Development of Models for Rock Improvisation," *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 9, no. 1 (2013).

137 R&B singer Bobby Bland first recorded "Turn On Your Lovelight," which was written by Deadric Malone and Joseph Scott. The Reverend Gary Davis wrote and first recorded "Death Don't Have No Mercy."

[138] "The folk-baroque era is as well represented here [on *Live/Dead*] as the Americana-Jam era is in *Europe '72*." David Gans, "The 9/19/70 Dark Star," unpublished essay. For further discussion of "folk-baroque" music in the 1960s see John Kimsey, "'She Moved Thru' the Bizarre': Davy Graham and Irish Orientalism," *Popular Music & Society* 37, no. 4 (2014), 1, 15-16.

either R&B or Edgard Varèse."[139] It would, in fact, be difficult to imagine a more overt (and I think successful) pairing of the disparate influences of R&B— represented by "Turn On Your Lovelight" and "Death Don't Have No Mercy"—and the following Varèse-like "Feedback," which is as its name suggests: a 7:50 long, entirely instrumental exploration of largely atonal sounds produced through electronic feedback.[140] Not surprisingly, given these characteristics, in a number of reviews of *Live/Dead* "Feedback" was singled out as the one regrettable inclusion on the album.[141]

Forms of musical analysis devised for Western art music are of little use for a piece such as "Feedback" given its lack of determinate harmony, melody or rhythm. A spectrographic representation—a visual display of a sound's harmonic makeup—however, provides some useful analytical facts (see figure 1.2). The vertical axis is the frequency range, from 0 to 8,000 Hertz; the horizontal axis on top is the time. The intensity of frequencies is indicated by a range of colors, from white at the bottom for the most to blue for the least. The two halves, top and bottom, represent the music's two-track, stereo quality.[142]

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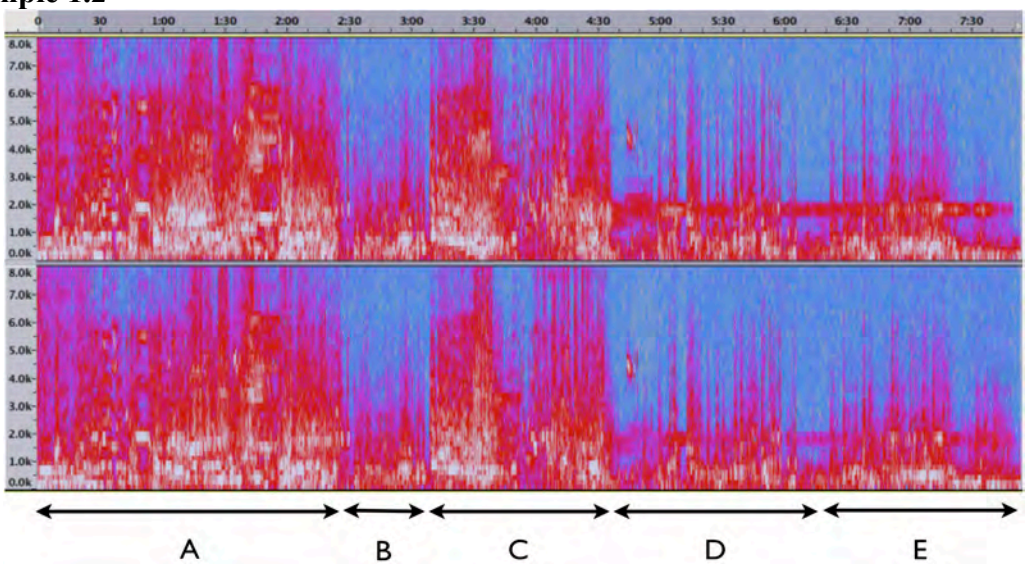
[139] Ben Watson, *Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 109.

[140] Lesh explains the origins of "Feedback": "Using feedback as a musical was originally mostly my idea because there we were with these electronic instruments, and it was starting to be obvious to me that they could function in that kind of manner. Even though you can't control the feedback too well, they more or less end up being pretty tonal—tonal in the sense that the sounds that usually come out tend to have the harmonic structure of tonal notes." In Blair Jackson and David Gans, *This Is All a Dream We Dreamed: An Oral History of the Grateful Dead* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2015), 106.

[141] "This album [*Live/Dead*] exemplifies all that is good and bad about the Dead. There is all of the raw blues shouting, the building and building and then more building, and occasionally some of the boring crap they can play, like 'Feedback,' which is eight minutes of exactly that." "Review: Grateful Dead and 'Live Dead' album," *Daily Collegian* (Fresno, CA: May 13, 1970), (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 1). Another reviewer notes that "Feedback" sounds "like a cross between Hendrix's 'EXP' and Kaleidoscope's 'Beacon from Mars.'" But although in some ways similar to other contemporaneous popular music, they did not think it was "the kind of music that Garcia and the Dead ought to try. It just doesn't seem to fit their disposition. The album would have been totally unblemished had 'Feedback' been left off." Still, they thought, "one blackhead does not mean the whole face is no longer beautiful." *Fusion*, February 1970 (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box. 1).

[142] For an extensive discussion of the use of spectrographic representations to analyze sound, see Stephen McAdams, Philippe Depalle, and Eric Clarke, "Analyzing Musical Sound," in *Empirical Musicology:*

Example 1.2



The five sections of "Feedback" are labeled on the bottom: A, 0:00-2:20; B, 2:21-3:02; C, 3:03-4:30; D, 4:31-6:15: E, 6:16-7:50. The distinctions between the first four sections, A to D, are obvious because of their contrasting amounts of higher frequencies: sections B, D, and E have considerably fewer than do A and C, indicating A and C's denser sonic texture. In contrast, the distinction between sections D and E is only audible given their similar spectrographic profiles. What differentiates them is the clear change from atonality to an A-pitch centrality around 6:20 that sets up the transition to the final part of the album-long suite: the a-capella song "And We Bid You Goodnight." In A major, it resolves the album's overarching harmonic dissonance and therefore marks the completion of its musical journey, returning home to where the album began with "Dark Star." But whereas "Dark Star" in the context of the album is an evocation of birth and discovery, "Goodnight" is a song of farewell, indeed of the final farewell, death.

Aims, Methods, Prospects, eds. Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 157-96. For an example of its application, see David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 194-95.

> "Lay down my dear brothers/Lay down and take your rest/Ah, won't you lay your head, upon your savior's breast/I love you, oh, but Jesus loves you the best/And we bid you goodnight, goodnight, goodnight."[143]

Emphasizing "community and the freedom that comes from the acceptance of God's love," "Goodnight" is harmonized by a simple I-V-I-IV-I-IV-V-I progression, in a largely a capella arrangement. The song was a common encore in the Dead's late 1960s' performances before becoming a rare, special treat after 1970.[144] As Buzz Poole points out, this final track on the album reveals "a glimpse of the future, and the past," and acts as "a come down after so much soaring electrified music."[145] Sarah Doudney wrote its lyrics in 1871 on the occasion of a friend's death, and Ira Sankey, a gospel singer, set them to music in 1884.[146] It is possible the Dead learned the song from the 1968 album *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* by the Incredible String Band where it forms part of their "A Very Cellular Song."[147] But more likely it was from the 1965 Pinder Family album *The Real Bahamas* given the similarity of the Dead's arrangement to that of the Pinder Family.[148] Rather than the repeating I-IV-I progression at the end of the String Band's version, the Dead's version, like the Pinder Family's, adds a dominant chord to create a more conclusive I-IV-V-I progression.[149] This harmonic device also works well rhetorically in the context of the overall album. With numerous songs on *Live/Dead*

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[143] http://www.dead.net/song/and-we-bid-you-goodnight.
[144] Rev. Dr. Pitman B. Potter, *The Gospel and the Grateful Dead* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris LLC, 2014), 63-64.
[145] Buzz Poole, *Workingman's Dead* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 14.
[146] The Incredible String Band likely learned "I Bid You Goodnight" from the a version recorded by Alan Lomax in the Bahamas in 1935 where the song was "typically sung when a casket was lowered into a grave." Ibid, 14-15.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Oliver Trager, *The American Book of the Dead: The Definitive Grateful Dead Encyclopedia* (New York: Fireside Books, 1997), 13.
[149] And though it may be because I am simply more familiar with the Dead's version of "And We Bid You Goodnight," the Incredible String Band's version seems to me to lack the sense of finality that the use of the dominant chord by the Pinder Family and the Dead brings to the song.

structured by avoidance of V-I progressions ("Dark Star," "St. Stephen," parts of "The Eleven," and "Turn On Your Lovelight), the repeated use of a I-IV-V progression at the album's end conjures a sense of long-delayed conclusion on the tonic to appropriately conclude an hour of harmonically interconnected music.

But along side the harmonic relationship's between *Live/Dead*'s tracks, one might discern a subtle parallel thematic narrative as well: the album as a whole telling the archetypal story of human life, from birth to death, each track a sonic evocation of a particular stage in this journey. "Dark Star," as the album's first track, represents birth and youth: a sense of childhood wonder and exploration evoked by its searching polyphonic musical conversation, and expectant, inviting lyrics pointing forward hopefully: "Shall we go, you and I while we can/Through the transitive nightfall of diamonds?" As the most obvious rock music-like song (with its repeated I-bVII-IV cliché rock music progression) "St. Stephen" suggests adolescence, a time of rebellion and uncertainty between child and adulthood, a sentiment echoed in its lyrics: "In and out of the garden he goes/Country garland in the wind and the rain/Wherever he goes the people all complain." "The Eleven" represents the struggle into adulthood: "Now is the time past believing/The child has relinquished the reign/Now is the test of the boomerang/Tossed in the night of redeeming." "Turn On Your Lovelight" is Eros, the erotic charge of love and sexuality: "When I get lonely in the middle of the night/And I need you darlin' to make things all right." "Death Don't Have No Mercy," in contrast, is Thanatos, death, the utter impermanence of existence, what dashes all illusions of immortality: "Death will go in any family in this land/Come to your house, you know he don't take long/Look in the bed on the morning, children find that your family's gone." "Feedback" also represents

death, but more in the nature of the aesthetic sublime, taking over where words fail to express the agonizing separation from the physical world, represented through resolute atonality, a-metrical percussion, and dissonant electronic sounds, which slowly transform into a sense of rebirth as the music returns to A major for the concluding "And We Bid You Goodnight": "Lay down my dear brothers/Lay down and take your rest/I want to lay your head upon your Savior's breast." It is an ending—death, either literal or metaphorical—but also a beginning into new life, suggesting that even in death, life goes on; there is always more still to come.

The preceding hermeneutical reading of *Live/Dead* will likely strike some as unconvincing, and even unnecessary in the context of this chapter. Although it involves some questionable interpretations, and lacks any definitive verifying evidence, such uncertainties do not invalidate its usefulness. After all, hermeneutical readings are by definition uncertain, inconclusive, and provisional.[150] Yet they are useful because they aim "not to reproduce its [the text's] premises … [as] the mirror of a settled understanding," but to instead produce new ways of understanding it.[151] Given the harmonic relationships that structure the album, it should not be beyond belief that a parallel thematic narrative continuity might exist as another layer of the album's overall cohesiveness. And though surviving band members or associates involved in its production could potentially verify whether they in fact intended such a narrative,

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[150] "The fundamental hermeneutical experience was articulated for us not merely by the tension between strangeness and familiarity, misunderstanding and correct understanding … If we start from the fact that understanding is verbal, we are emphasizing, on the contrary, the finitude of the verbal event in which understanding is always in the process of being concretized." Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 492. Also, "the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 309.

[151] Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 2.

interpretations are not limited by authorial design but instead depend on evidence internal to the text.[152] I therefore offer this reading of *Live/Dead* not as a definitive one, but rather as one possible (and, as far as I know, original) way of understanding it as a cohesive, multi-faceted musical text.

Conclusion

From 1965 to 1970 the rock music scene in the San Francisco developed a worldwide cultural influence. Some of its characteristics survived into the 1970s and beyond, while others did not, surviving only as memories. By 1972 the only original Bay Area rock groups from the mid-'60s to survive would be the Grateful Dead—the Jefferson Airplane and Country Joe & the Fish (among others) having split up. By 1970, what had been the San Francisco Tape Music Center had already spent four years at Mills College and had since been renamed the Center for Contemporary Music. Pauline Oliveros was the director for its first year there, 1966-67, after which she moved to the University of California – San Diego. It was then co-directed by Lowell Cross and Anthony Gnazzo from 1967 to '69, then by Robert Ashley from 1969-81. Although it continued to be an important center for tape and electronic based music, its situation within the academic world, and in the East Bay rather than in San Francisco, changed it significantly. Whereas Sender had intended it to be an alternative to the academic music environment, it became appropriated by the very academy it had tried to resist.

The history of the San Francisco Tape Center-Center for Contemporary Music follows quite closely the fate of the avant-garde in general. Beginning in opposition to

[152] "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." W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *Philosophy: Basic Readings*, ed. Nigel Warburton (New York: Routledge, 1999), 344

established institutions, and with little cultural capital, its aesthetic justification came from a self-conscious rejection of the older generations' rules amid a search for new avenues of artistic expression. But over time, the innovations that characterize such new paths themselves become canonized, accrue cultural capital, and become increasingly recognized within the very institutions against which they had originally protested. And once adopted by such institutions their initially intended radical disruptiveness becomes attenuated, as the perpetuation of the institutions the innovators increasingly depend upon become an unavoidable concern.

The original Jefferson Airplane broke up in 1971 with its different members going on to form the rootsy Hot Tuna, and the more pop-focused Jefferson Starship. Country Joe continued to perform but without "the Fish," i.e. other band members. But although the Grateful Dead lost Ron "Pigpen" McKernan in 1973 to liver disease, it, alone among rock groups who had started in the mid-1960s in the Bay Area, survived into and beyond the first half of the 1970s. And it is to the story of those five years that I turn to in the following chapters.

Chapter 2:
"Sing Me Back Home": Musical Traditions and Sixties' Counterculturalism

The primacy of dialogue in the ongoing life of modernism means that modernists can never be done with the past: they must go on forever haunted by it, digging up its ghosts, recreating it even as they remake their world and themselves.[1]

As a number of scholars have pointed out, the overt experimentalism of the Grateful Dead and other associated San Francisco rock musicians in 1967-69 gave way in the following years to attempts to connect their musical practices with overt invocations of various forms of musical traditionalism and a less modern past.[2] On account of the extensive personal experience of many of the musicians in these bands with traditional folk, country and blues music prior to their involvement with rock music, the influence of these musical genres had always in fact been present. But in 1969-70 the emphasis shifted as they became much more obvious than in 1967-68.

These changes contradict some common modernist narratives of progress in the arts by challenging the idea that only in their progress and discovery of new forms can their substances be justified *as* art rather than mere kitsch. They thereby raise questions for those trying to understand how such music was received and interpreted at the time of its production. Given that the San Francisco rock music scene had become internationally famous in 1967 largely because of the conspicuous musical and, more broadly, cultural experimentalism of its musicians and audiences, many critics have been puzzled by this seeming retreat from their earlier boundary-crossing iconoclasm. Others have used the evidence of such musical traditionalism as evidence of a troubling hypocrisy or even

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[1] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 346.
[2] See Morrison, "Psychedelic Music in San Francisco," 238-40; Kaler, "Ensemble Stuff," 76-77.

betrayal of the liberatory possibilities that the sixties' counterculture supposedly univocally exemplified.[3]

An alternative interpretation of these seemingly contradictory combinations of musical traditionalism and experimentation is, however, possible. Rather than revealing hypocrisy or representing a betrayal of the promise of these musicians' earlier music, such musical inclusiveness could reflect a profoundly self-aware and critical response to life and artistic production in the postwar United States. Against the triumph of liberal rationalism and artistic formalism, these musicians developed practices that looked to the future and the past as a modernism of the in-between, of transitions and the perennially incomplete.[4] Although "[t]he expressway world, the modern environment that emerged after World War Two, would reach a pinnacle of power and self-confidence in the 1960s, in the America of the New Frontier, the Great Society, Apollo on the moon," the practices of these musicians reflected widely shared doubts as to its ultimate success.[5] While science and technology had done much to improve people's lives, there was also a sense of their responsibility for the widespread environmental destruction that had become increasingly evident, the horrors of the Nazi death camps and the world-destroying possibilities of the atomic bomb.

For the partisans of liberal rationalism and artistic formalism, however, there was no alternative: "the developers and devotees of the expressway world presented it as the only possible modern world: to oppose them and their works was to oppose modernity

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[3] See, for example, Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope,* 21 and passim.
[4] As I will discuss later in this chapter, by "liberalism" here I mean the overarching ideology of modernity that had, by this point in time, been on the ascent since, at least, the French Revolution and which both most modern conservatives and, though to an even stronger degree, modern liberals are encompassed within. On the connection between historicist accounts of liberal rationality and artistic formalism see Raverty, *The Struggle Over the Modern,* 125-28.
[5] Berman, *All That Is Solid,* 313.

itself, to fight history and progress, to be a Luddite, an escapist, afraid of life and adventure and change and growth."[6] Within such a context, new ways of developing an oppositional modernist vocabulary were necessary in order to fight for the good that had been lost, "to show that this was not the only possible modern world, that there were other, better directions in which the modern spirit could move."[7]

For many people in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including many San Francisco rock musicians of the time, the realization of such alternative paths were to be found in a re-engagement with traditional forms of life. Such neo-traditionalism was sometimes enacted in quite reactionary ways, as an explicit attempt to, in the words of a then-influential song, "get back to where you once belonged," and thereby escape from the dilemmas and contradictions of modernity into some kind of halcyon, mythic past.[8] For others, including the musicians focused on in this dissertation their engagement with tradition was arguably motivated instead by a search for other, and equally modern, answers to such dilemmas and contradictions. Rather than a wholesale rejection of modernity, they used evocations of tradition within its perpetual flux and transformations in order to create a "new rite of incorporation, signifying membership in a community that has links with the past as well as the future."[9] One way such linkages were expressed was through a rapprochement between rock and the popular music genre that most symbolized traditional forms of life: country music.

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] The song is "Get Back" by the Beatles, which was released on their 1970 album *Let It Be.* I do not mean to suggest that the song advocates for some kind of neo-traditionalism. My point, instead, is that it could be, and almost certainly was, so interpreted.
[9] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 170.

"We've got to get ourselves back to the garden": The Politics of Countercultural Ideals

Country music and the counterculture(s) stand in a curiously ambivalent relationship to each other. Ever since the widespread emergence of countercultural forces in the mid-1960s, the politics and behavior of those involved have been interpreted as decidedly liberal and thus in marked contrast, indeed in outright opposition, to country's musical and cultural conservatism. And yet, despite such apparent opposition there have long been significant connections between not only various countercultures and country music but also, more broadly, between counterculturalism and conservatism as a disposition if not always as a political ideology.[10] For the critique of modernity that defines the counterculture is simultaneously a progressive-liberal vision of a better society to come, and a conservative desire to return, or at least hold on, to a simpler, more idyllic past. One need only think of the chorus of Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock," that anthem of the sixties' counterculture, for evidence of such conservative impulses: "We are stardust/Billion year old carbon/We are golden/Caught in the devil's bargain/And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden." On account of its assertion of humanity's unchanging essence and the need to return to the paradisiacal bliss and innocence of Eden ("the garden") it would be difficult to imagine a more literally conservative statement than this.[11]

Such a literal meaning of conservatism differs in significant ways from how "conservative" and "conservatism" are used in contemporary political discourse. But then

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[10] For conservatism as a disposition see Michael Oakeshott, "On Being Conservative," http://faculty.rcc.edu/sellick/On%20Being%20Conservative.pdf.

[11] Jonathan Harris has discussed the contradictory nature of the "back to the garden" trope within the sixties' counterculture. See his "Introduction: Abstraction and Empathy: Psychedelic Distortion and the Meanings of the 1960s," in *Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis and Counterculture in the 1960s*, eds. Christoph Grunenberg and Jonathan Harris (Tate Liverpool Critical Forum, vol. 8. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 15-16.

the similarity between "conservative" and "conservation" is hardly the unrelated coincidence that it generally seems to be today when the capitalism that most self-described conservatives value above seemingly all else fatally undermines the conservation of anything at all—with the exception of capital itself. Rather than a symbiotic relation between traditional forms of life and capitalism, as such conservatives assert, they are, in fact, radically antagonistic to each other.[12]

What is now far too often forgotten is how *unconservative* capitalism actually is and therefore how problematic is a simple connection between it, an ostensible conservative politics, and country music—a genre whose very *raison d'etre* is precisely the celebration and conservation of tradition. In the words of Marx and Engels:

> The bourgeoisie … has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors,' and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment' … The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society.[13]

Rather than wholly opposed to capitalism as Marx and Engels are often considered to be, it is precisely because of capitalism's revolutionary qualities that they see in it the potential to resolve the economic, and superstructural cultural, contradictions that plague modern, bourgeois societies.[14]

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[12] "The breakup of the traditional bourgeois value system … was brought about by the bourgeois economic system—by the free market, to be precise." Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 55.
[13] Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 82-83.
[14] The dilemma at the heart of such a conception of capitalism as both the most advanced economic system to ever exist and the most debased is that such dialectical ambivalence suggests the rejection of ameliorative efforts in favor of those aimed at deepening the contradictions in the hope that they will be

As the etymological relation between "conservation" and "conservative" suggests, there is a contradiction at the heart of modern political conservatism. First articulated in the late 18th century against the liberal capitalism of the bourgeoisie, in the 20th century, conservatism came to paradoxically celebrate the very liberalism it had once so vehemently opposed.[15] At the same time, those, such as John Dewey, who called themselves New Liberals increasingly came to distrust older liberalism's focus on individual negative liberty and lack of concern for the social relations without which, they argued, individuality is meaningless.[16] Dewey (along with other pragmatist philosophers such as William James) also argued for the essentially pluralistic and necessarily perspectival nature of truth against those who thought that it could be deduced from apodictic certainties, while rejecting the radically relativistic implications some have tried to draw from such an epistemology.[17]

In understanding the historical development of liberalism and conservatism in the United States, one can also trace the influence of the Transcendentalists in their embrace of seemingly contradictory positions.[18] Ralph Waldo Emerson's epigram, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines," for example, challenges the value of rationality to understandings of politics

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permanently solved by the promised Revolution that would usher in a true socialist state. The ethics of such a strategy are, however, highly dubious at best.

[15] Isaac Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke," *Political Theory* 11, no. 2 (1983), 206-209.

[16] John Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy," in *Dewey: The Early Works, 1882-1898*, vol. 1, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 231-2.

[17] See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 29-30.

[18] As many scholars have noted, there are many connections between philosophical pragmatism and transcendentalism. See Frederic I. Carpenter, "Charles Sanders Peirce: Pragmatic Transcendentalist," *The New England Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1941), 34-48; and J. David Greenstone, "Dorothea Dix and Jane Addams: From Transcendentalism to Pragmatism in American," *Social Service Review* 53, no. 4 (1979), 542-45.

and human behavior.[19] Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass* similarly rejects rational consistency as a universal standard: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."[20] Although Dewey, Emerson and Whitman are commonly associated with liberalism, their belief in the importance of the imperfect and the inconsistent in communal norms and values recall far more the conservatism of Edmund Burke than the utopian liberal-socialism of, say, Saint-Simon.[21]

Although the countercultures of the 1960s had strong associations with some aspects of contemporary liberalism, their roots in fact stretch back through a long history of critiques of modernization, liberal rationalization and what seems to inevitably follow from them: the breakdown of community, tradition and the social anomie that follows. There are certainly many liberal, liberatory, aspects of such countercultural critiques. But understandings of music that make use of traditional tropes (as well as our political discourse), is impoverished when their conservative, conservationist, character is ignored or bizarrely reinterpreted as wholly a part of the liberal tradition.[22] After all, "what [North] Americans now call conservatism much of the world calls liberalism or neoliberalism."[23] And it was in opposition to the ascendancy of bourgeois liberalism in the French Revolution that Edmund Burke, the arguable founder of modern political conservatism, argued for an understanding of society in a highly conservationist manner: as "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are

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[19] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *Self-Reliance, and Other Essays* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1993), 24.
[20] Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. David S. Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43.
[21] For a discussion of the development of Saint-Simon's work and philosophy see Keith Taylor, *Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (Totowa, NJ: Frank Cass and Co., 1982), 39-49.
[22] That something as self-evidently conservative as organic food production is now generally conceived as associated with liberalism is a perfect example of how skewed these foundational political concepts have become.
[23] Leo P. Ribuffo, "Twenty Suggestions for Studying the Right Now that Studying the Right Is Trendy," *Historically Speaking* 12, no. 1 (January 2011): 6.

living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."[24] That is, in contrast to the social contract theories of Locke and Rousseau, for whom political legitimacy depended upon a continual renewal of individual, autonomous consent, Burke saw socio-political order, culture in its broadest sense, as necessarily shaped by, and a product of tradition as an inheritance from those who have come before, and whose duty it is for those of the present to preserve, i.e. *conserve*, for future generations. Even though those who made up the counterculture of the 1960s were highly Rousseauian in their personal morality and understanding of politics, they were often highly Burkean in their conception of art, the economy and the environment.[25] Though seemingly contradictory, these positions reflected, though in oppositional form, the dominant culture's equally paradoxical conservative morality and economic liberalism.[26]

Some scholars have pointed to the diversity of influences of the sixties' counterculture as indications of its postmodern character, and as articulations of a postmodern, "post-ideological" aesthetic.[27] Marshall Berman, in contrast, argues that such ideological diversity has, in fact, always been an integral aspect of modernism: "To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction … We might even say that to be fully modern is to be anti-modern: from Marx and Dostoevsky's time to our own, it has

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[24] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 114. On Burke's status as the founder of modern conservatism see David Y. Allen, "Modern Conservatism: The Problem of Definition," *The Review of Politics* 43, no. 4 (Oct., 1981), 595.

[25] There was also, however, a strongly classically liberal element to the sixties' counterculture although it became known as "libertarian" to distinguish it from what "liberal" had by that time evolved to mean. For a discussion of this process, see Ira Basen, "In the Valley of the Kings," *The Sunday Edition: With Michael Enright* (http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thesundayedition/the-niqab-and-citizenship-the-bystander-effect-train-love-in-the-valley-of-the-kings-1.2963290/in-the-valley-of-the-kings-an-ira-basen-documentary-1.2963565).

[26] For an exploration of these oppositions, see Patrick J. Deneen, "Progressive Liberalism—Contemporary Voices," *The American Conservative*, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/week-4-progressive-liberalism-contemporary-voices/.

[27] See, for example, Brent Whelan, "'Furthur': Reflections on Counter-Culture and the Postmodern," *Cultural Critique*, no. 11 (1988-89), 68 and passim.

been impossible to grasp and embrace the modern world's potentialities without loathing and fighting against some of its most palpable realities."[28] Such an understanding of modernism as simultaneously *anti*-modernism helps explains the paradox of some countercultures' simultaneous embrace of both radical experimentalism and conservative yearnings.

Berman also illuminates the specific historical condition to which artists in the 1960s were responding and that led them to such a diversity of influences and means: "the radical splitting-off of modernism from modernization … [in] the postwar evolution of culture and society." Whereas in the first few decades of the 20th century there was a "dialectical interplay between unfolding modernization of the environment … and the development of modernist art and thought," as in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *The Waste Land*, "in the wake of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, this process of dialogue had stopped."[29] From Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, to Boulez's *Structures*, Cage's *Music of Changes*, and Rothko's color field paintings, the consecrated art of the 1950s was marked by a pronounced negation of social content.

Art historian Dennis Raverty has explored this change in terms of a struggle between a formalist and an anti-formalist modernist avant-garde. Against the view that anti-formalism was a wholly reactionary viewpoint opposed to a monolithic formalist modernism, Raverty traces the critical debates in the United States between these two different modernist camps to show that rather than a gradual increase in the influence and prestige of "avant-garde" formalism until its seeming triumph in the 1950s, the aesthetics of modernism were highly disputed in the United States throughout the first half of the

[28] Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air,* 13.
[29] Ibid, 309

20th century.[30] "The battle I speak of," Raverty writes, "is not the familiar one between the conservative academics and the 'progressive' moderns, but a struggle *within* the avant-garde, a struggle over which ideas would define the modern for future generations."[31] As Raverty demonstrates, in the 1930s and 1940s it was, in fact, the anti-formalist, experiential side of modernism that dominated American critical discourse with formalism an embattled minority.[32] The dominance of an anti-formalist aesthetic at this time should not be surprising given how many contemporary artists were concerned with the practical function of their art given the economic turmoil of the Great Depression, the troubling rise of fascism, and apparent (though mostly illusory) successes of communism in the Soviet Union. In such a context, anti-formalism—the desire to forge connections between art, life and audiences—was crucial for many leading artists and thinkers.[33]

But in the postwar years in the West, the objectivity and purity of formalism's repudiation of content and audience demands far better fit the prevailing intellectual climate largely defined by positivism's exaltation of science and structuralism's critique of subjectivity.[34] Furthermore, with the onset of the Cold War and the division of the world into opposed ideological camps, the politically engaged, primarily left-wing politics of the anti-formalists became highly suspect within the capitalist West, at the

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[30] The rise and gradual triumph of formalism as the only real avant-garde is certainly the story told in Clement Greenberg's highly influential essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961/1989), 3-21. Significantly, Greenberg first published this essay in 1939.
[31] Raverty, *Struggle Over the Modern*, 10.
[32] Ibid, 104-119.
[33] Ibid, 89-103. See also David Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition: Socialists, Liberals and the Quest for Unity, 1884-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Elizabeth B. Crist, "Aaron Copland and the Popular Front," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56, no. 2 (2003).
[34] Raverty, *Struggle Over the Modern*, 103 and 144.

same time as anti-formalism (i.e. "social realism") was demanded and formalism opposed, on pain of censorship, within the communist East.[35]

The countercultures of the 1960s thus faced a situation in which the hegemony of formalism within the Western art world was almost total.[36] But then the communist alternative was no better, and arguably much worse. Although overtly social in its political content, it was as equally one-dimensional as Western formalism in its singular allowance of depictions of the socialist future and total disavowal of the capitalist past. That some young artists at the time would think a new path was necessary that would somehow overcome the opposition of these two aesthetics should not be surprising.

Rather than either of these alternatives—a retreat into an anti-subjectivist formalism or an ostensibly objective realism—some countercultural individuals in the 1960s and 1970s found in the past inspiration for new, or at least forgotten, ways of responding to life within the dominant liberalism that was "now up against the wall."[37] Whereas the guiding assumption of liberals (as well as many socialists such as Marx) since the 18th century had been that rising living standards stemming from a growing economy were the panacea for most, if not all, of the problems that plagued humanity, by the late 1960s, in the wake of massive environmental devastation, "the very idea of economic growth," and of its associated claims to progress, came under attack from liberals themselves.[38] Instead—and here the echoes of the conservative Burke are especially strong—some "attempt[ed] to recover past modes of life that were buried but

[35] Paul Sjeklocha and Igor Mead, *Unofficial Art in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 29-36.
[36] Although most countercultural individuals at the time likely had little knowledge of such formalist hegemony some, such as Phil Lesh, the bassist in the Grateful Dead, certainly did on account of his musical studies at the University of California – Berkeley as well as with Luciano Berio at Mills College.
[37] Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 79.
[38] Ibid, 79-80.

not dead … to find themselves by remembering."[39] However, this was not to merge with the past, but "to bring to bear on their past the selves they have become in the present, to bring into those old homes visions and values that may clash radically with them … to re-enact the very tragic struggles that drove them from their homes in the first place."[40] And it is as the narration of these "tragic struggles" that these musical mixtures should be at least partially understood.

Country Music and Its Countercultural Relations

Appreciating the political diversity of countercultural articulations is key to understanding the complex relationship between country music and counterculturalism, as well as the split between country and folk music in the 1930s through 1950s. As Ronald D. Cohen points out, there was an

> ongoing political and culture struggle over folk music … [because of] its appeal to both conservatives and progressives. The latter subscribed to what could be called the functionalist approach to folk music, the view that folk songs might have not only an ancient lineage but a dynamic present; they could serve practical purposes, energizing the folk to struggle against racism and oppression.[41]

For conservatives, in contrast, the value of folk music lay in its re-articulation of timeless truths, an upholder of traditions passed down through history. It was, then, also functional, but with a different purpose. Rather than serving as a vehicle through which to

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[39] Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 332.
[40] Ibid, 333.
[41] *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival & American Society, 1940-1970* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 19.

reform the present, it functioned instead as a way to link the present with the past, and thereby evoke tradition in the immediacy of the experiential moment.

Up until the middle of the 20th century "folk music attracted a complex mix … hard-headed radicals and fuzzy romantic, progressives and conservatives, those strictly interested in the music and those who mixed culture and politics."[42] What became separate country and folk music genres after World War II therefore shared a common root in the hillbilly music genre that had become increasingly popular since the 1920s, and attained its own separate chart in Billboard magazine in 1939. In 1945, *Billboard* magazine renamed its Hillbilly music chart "American Folk." However, in 1949 it was changed to Country & Western (C&W) because of the controversial left-wing political associations of many widely identified folk musicians, such as Woody Guthrie and the members of The Weavers.[43] But in the late 1940s they separated because of the fear of communist influence in the United States. "Overnight the word 'folk' was dropped from contention. In 1953 it was no longer used in the trade press, the fan magazines, or in advertisements for country music."[44]

Folk and country music genres both idealized the common people and the music and other cultural attributes associated with them. But for self-identified "folkies" such idealization was to a significant degree motivated by a broad critique of capitalism, in which "the people" were understood in quasi-Marxist-Leninist terms as a potentially revolutionary class if sufficiently motivated by a political and artistic vanguard.[45] In

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[42] Ibid, 22.
[43] David Brackett, "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in Popular Music, 1963 to 1965," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994), 777.
[44] Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 199.
[45] Richard A. Reuss, *American Folk Music and Left-wing Politics, 1927*-1957 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 116.

comparison, partisans of country music largely defined it according to a distinction between the decadent complexity, inauthenticity, social isolation and general iniquity of urbanity versus the virtuous simplicity, authenticity, community and righteousness of the country living and loving people.[46] Folk music partisans asserted an aura of seriousness, autonomy and anti-commercialism for it as a quasi-art of the people.[47] Country musicians and their fans, in contrast, saw no contradiction between the values that it represented and its commercial success and entertainment use-value.[48] More important to them was sincerity: that the musician really was the person they projected in their music even if, as was then and is still now quite common, they did not in fact write their own songs.[49]

By the 1960s country and folk were, therefore, different genres with different, though overlapping, audiences and political associations despite their frequent musical similarities, and even, in some cases, common repertoire and musical ancestors.[50] Although "the folk music movement … originated in the same music as country and western music … [it] differed from it in being more sophisticated, with some traces of art music. It was performed for an urban audience, and many of the people involved in the

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[46] Peterson, *Creating Country Music*, 5-6.
[47] Cohen, *Rainbow Quest*, 22.
[48] Peterson, *Creating Country Music*, 8-9.
[49] "'You ask what makes our kind of music successful,' [Hank] Williams was saying. 'I'll tell you. It can be explained in just one word: sincerity. When a hillbilly sings a crazy song, he feels crazy. When he sings, "I laid My Mother Away," he sees her a-laying right there in the coffin.'" David Brackett, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 56.
[50] The commercial success of the Kingston Trio's "Tom Dooley," one of the most influential recordings of the urban folk revival, led to a wave of story songs such as Marty Robbins' "El Paso," and Johnny Horton's "The Battle of New Orleans." Despite its anti-commercial protestations, folk music helped "revitalize the careers of some traditional country performers" such as the Carter Family, and the Stonemans. "Moreover, because it was now called 'folk,' many people could at last admire what until then they had denigrated." Gerald W. Haslam, *Workin' Man Blues: Country Music in California* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1999), 165.

movement used the music to further their political aims and beliefs."[51] And the cultural importance of this divide only increased throughout the decade as folk splintered between traditionalists and rock & roll syncretists, both motivating and reflecting the political and cultural changes at work within North America over civil rights, debates over the Vietnam War, feminism, environmentalism, and so forth. As the postwar liberal consensus began to break apart in 1968, however, and the opposition of conservative-leaning Americans to such supposedly liberal demands became increasingly strident, the battle lines between country and folk became increasingly apparent with country largely providing the soundtrack to politically conservative forces.[52]

"Country & Western" vs."Country"

When country and western was coined as the new name for the older hillbilly music chart, the two terms that made it up denoted a real difference. Whereas "country" referred to the older hillbilly music of the rural white poor from the South and the Appalachian mountains, "western" was the name for the then popular cowboy- and western-themed music of the likes of Bob Wills, Roy Rogers, and Gene Autry.[53] By the 1960s, however, the boundaries between these two terms increasingly blurred and the simpler "country" became the common generic term. The Country & Western Music Academy, for

[51] Charles Hamm, "The Acculturation of Music Styles: Popular Music, U.S.A.," in *Contemporary Music and Music Cultures*, eds. Charles Hamm, Bruno Nettl and Ronald Byrnside (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 141.
[52] James C. Cobb, "From Muskogee to Luckenbach: Country Music and the 'Southernization of America," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 16, no. 3 (1982), 84-85.
[53] Brackett, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader,* 50.

example, originally founded in 1964 by primarily West Coast country and western performers and fans, changed its name to the Academy of Country Music in 1974.[54]

That the classic western song became increasingly rare through the 1960s and 1970s, suggests that the dropping of "western" possibly reflected a gradual attenuation of its influence. However, western music's glamorous cowboy clothing styles had in fact become increasingly common among country performers since the 1930s as a way of shedding the music's relation to the rural poor.[55] And in the 1960s and 1970s, the lyrics of country songs increasingly followed this adoption of western music's sartorial style with references to the Southwest United States becoming increasingly common in such popular songs as Waylon Jenning's "Luckenbach Texas," and Willie Nelson's "Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys."[56]

Rather than the slow dying out of western music and its replacement by country, then, these changes suggest instead a synthesis of the two sub-groups of country and western into a single undifferentiated "country" genre.[57] As James Cobb points out, the increasing success of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and the association of country music with the area of the United States most associated with racial segregation, likely helped to fuel this merger. "Country music's failure to apologize for the southern past was mitigated to some extent by a fusion of the southeastern 'Deep South' with the 'Cowboy South' of the Southwest."[58] Recasting its lyrical tropes in the West rather than

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[54] Paul Kingsbury, Michael McCall and John W. Rumble, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Country Music*, *2nd ed*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 2.
[55] Cobb, "From Muskogee to Luckenbach," 82.
[56] For a discussion of the "Outlaw Country" music genre Nelson and Jennings represented see Barbara Ching, "Outlaw Country Music," in *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, *Volume VIII, Genres: North America*, eds. David Horn and John Shepherd (New York: Continuum, 2012), 362-64.
[57] That such a synthesis runs counter to the more usual process of fragmentation and differentiations that genres undergo as time passes poses interesting comparative questions beyond the scope of this work.
[58] Ibid, 89.

the traditional South allowed country to escape, at least partially, its Jim Crow associations by finding within the world of the cowboy and the Wild West a less divisive mythic home.[59] Therefore, by the late 1960s when various rock bands began to reveal overt country and western influences in their music, songs and lyrical tropes that would have earlier been categorized as western were largely assimilated within the broader country music tradition.

"Okie from Muskogee," the Beach Boys and the Grateful Dead

Although Merle Haggard has since claimed that its origins were something of a joke, his 1969 song "Okie from Muskogee" was enormously popular, reaching #1 on the Country charts in November of that year, staying there for three weeks, and winning Song of the Year at that year's Academy of Country Music awards.[60] Appealing to what Richard Nixon had labeled the "silent majority," it tapped into the significant resentment of and opposition to the perceived countercultural liberalism of the 1960s that had propelled Nixon to the presidency the previous year.[61] Its lyrics consist of a series of contrasts, recounted primarily using the first person plural "we," between the narrator's pride in the sartorial choices, and ways of having fun and respect for authority of traditional America in sharp contrast to what, most notably, "the hippies out in San Francisco do."[62]

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[59] One might think of Mel Brooks' 1974 comedy film *Blazing Saddles* as a possible commentary on the racial politics in such an idealized West.

[60] Travis D. Stimeling, *Cosmic Cowboys and New Hicks: The Countercultural Sounds of Austin's Progressive Country Music Scene*, 64.

[61] In his autobiography Haggard says that the song "was being understood and accepted in different ways, so I was not surprised when I was invited to appear on the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, a program that was eventually cancelled for its left-wing humor." He then relates an invitation to perform at a birthday party of Pat Nixon at the White House who "owned every recording I had ever made." Merle Haggard and Tom Carter, *My House of Memories: An Autobiography*, 192-94.

[62] See appendix B for the lyrics.

That just two years later, in April of 1971, the Beach Boys would perform "Okie from Muskogee" at the Fillmore East, one of the most iconic rock music venues at the time, backed up by, of all groups, the Grateful Dead, is therefore rather remarkable.[63] Not only were the Dead one of the groups most famously associated with the sixties' counterculture that the song took issue with (especially its San Francisco manifestations), but at the time the Beach Boys were themselves hardly the clean-cut, All-American looking group they had been in the early 1960s. Wearing long hair and beards (see figure 2.1) they were clearly presenting themselves as members of the counterculture, and undoubtedly hoped they would earn some credibility in the musical underground by performing with the Dead whose subcultural capital within the popular music industry was virtually unparalleled at the time.[64]

The most obvious way to understand the two groups' performance of "Okie from Muskogee" is as wholly parodic: the musicians mocking their own caricature in the song through its ironic appropriation. However, tempting as this may be, such an interpretation is not entirely unconvincing given the significant links between the counterculture and country music at the time. As one of the defining groups of the San Francisco psychedelic scene, there could hardly be a better representative of what, in the lyrics of "Okie from Muskogee," "the hippies out in San Francisco do" than the Grateful Dead: smoking marijuana, taking LSD, letting hair grow long and shaggy. And yet other songs by Haggard, such as "Mama Tried" and "Sing Me Back Home," as well as by other country-associated singers, such as "Big River" by Johnny Cash, and "El Paso" by Marty

[63] The concert is available for online streaming here: https://archive.org/details/gd1971-04-27.sbd.miller.114461.flac16.
[64] Kramer, "The Civics of Rock, 141.

Robbins, became regular parts of the Dead's repertoire around this time despite their musically and politically conservative associations.

Figure 2.1

The Dead had, however, undergone a transformation of their own in the previous two year; the country-music leanings on their two 1970 album releases, *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, in stark contrast to the experimental practices of their earlier records (see figure 2.2 for a picture of the Dead in 1970). Whereas their 1968 and '69 albums *Anthem of the Sun, Aoxomoxoa* and *Live/Dead* are laden with the sounds of experimental psychedelia, on *Workingman's* and *Beauty* (see figures 2.3 and 2.4 respectively for their album covers). Instead, lyrical evocations of miners, farmers, the beauty of nature and traditional figures such as Black Peter, the Candyman, and Casey Jones, are set to acoustic and pedal steel guitars (along with their usual electric ones), mandolin, banjo and three-part vocal harmonies.[65]

[65] For discussion of the process by which this change occurred, the motivations for it, and the beginnings of the Dead's relationship with the New Riders, see Blair Jackson, *Garcia: An American Life* (New York: Viking, 1999), 163-68; and Dennis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 316-21. In his dissertation, Michael Kaler explores this "Americana" period and its "retreat … from the apocalyptic excesses of the [earlier] Acid Rock phase" of the group's music and connects it to "a degree of recoil on the part of many Rock musicians and fans from the utopian ideals and rampant experimentalism of the late 1960s, in favor of claiming a traditional grounding for Rock music and the Rock scene, as can be seen from some of the later works of the Beatles, Creedence

Figure 2.2

Figure 2.3

Figure 2.4

Although the final abbreviated track on their previous album, *Live/Dead*, "We Bid You Goodnight," with its three-part, a cappella vocal harmonies and imperatival call to "lay your head/upon your savior's breast," could be seen to foreshadow these two albums' very different musical direction, most commentators were shocked by what they heard.[66] Relating it to Bob Dylan's then most recent, and, up to that time, most country music-inspired album *Nashville Skyline*, one reviewer notes,

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Clearwater Revival's success, the Band's late-1960s rise to popularity, and Bob Dylan's turn to Country music and his return to sparse, Folky music with *John Wesley Harding* in 1967." See his "Ensemble Stuff: The Grateful Dead's Development of Rock-Based Improvisational Practice and its Religious Inspiration" (PhD diss. – York University, 2014), 77-78. And the pseudonymous Light into Ashes has an extensive essay on the relationship of the Dead to "acoustic" music. See "The Dead's Acoustic Sets, 1969-70," http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2009/08/deads-acoustic-sets-1969-1970.html.

[66] At least one reviewer did connect the Dead's psychedelic rock to their later country-influenced rock. "Perhaps more than any other group, the Dead are leading the transition from the heavy Rock of the sixties to the mellow Folk Rock of the seventies. The first hints of the new trend came in their forth [sic] album, 'Live Dead,' in songs such as 'Dark Star' and 'We bid you good night'." Steve Nielan, "The 'Dead' is alive," GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 6.

> On the first listening, you just can't believe it's the Dead. Shades of Nashville Skyline! Jerry Garcia's mastery has found another true home in the pedal steel guitar, and the vocals are so clear and harmonious, it's difficult to accept from the Grateful Dead, so long unintelligible beneath barrages of acid-complex arrangements. Country simplicity seems to be the key, an apparent turnabout by the most innovative of the American Rock bands (with the possible exception of the Mothers of Invention).[67]

Here, the "apparent turnabout" by the Dead's "country simplicity" is marked as in seeming opposition to the group's previous status as rock music innovators. However, the "apparent" qualifier and seemingly continuing status of the Dead as one of the "most innovative of the American rock bands" calls this opposition into question suggesting instead that such changes are themselves *expressions* of such innovation.

Another reviewer, clearly influenced by the then popular "New Journalism" style of such writers as Hunter S. Thompson and Tom Wolfe, suggests that despite its popular appeal the album is an antidote to and offers an escape from the frenetic, overwhelming pace of modern life.

> Slam Ignite Red Yellow Green. Watch out David. I am not going to make it.
>
> Gotta get home. New Dead. Supposedly commercial but I have faith. Almost there but the guard hassling. "I live here". He doesn't believe it but he doesn't really give a shit so I'm home and the amps on and the the the [sic] Dead are flowing as their mellow ways and means are finally soaking in and Garcia's steel guitar, Weir's acoustic twelve, and the acid country flow has got my head back

[67] Jim Ogg, review of *Workingman's Dead*, p. b1, MS 332, ser. 4, GDA.

> and the trees and sounds and green have me sitting and relaxed and and.. [sic] They have done it again.[68]

After such a manic-like connections of words and Faulkner-like run-on sentence, the simplicity, grammatical correctness, and yet deliberate ambiguity of the last line (what is it exactly that they have done again?) suggests the album as part of a tradition of the group's salvational expressivity, providing a form of escape, if only temporarily, from the travails of modernity. But then the Dead's "mellow ways and means" are only possible because, as the writer says, "the amps on," thus simultaneously pointing to the technologically mediated character of the band's "acid country flow."

"An Evening with the Grateful Dead"

As these preceding reviews reveal, the use of the pedal steel guitar by the Dead's lead guitarist Jerry Garcia was often mentioned in discussions of the change that the band had recently undergone because of how unusual its use outside of country music was at the time. Although there was some precedent for its use by rock-affiliated musicians, its genre associations remained overwhelmingly tied to country music. Those rock-affiliated musicians who had used it, such as the Byrds' on their 1968 album *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* and the aforementioned 1969 album *Nashville Skyline* by Bob Dylan, had largely done so (as the names of these albums suggest) as part of a wholesale reinvention of themselves within the aesthetic of country music—if not, because of their continuing association with rock music, becoming country musicians themselves. Garcia's use of the pedal steel guitar within the Dead and their concomitant performance of country-associated music, in contrast, was *in addition* to, rather than replacing, the band's most

[68] Craig Bryson, review of *Workingman's Dead*, *Amazing Grace* GDA MS 332, ser. 4.

experimental musical practices.[69] Furthermore, its performance within the Dead by Garcia (who was in many ways the public face of the group) instead of a hired session musician, arguably revealed a degree of dedication and seriousness to country music in comparison to other rock-affiliated musicians who recorded country-influenced music around this time.

In 1969, Garcia's budding pedal steel guitar skills led him to form a country-rock side group with some old friends, the New Riders of the Purple Sage (NRPS), a band that also initially featured Dead bassist Phil Lesh and drummer Mickey Hart.[70] This band toured with the Dead in 1970 playing between a first "acoustic" set and a later electric one.[71] Named "An Evening with the Grateful Dead," these concerts were unusually long—five to six hours in length—and encompassed a possibly unprecedented musical stylistic variety. At least partly because of their unconventional nature, they received significant press coverage at the time. *Variety* magazine, for example, explained their genesis in terms of the Dead audience's preference for longer concerts.

> The unusual booking was prompted by the loyalty the Dead inspire from its followers and the knowledge that the band is most alive when there is no time limit placed upon its set. By devoting an entire evening to the Dead, Graham was able to solve a problem the sextet had presented in the past. Since the normal Fillmore bill includes three acts, the majority of Dead fans have refrained from

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[69] "They did not simply replace psychedelia with Country; they added new dimensions to an established oeuvre." McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 319.

[70] For perhaps the most extensive scholarly discussion of the history of the pedal steel guitar and its association with country music, see Kenneth Brandon Parker, "The American Pedal Steel Guitar: Folkloristic Analyses of Material Culture and Embodiment" (PhD diss. – University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2012), in particular pages 67-72.

[71] "Acoustic" is here in scare quotes because the music was still amplified through a PA system and featured bassist Phil Lesh on electric bass, though playing considerably quieter than during the band's electric sets. The primary differences between the "acoustic" sets and their usual electric ones were the two guitarists' use of acoustic guitars and the more folk and country music-focused repertoire.

> attending the early show where the band was limited to an hour set, resulting in sellouts for the late shows, but less than capacity for the first show. With tickets scaled to $5.50, the pair of concerts grossed $22,500.[72]

Unsurprisingly for an entertainment trade publication like *Variety*, the commercial reason for this unconventional concert format is made explicit. What is also evident, however, is that these concerts were motivated by the audience's demand for a certain kind of musical experience that the band could produce "when there is no time limit placed upon its set." Rather than the romanticized dogma of art and commerce as wholly antithetical, with art's authenticity inevitably compromised by commercial demands, what is shown here is their *productive* interaction. The unusual length and variety of the concert experience came about through the intersection of: 1) the band's enjoyment of playing long concerts with a wide range of musical styles; 2) their audience's desire to experience long concerts; 3) the promoter's, Bill Graham, unsurprising desire to make as much money as possible.

But along with the novelty of the concert format and the commercial reasons that motivated it, the author's discussion of the music performed is also interesting. Rather than simply a concert, this multi-part performance "falls more into the category of a music experience. Over the course of five-and-a-half hours, the Dead's trip through every facet of contemporary music, from soft folk to eerie electronic explorations exemplified an affinity for freedom and spontaneity that was reflected in the festive atmosphere that pervaded the Fillmore." Furthermore, there was, according to the author, an increase in energy and intensity as the concert progressed.

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[72]Jeff, "Grateful Dead: Fillmore East, NY," *Variety* (May 27, 1970), 40, 48.

> Part one featured five members of the Dead presenting an acoustic set of tranquil country-folk that provided a relaxing warmup to the energy that followed. The pace was quickened by The New Riders of the Purple Sage … The evening reached its zenith with stage three, the electricity of the Dead … Now when any rock band employing horns is said to fuse rock and jazz, the Dead, sans horns, perhaps best exemplify the qualities that are indigenous to jazz, freedom and improvisational instrumental jams. With Garcia's piercing guitar riffs leading the way, the Dead cohesively follow him through excursions that are as powerful as any in rock without sacrificing clarity.[73]

The performance structure so described suggests a teleological narrative as the musicians move from simpler traditional genres and styles, through electrically amplified but still formally traditional music, to the Dead's own experimental psychedelic rock. As another writer describing these concerts states: "The Dead build up their set very carefully and you progress with them from the acoustic segment to the electric."[74] A plausible interpretation of the implicit argument at work would be of a musical analogue of a progressive ascension from simple to complex, with the Dead's electric music overcoming the limitations of earlier stages.[75] But in 1971, having given last their

[73] Ibid, 48.
[74] Lisa Robinson, "The Grateful Dead are Grateful to Be Alive," *Nyack Journal*, Dec. 26, 1970 MS 332, Ser. 4, GDA.
[75] The comments on fusing rock and jazz are also interesting given the context at the time. By 1970 jazz-rock/jazz-fusion were significant forces in the music industry after the success of such groups as Blood, Sweat & Tears, Chicago and Miles Davis's highly influential album *Bitches Brew*. The Grateful Dead even shared a bill at San Francisco's Fillmore West with Miles Davis April 9-12, 1970.

acoustic sets in November 1970, they would evolve an even more complex, less teleological interweaving of musical styles and histories.[76]

Rock-Country-Jazz-Fusion?

Given the Dead's explicit invocations of musical traditionalism in 1969-70, it is not surprising that during this time they also began to incorporate a significant number of country music cover songs into their performances, alongside their own newly composed country-style originals. Although these newly introduced songs, and the albums on which they appeared, were in line with the broader country-rock genre of the early 1970s, their live performances continued to reflect their earlier experimentalism. Featuring long, highly improvised, sonically adventurous sections, they often sounded far closer to the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen than the concurrent country-rock style of, say, the Eagles.[77]

In 1971, the Dead began to interpolate these country songs within the larger form of their musical explorations, as well as to use country songs as segue destinations at their end. In doing so, they brought about dramatic stylistic contrasts as they moved between sections of their concerts dominated by the overt experimentation of atonality, electronic "noise" and the lack of a clearly identifiable pulse, and country's defining musical conservatism: tonal; clear, steady meter; and syllabic text settings.

During this period the Dead made use of two songs in particular for realizing these juxtapositions: Marty Robbins' "El Paso" and John Phillips' "Me and My Uncle."

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[76] They would, however, return to performing "acoustic" sets during a number of performances in San Francisco, New Orleans and New York in 1980. Songs from these were later released on the live album *Reckoning*.

[77] For detailed histories of country rock, see John Einarson, *Desperados: The Roots of Country Rock* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001); and Olivia Carter Mather, "'Cosmic American Music': Place and the Country Rock Movement, 1965-1974" (PhD diss. – UCLA, 2006).

That both are covers, rather than original songs by the band, is likely not a coincidence. For it is precisely as episodes of familiarity and relative stability—i.e. their *lack* of originality—that these songs are functioning, in contrast to the band's very different, though often connected through segues, free collective improvisation. There are also a number of similarities between them, as they share a common theme in the stories they narrate: both are set in the western United States, involve cowboys as antagonists, and end with the death of one of the primary characters, though with very different motivations and affective meanings.

"El Paso," which the Dead had been performing regularly since 1970, is the older of the two songs, having been composed by Marty Robbins and released in 1959 reaching #1 on both the Country & Western and Hot 100 charts in 1960.[78] It is a first person tale of a cowboy who falls in love, kills and is eventually killed in turn for his love in El Paso, Texas. In moderate 6/8 time and D major, it uses a cyclical AB form. The A section is formed by a repeating I-IV-V7-I progression that ends with the I becoming a V7 of IV to effect a modulation to the subdominant for the B section. It, in turn, ends with a movement up a major second to the dominant seventh of the tonic key to return to A major at the beginning of the overall form.

"Me and My Uncle," in contrast, is in E minor, set to a quick 2/4 time, and uses strophic form. Lacking formal divisions it depends for its harmonic interest on the modal borrowing of an A major chord IV chord as the climax of each strophe before a quick i-V7-i turnaround. Performed by the Dead since at least November of 1966, "Me and My

[78] Barbara J. Pruett, *Marty Robbins: Fast Cars & Country Music* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1990), 77. The earliest version by the Dead I have been able to find is during the late show's acoustic set at the Capitol Theater in Port Chester, New York on November 6, 1970 (https://archive.org/details/gd70-11-06.aud.warner.17183.sbeok.shnf).

Uncle" lasted in the band's performance repertoire longer than any other as guitarist Bob Weir's prototypical "Cowboy" song.[79]

"Dark Star>El Paso>Sing Me Back Home" – August 27, 1972

One of the more notable examples of the pairing and contrast of one of these country & western songs with music almost as different as can be imagined occurred during the Grateful Dead's performance on August 27, 1972. This concert is widely celebrated among the group's audience as one of their best on account of its high performance quality, friendly audience and idyllic rural setting.[80] During the group's third set, as an over 32-minute version of one of their most exploratory improvisational vehicles, "Dark Star," comes to an end with "apocalyptic" sounds of atonal dissonance and harsh, distorted guitars, and no clear rhythmic pulse—expressing the darkest, most sublime, "death-like" moments of the psychedelic experience—the group slowly coalesces around D major as a tonal center.[81] Rather than the various musicians having a clear destination in mind, however, an audible conflict arises as to which song will come next. With the beginning of its lead guitar introduction, guitarist Jerry Garcia suggests "Morning Dew," a song with apocalyptic undertones of its own given that its writer, Bonnie Dobson, wrote it as an expression of the aftermath of nuclear war.[82] After only three notes, however, rhythm guitarist Bob Weir and drummer Bill Kreutzmann cut him off as they assert the introduction to "El Paso." The transition between the two songs is quite smooth, but one

[79] One of the earliest performances of "Me and My Uncle" by the Grateful Dead was on November 29, 1966 at the Matrix in San Francisco (https://archive.org/details/gd1966-11-29.sbd.graham-perlstein.106497.flac16). Other "cowboy" songs of Weir's are Johnny Cash's "Big River" and the Weir-Barlow original "Mexicali Blues." In later years two of these would often be played in quick succession, without a pause, in the middle of the band's first sets. For a discussion of the song's origins and history with the Dead see David Dodd, "Greatest Stories Ever Told – 'Me and My Uncle,'" (http://www.dead.net/features/greatest-stories-ever-told/greatest-stories-ever-told-me-and-my-uncle).

should not let that efface the remarkable change that takes place: from highly dissonant, improvised sounds at the end of "Dark Star" to the I-IV-V harmonic progression in 6/8 time of "El Paso" in less than two minutes.[83]

Given that "Morning Dew" is one of the Grateful Dead's most popular songs, and in the early 1970s often worked as a particularly effective segue out of "Dark Star," some commentators have criticized Weir for cutting off Garcia's seemingly far more powerful and appropriate choice.[84] Yet even though "El Paso" is musically almost as different as one could imagine from the apocalyptic darkness with which the group ends "Dark Star," it is about death (a man dies fighting against overwhelming odds to be with the woman he

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[80] *Veneta, Oregon: August 27, 1972* (Burbank, CA: Rhino Entertainment, 2013), R2-536029. The entire concert is also available for online streaming at https://archive.org/details/gd72-08-27.sbd.orf.3328.sbeok.shnf. Luckily, a significant part of it was also filmed: see *Sunshine Daydream, The Movie*. The third set that is discussed here is also available on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgxGAJ2CDuI with the transition from "Dark Star" to "El Paso" around 33:00 minutes. For a detailed discussion of this performance see John R. Dwork et al, "8/27/72," in *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium, Vol. 1*, eds. Michael M. Getz and John R. Dwork (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 401-11. A number of the song versions performed during this concert are considered among their best ever, such as "Birdsong," "China Cat Sunflower>I Know You Rider," "Playing in the Band," and "Dark Star." The ">" indicates a segue between otherwise distinct songs.

[81] "Dark Star" is undoubtedly the Grateful Dead original song that has been the focus of more scholarly attention than any other. (Although given its mutability and often expansiveness, "song" seems too limiting to describe what it is.) See Graeme Boone, "Tonal and Expressive Ambiguity in 'Dark Star,'" in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, eds. John R. Covach and Graeme M. Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 171-210; Graeme Boone, "Dark Star Mandala," in *The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation*, eds. Jim Tuedio and Stan Spector (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2010), 85-106; David Malvinni, *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 79-136; Kaler, "Excursus on 'Dark Star'" in "Ensemble Stuff," 109-110 and passim. See Getz and Dwork, "8-27-1972," p. 410 for the description of this passage as a "cathartic voyage through a metaphorical apocalypse." Dani Ruby in "On the Road with the Grateful Dead," p. S7 also points out the commonality of "apocalyptic imagery" in the Dead's music: "Throughout the songs one is struck repeatedly by the thoughts that a terrible moment is coming, and that it will be followed by arrival in a new age of fertility and beauty."

[82] Robert G. Weiner, "Atomic Music: Country Conservatism and Folk Discontent," *Studies in Popular Culture* 19, no. 2 (1996), 227.

[83] For another discussion of this performance, especially the transition from "Dark Star" to "El Paso," see Richard Pettengill, "Performing Collective Improvisation: The Grateful Dead's 'Dark Star,'" in *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 47. See also David Malvinni, "'Now Is the Time Past Believing': Concealment, Ritual, and Death in the Grateful Dead's Approach to Improvisation," in *All Graceful Instruments: The Contexts of the Grateful Dead Phenomenon*, ed. Nicholas G. Meriwether (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 10-11.

[84] Dwork et al, *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium, Vol. 1*, 410.

loves) and its choice leads to an interesting result. For after they finish "El Paso," Garcia leads the group into a cover of another country song concerned with death and loss: Merle Haggard's "Sing Me Back Home." Its first verse tells the story of a man on his way to be executed who, as he passes the cell of his "guitar-playin' friend," asks the prison warden to let him sing his last request. Its second verse relates how on a Sunday morning, a man asked a choir, who had come "in to sing a few old gospel songs," to sing "a song my mama sang … before you move along." The chorus is particularly powerful in its evocation of tradition, memory and home and their juxtaposition with the imminence of death and departure.[85]

What is going on in this odd mélange of musical styles and histories? "Dark Star" is clearly an evocation of the psychedelic experience as it narrates a journey through a profound sense of doubt, transcendence and crisis (even "death") of the ego.[86] Although other versions resolve to consonance, major tonalities and upbeat rhythms before the introduction of another song, here the resolution takes place between songs with the segue into "El Paso."[87]

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[85] See appendix B for the lyrics. Haggard discusses the song's origins in *My House of Memories: An Autobiography* (New York: First IT Books, 2011), 140.

[86] See Steven Skaggs, "'Dark Star' as an Example of Transcendental Aesthetics," *The Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*, ed. David Dodd (http://artsites.ucsc.edu/GDead/agdl/ds.html). On the role of the dissolution of the ego in psychedelic experiences see David R. Crownfield, "Religion in the Cartography of the Unconscious: A Discussion of Stanislav Grof's 'Realms of the Human Unconscious,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44, no. 2 (1976), 313. Unlike the version of "Dark Star" on *Live/Dead*, discussed in the previous chapter as an evocation of birth and childhood, this version is quite different, notably lacking its second verse, and is of a much "darker" mood overall.

[87] Perhaps the most celebrated such example of a "Dark Star" where such a resolution happens prior to segueing into another song is from April 8, 1972 at the Empire Pool, Wembley, England. "The highlight of this 'Dark Star' is a heavenly jam at its finale that rises out of controlled madness and congeals into pure bliss." Getz and Dwork, *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium*, 372). This performance has been officially released on two CD collections: *Steppin' Out With the Grateful Dead: England '72* and *The Complete Europe '72*. Such musical diversity apparently internal to "Dark Star" raises a question as to the song's ontology. That is, what *is* "Dark Star" given the extremely wide variety of musical possibilities that are encompassed by its designation? Are all the musical sections played by the band after they have begun "Dark Star" and before they clearly begin another song properly characterized as part of "Dark Star" even if the musical material seemingly bears no relation at all to the song as originally recorded in 1967? Or is it

The differences, however, are remarkable: "Dark Star" with its highly improvised, polyphonic texture that moves from a jazzy A Mixolydian/E Dorian modality to an epic-sounding, atonal sonic breakdown, versus "El Paso," a popular, country & western waltz using the most basic of chords, whose primary harmonic interest is a clichéd modulation to the subdominant in its B section. The first is an ideal example of the cause and effect of the cultural accreditation of popular music in the latter half of the 1960s on account of its foregrounding of group improvisation, lyrical depth, extended form, the use of non-traditional textures, and atonality.[88] The second, by comparison, completely lacks any such characteristics of cultural accreditation. It is musically quite simple and, moreover, a cover version, thus lacking the higher cultural capital attendant to original songs in rock music since the mid-1960s' popularity of the Beatles and Bob Dylan for whom the composition of original songs was a *sine qua non* of their status as *artists* rather than mere popular musicians.[89] In addition, not only is it a country & western song (or more precisely, given its cowboy theme and setting, a western one), a musical genre with relatively low symbolic capital, it was, moreover, a #1, multiple-chart topping *hit*.[90] It is, then, not a rare, relatively unknown find by the musicians demonstrating their deep knowledge of country music, and thus of their attendant cultural capital, as a performance

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more appropriate to think of such seemingly unrelated musical episodes as related but ontologically distinct "jams." The most thorough attempt at answering this question is undoubtedly Graeme M. Boone's "Dark Star: Biography of a Song – An analytical listening across its recorded history, featuring symbolic annotations of its constituent episodes," paper presentation at the *So Many Roads: The World in the Grateful Dead* conference, San Jose State University, November 8, 2014. Tracey Nicholls has explored a similar situation in regards to the evolution of John Coltrane's performances of "My Favorite Things." See her "It Does Too Matter: Aesthetic Value(s), Avant-Garde Art, and Problems of Theory Choice" (PhD diss. – McGill University, 2005), 105-115.

[88] Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 175-80.

[89] Keir Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, eds. Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 119.

[90] On the low cultural status of country & western music see Maria E. Grabe, "Massification Revisited: Country Music and Demography," *Popular Music and Society* 21, no. 4 (1997), 68.

of an obscure country song would have been.[91] Indeed, in the context of this particular performance, its familiarity and musical simplicity seem to be precisely *the point* of its choice to contrast so dramatically with what has come before.

Even though it differs significantly from its predecessor on account of its 4/4-meter and slow 48 beat-per-minute tempo, "Sing Me Back Home" continues in the same country & western music genre as "El Paso." The simplicity of its music is matched by its lyrics, with their call for a renewal of the old and a celebration of the power of tradition.[92] However, this artistic conservatism is realized in terms of music's role in strengthening community, realizing solidarity with the victims of unjustified power—the song gives no explanation for the prisoner's imminent execution, only the certainty of his fate—and connection with the comforts and temporal defiance of memory, religious tradition, and longing for home. These values are expressed explicitly in the lyrics and implicitly in its placement in the performance as a realization of social reintegration after the psychic and social challenges narrated through "Dark Star" and "El Paso." Such associations make for a tangled weave of political commitments with no clear position on the usual right-left, conservative versus liberal axis.

"Dark Star>Cumberland Blues" – September 27, 1972

Another interesting and somewhat similar example of the overt connection of extreme sonic experimentalism with relatively simple and conservative musical styles, is from exactly a month later during the Dead's September 27, 1972 performance at the Stanley

[91] On the concept of "cultural capital" see Pierre Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993), 131-41.
[92] "Sing me back home with a song I used to hear/And make my old memories come alive/And take me away and turn back the years/Sing me back home before I die." See appendix C for the remainder of the song's lyrics.

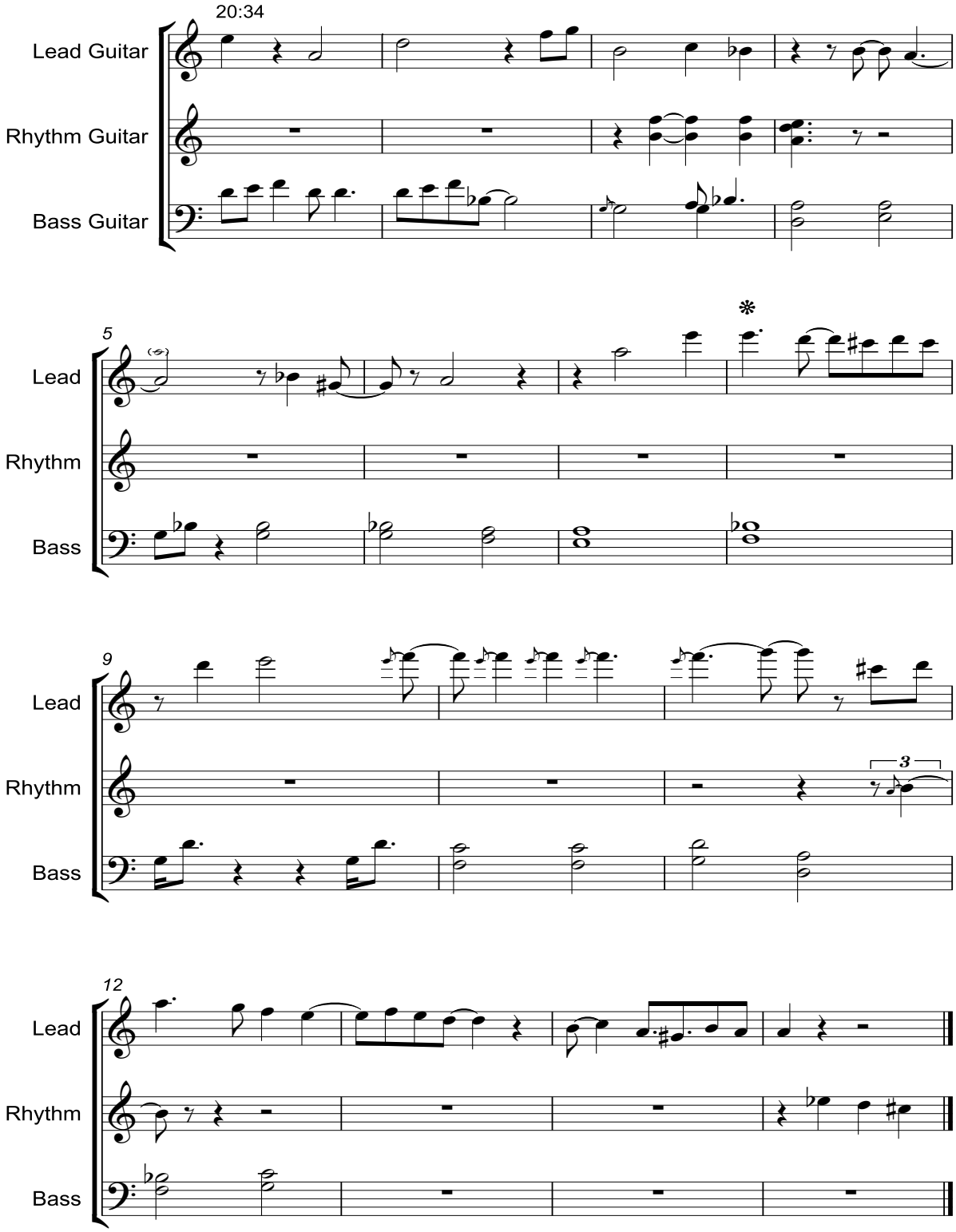
Theatre, in Jersey City, New Jersey.[93] Also involving "Dark Star," it is as experimentally exploratory as the one on August 27, but has a quite different mood overall. While it never reaches the high degree of atonal dissonance and apocalyptic-like power as the earlier version does (especially in its last ten minutes), this performance does realize a level of quiet intensity that the August 27 one lacks. Also notable about this version is the extended length of the pre-first verse instrumental section: the vocals don't begin until 24:39 into the song. During this extended pre-verse improvisation, the band moves from the song's "home" musical space of the "Dark Star" progression of A major-E minor, through a double-time section in E Dorian (definitely felt by the 10:00 mark), that then tapers off after 16:30 leading to a harmonic shift first indicated by the bass at 16:44 with Lesh's repeated use of a low F.

From there, the sense of tonality and meter slowly disintegrates as each instrument follows Lesh's lead in stretching the music's formal boundaries. At 18:28, a strange, quasi-electronically generated noise sounds as all the instrumentalists play freely with E as a very loose central pitch while the piano plays rapid 16th notes in minimalistic fashion through a wah-wah pedal creating slow timbral shifts. The band continues to decrease in volume and texture with each musician showing remarkable restraint in their playing. The center point of this section, if not the entire piece, occurs between 20:00 and 22:00 minutes. With the drums, piano and rhythm guitar having dropped, the bass and lead guitar are left alone in improvised counterpoint (see example 2.1).

Although very free (the bar lines are only approximate since there is no clear meter), guitarist Garcia and bassist Lesh seem to be listening incredibly intently to each

[93] The entirety of this concert has been officially released as *Dick's Picks 11*. It is available for streaming at https://archive.org/details/gd72-09-27.sbd.vernon.18106.sbeok.shnf.

Example 2.1: "Dark Star" 9/27/1972 (Excerpt)



other; that what each does depends completely on the actions of the other. In measure 7, Lesh plays an E-A dyad. Garcia responds with a high A from which he leaps to the E a

perfect 5th above, melodically matching Lesh's ongoing two notes but inverted to produce a perfect 5th. At 21:06 (marked with a *), Garcia repeats the E but this time with the underlying bass dyad moved a half step higher to F-Bb, thus producing a tri-tone relation above the bass' perfect fourth sounding like an anguished cry. No drums, piano, voice or other sound can be heard. It is as if the entire 21 previous minutes of this "Dark Star" has led inexorably to this singular point in time.

As powerful as this moment is, however, the music continues as Garcia then resolves the tri-tone down to a mixture of major and minor 10ths of D and C#. Lesh responds by moving up another whole step but now with a melodic interval of a perfect 5th, G to D. Garcia returns again to D from his previous C# and then rises, similarly, a whole step to E, creating a major 16th (a major 2nd two octaves above). He then repeatedly bends the E up to an F as the bass moves down a whole step with an F-C perfect 5th dyad. As the guitar rises another whole step to G, the bass again follows with a parallel whole step movement back up to G-D, after which Lesh moves in parallel motion down to D-A. Garcia then leaps down a tritone to C#, rising again a half step to D before dropping down a perfect fourth to A at the beginning of bar 12. From this A, Garcia works his way down its minor scale, passing through the A an octave below to turn at the neighboring G#, then leaping up to B before finally coming to rest on A.

The focus on A, C# and D is not a coincidence since they are also defining aspects of the A Mixolydian mode that is the home modality of "Dark Star."[94] Garcia, then, is already hinting that the band has reached the furthest point out they will go on this particular improvisational journey and is beginning the movement back to "home" in order to set up the beginning of the first verse. And this is indeed what happens. Weir, the

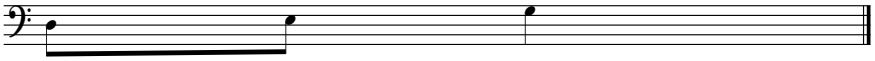
[94] In A Mixolydian, A is the tonic, C# is the major third, and D is the minor seventh.

other guitarist, begins to be more active as Garcia and Lesh further develop their contrapuntal dialogue. At 24:04. Garcia lands on an A after Lesh plays an A-D dyad, which leads into the first hint of the "Dark Star" progression (DSP) at 24:08. The band repeats the DSP four complete times before the vocals finally enter with the first verse at 24:39.

With the end of the first verse at 25:53, the group continues in the A Mixolydian/E Dorian modal space that primarily defines "Dark Star." Around 29:35, Garcia leads the band in a crescendo that peaks at 29:53 after which the band's energy somewhat dissipates. At 30:02, bassist Lesh, likely responding to the space the higher pitched instruments are leaving, moves up from the low pitches he had previously been concentrating on to play a short three-note phrase very similar to the introductory bass part of the Dead song "Cumberland Blues" (see example 2.2). Because the notes D, E, G that make it up are contained within the E Dorian space that the band is using as the harmonic basis for their improvisation, there is nothing out of the ordinary in Lesh using them in this context. But phrased as they are here, a movement up a perfect 4th from D to G through a passing E—a fairly cliché bass riff in pop, rock and country music—they suggest G as a tonal center. Whether Lesh planned this action as a suggestion or it came out spontaneously as he searched for something to play is almost certainly unknowable. But whatever the truth, over the next minute a remarkable change takes place as the band segues from the swing 4/4, E-Dorian polyphony of "Dark Star" into the 2/4, G-Mixolydian/blues of "Cumberland Blues" for the first and only time in their recorded history.[95]

[95] Having scoured the records of Grateful Dead performances for other examples in which they segue from "Dark Star" into "Cumberland Blues," I am quite confident in claiming that they only did so once on

Example 2.2



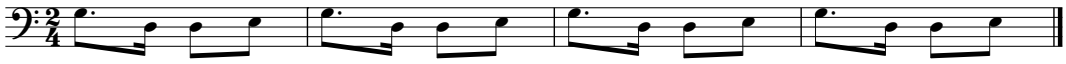
At first, there is no immediately obvious response to Lesh's phrase as the band continues its collective improvisation in a loose E Dorian, with guitarist Garcia consistently emphasizing F# in various octaves, thus implying an overall E minor 9th chord in relation to the rest of the band. However, from 30:41-45 Lesh responds with descents from G to F# in the same octave as his earlier "Cumberland Blues"-like phrase as if to invert Garcia's repeated moves of E-F#. It is at this point that Lesh seems to have decided to try to move the band into "Cumberland" as he then reverses his earlier phrase as a descent from his high G, through E to D. By this time guitarist Garcia has dropped out leaving only pianist Godchaux and guitarist Weir in a restrained harmonic dialogue with Lesh. Seizing the opportunity made available by this space, Lesh begins "Cumberland Blues" (0:00 on the recording) by repeating, though at first fairly quietly, the song's distinctive bass introduction riff he had first implied 50 seconds before (see example 2.3). By 0:05, drummer Kreutzmann has followed Lesh's lead and switched from the medium 4/4 swing of "Dark Star" to the fast 2/4 of "Cumberland, while Weir has also clearly shifted to its G dominant seventh tonic harmony.[96] Hearing their confirmation of his segue choice, Lesh's playing increases in volume and assertiveness before dropping down an octave to leave room for the higher pitched instruments. The band then continues into "Cumberland Blues," playing its usual structure and form though considerably extended, lasting just over 6 minutes compared to the 3:18 length of

September 27, 1972. It is, of course, possible that there was another instance, the records of which (if they even exist) I have not been able to find.

[96] Although these are modes rather than keys, it is interesting that the root movement of up a minor third from E minor (Dorian) to G major (Mixolydian) parallels the standard relationship of a primary theme in a minor key to its relative major key subordinate theme in sonata form.

its studio recorded version. Although the juxtaposition of styles is not quite as extreme as in the "Dark Star>El Paso" of a month before, the band has still managed to travel an enormous musical distance in a very short period of time.

Example 2.3



Conclusion

As with the Beach Boys and the Dead's version of "Okie from Muskogee," the most obvious way of understanding the Dead's juxtaposition of "Dark Star" with the country and western invocations of "El Paso" and "Cumberland Blues" is as parody. But such an interpretation is problematic given that the Dead seem completely serious in the performance of these songs, as also with that of "Sing Me Back Home." In sharp contrast with the music of Frank Zappa, perhaps the other most notable California rock musician who infused rock music with high-art influences, parody is virtually absent from the music of the Dead.[97]

But though such realizations of musical diversity are not parodic, they are arguably *ironic* given how deliberately they contradict expectations. Although almost certainly arising from in the moment collective improvisation, seguing from the exploratory, experimental spaces and sounds of "Dark Star" into the country & western sounds of "El Paso" and "Cumberland Blues" is obviously not random; these are clearly deliberate, conscious acts. But what kind of irony is this? And if, according to

[97] On Zappa's parodic use of "low" cultural elements see Max Paddison, "Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde," in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009): 220-24; and David Ingram, "'*Go to the Forest and Move'*: 1960s American Rock Music as Electronic Pastoral," *49th Parallel* 20 (Winter 2006-07): 8-10.

Kierkegaard, "the deepest modern seriousness must express itself through irony," then how should such irony inform our understanding of the Dead's musical aesthetic?[98]

One way to potentially understand the connection of these very different pieces, and of the wider stylistic diversity that the Dead so often realized, is as an expression of postmodern pluralism. As theorists of the postmodern have argued, having rejected, or recognized the continued futility of modernism's teleological drive for new artistic forms and ever-greater autonomy, postmodern artists instead turn to combining older forms and styles, the genuinely old and the more recently old, in innovative but often quite explicitly popular ways. Jean Baudrillard, for example, states that "playing with the pieces—that is postmodern."[99] And in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson discusses John Portman's Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles as a paradigmatic example of postmodern architecture. Rather than the utopian intentions and dramatic contrasts between buildings and their surrounding environments that characterized the work of Le Corbusier and the International Style, arguably the pinnacle of modernist architecture, the Bonaventure aims not to transform the surrounding through the radicalism of its spatial innovations but to instead fit into it. Such buildings, Jameson thinks,

> no longer attempt, as did the masterworks and monuments of high modernism, to insert a different, a distinct, an elevated, a new Utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign system of the surrounding city, but rather they seek to speak

[98] Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 14.
[99] "Interview: Game with Vestiges," *On the Beach* 5 (Winter 1984), 24. See also the section "Playing with the Pieces: Postmodern Styles and Identities" in Simon Gottschalk, "Uncomfortably Numb: Countercultural Impulses in the Postmodern Era," *Symbolic Interaction* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1993), 365-68.

> that very language, using its lexicon and syntax as that has been emblematically "learned from Las Vegas."[100]

And instead of the modernist mantra of *form follows function*, the Bonaventure revels in form *not* following function, purposefully frustrating attempts to orientate oneself to the point that businesses within it suffer because potential customers are sometimes unable to find them a second time.[101]

But applying such a postmodernist interpretation to the Dead's performances, and to the counterculturalism of sixties' San Francisco more broadly, is problematic. Although the stylistic pluralism and popular appeal of postmodernism are certainly present, others of its seemingly essential characteristics are not. Sixties' counterculturalism was, after all, strongly characterized by highly utopian, progressive intentions; and this is no less true of the Grateful Dead and its audience. Their concerts were understood, by both the band and audience members, as attempts to realize a transformational musical space that through its affective power would influence audiences, and through them society at large, for the better.[102] At the same time, however, their music, and that of other countercultural musicians, was also conceived (as the aforementioned chorus of Mitchell's "Woodstock" makes clear) as conservationist, if not conservative, in attempting to hold onto values, traditions and essential truths threatened by a hostile world. But neither of these interpretations are compatible with

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[100] *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 39.

[101] Ibid, 43-44. On the origins, history and critical appraisal of "form follows function" see Jan Michl, "Form Follows What? The Modernist Notion of Function as a *Carte Blanche*," http://janmichl.com/eng.fff-hai.html.

[102] In the words of Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia, "I think of the Grateful Dead as being a crossroads or a pointer sign and what we're pointing to is that there's a lot of universe available, that there's a whole lot of experience available over here. We're kinda like a signpost, and we're *also* pointing to danger, to difficulty, we're pointing to bummers."

postmodernism as it is usually understood given its disavowal of progress towards a future better world or any possible return to a lost Edenic innocence. It is also difficult to see what comparable function that the musical form of the Dead's performance would not be following as a postmodern rejection of the modernist "form follows function" ethos. As performances that are widely thought of as one some of the group's best—ideal expressions of their musical style as well as the communal cultural values with which they are associated—the form, though strange for popular music on account of its stylistic diversity, seems, rather, to follow its function very well indeed.

Another commonly conceived characteristic of postmodernism is a purposeless-like play with the diversity that it revels within. Having disposed of modernism's teleological drive, its seriousness gives way to a reveling in the freedom to act in non-goal directed ways. Rather than the old and new wholly opposed, they are, instead, thoroughly comingled. Jean-Francois Lyotard refers to this as the "incredulity toward metanarratives," with a list of "isms" as the target: Marxism, Freudianism, Structuralism, Existentialism, and so forth.[103]

However, such a total distrust of meta-narratives also seems problematic in the case of the Dead and their audience. For the Dead and the rest of the counterculture, there certainly was a reveling in the moment, Nietzschean-like embrace of life in all of its manifestations.[104] However, rather than expressing a kind of "beyond good and evil" value neutrality such seemingly purposeless play does have an intended purpose: to break the chains of rationalism, free the human spirit from the tyranny of reason, and thereby

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[103] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneanapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv. Postmodernism, then, could perhaps be thought paradoxically as an anti-ism -ism.
[104] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 333.

more closely come to what they believed to be the essence of the human condition.[105] It is, thus, highly goal directed, which is, again, hardly characteristic of accounts of postmodernism given its explicit disavowal of teleology. Postmodernism does not, therefore, seem to be an appropriate basis for understanding the Dead's variety of stylistic mélange.

As an alternative interpretive framework, Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom's argument for the importance of movement, or "flow," in film on account of its montage, assemblage character is arguably more promising. "To get 'flow,'" they write, "the new concept is introduced from within the expression of the old; it begins as a small part of the first and gradually eclipses it. But the new is presented from a reference point within the old."[106] Rather than simple juxtaposition of old and new—analogous in the political realm to, respectively, conservatism versus liberalism—Williams and Orrom point to their interpenetration: to be effective aesthetically, and arguably politically as well, the new should not be conceived as wholly in opposition to the old, imagining itself capable of realizing a radical break with the past. Instead, it must develop out of it.

One can see here a connection between the implicit aesthetic organicism at work here and Williams' paradoxical interest, despite his Marxist sympathies, in Edmund Burke, the founder of modern conservatism and avowed enemy of those who would think themselves able to eliminate the inconsistency, contradiction and irrationality within human relations.[107] Transferred to the political sphere, the importance and method of realization that Williams and Orrom attribute to "flow" bears more than a small relation

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[105] Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 109.
[106] Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954), 84.
[107] Tony Pinkney, "Modernism and Cultural Theory," in *Politics of Modernism: Raymond Williams*, ed. Tony Pinkney (New York: Verso, 2007), 11.

to Burke's description of society as "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born," in opposition to the radical rationalism of the capital-fueled Revolution, which believed that society could be wholly and radically remade through the application of reason.[108] There is, of course, also a profound difference between Burke and Williams on account of the former's belief in the relative stasis of social positions versus the latter's desire to change them in a more egalitarian direction. But they share a suspicion of cultural forces that claim the possibility of an escape from history, a suspicion widely shared among countercultural forces despite their sometime utopian moments.

To then return again to the music at the heart of this chapter, the Dead's non-parodic association of such vastly divergent genres in their own performances, as well as with the Beach Boys, implicitly affirms their equal validity as musical choices—in sharp contrast to traditional high/low aesthetic hierarchies. Rather than one genre privileged over others, the Dead foreground both the obvious generic differences, but also the viability of connecting them as parts of an overall performance, implicitly suggesting the possibility of holding in tension, if never ultimately resolving, the contradictions and inconsistencies of modernity. Country music thus serves as a marker of tradition, but rather than opposed to the new, here tradition is its necessary counterpart: a conservation of the old (at least its positive aspects) alongside the new instead of the latter's wholesale rejection as the political ideology of contemporary conservatism often insists is necessary. Recognizing the sometime conservative character of countercultural forces not only renders far better their actual cultural complexity, but also helps illuminate the

[108] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 114.

countercultural forces within country music as it tries to maintain the traditions and sense of community subverted by the forces of modernization and liberal individualism.

Chapter 3:
Pastoral Complexity in the Music of the Grateful Dead

This chapter extends the concern of the previous chapter with the penchant of some rock music groups in the San Francisco Bay Area in the early 1970s of synthesizing, or dramatically juxtaposing, relatively traditional musical forms with overtly experimental ones further into the period of 1973-74. Because of the debates their use has engendered among many scholars and critics, a particular area of focus is on the prevalent use of pastoral tropes in order to suggest alternative ways of understanding music that makes use of them. Using Leo Marx's interpretation of the pastoral I argue that in many (though certainly not all) instances the use of such tropes by these musician represents highly aware and self-reflective explorations of a thoroughly modern conflict: the desire to preserve and hold on to what is slipping ever further away into the past, while simultaneously yearning for a better future yet to come.

Indeed, this paradox, of being drawn to both the past and the future, may be, as Marshall Berman argues, the essence of the modern experience. Quoted in the last chapter but again relevant here is Marshall Berman's observation that "To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction …We might even say that to be fully modern is to be anti-modern."[1] Rather than a simplistic flight from the real world or delusional fantasy, as they are sometimes characterized, these evocations of the pastoral, and through them the past, were thoroughly modern responses to the travails of postwar, North American modernity.

However, such modern evocations of the past, in dialogue with the extremities of the avant-garde, challenge the ideology of liberal-progressivism, which has not only

[1] Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air,* 13.

exerted profound and widespread influence in recent centuries but has also been the primary fuel for modernist aesthetics. Perhaps given its most cogent form by Immanuel Kant in his "Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitan Plan," he argues that the history of humanity is necessarily one of gradual moral improvement, characterized by the overcoming of all particularistic forms of ethical-political attachment, leading inevitably towards a universal republican state.[2]

On this view—or at least common understandings of it—the past is but a near endless series of barbarism and moral turpitude from which progress has thankfully partially freed us, and will in time inevitably fully accomplish.[3] Modernist artists, since at least Baudelaire and his vitriolic attacks on Romanticism, have largely justified their practices as realizations of such progress, espousing an aesthetic ideology in which the development of new forms characterized by evermore-radical gestures, and the concomitant rejection of the past, was the *sine qua non* of artistic legitimacy.[4] This aesthetic ideology reached its apogee in the two decades following World War II with the

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[2] "The History of the Human Species as a whole may be regarded as the unraveling of a hidden Plan of Nature for accomplishing a perfect State of Civil Constitution for society in its internal relations (and, as the condition of that, by the last proposition, in its external relations also) as the sole state of society in which the tendencies of human nature can be all and fully developed." Immanuel Kant, "Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmo-Political Plan," in *Thomas De Quincey: The Complete Collection* (Amazon Digital Services, 2016), 33.

[3] Walter Benjamin expresses this view, though not without considerable ambivalence, in the ninth of his "Theses on the Philosophy of History": "There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth stands open and his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, to awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257-58.

[4] See David Carrier, "Baudelaire, Pater, and the Origins of Modernism," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1994), 39-43. And though a progress in morals has certainly not been the goal of many modernist artists, the claim that they are only revealing the reality of what many would rather pretend did not exist, an oft-repeated retort to critics, implies a progressive moral stance as a form of illumination and enlightenment.

triumph of high modernism in painting (the Abstract Expressionists), architecture and urban design (the International Style of Corbusier, Robert Moses' developments in and around New York City), post-Joycean literature (Samuel Beckett, William Faulkner, William S. Burroughs), and music (Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and the Darmstadt School), among other artistic areas.

In the 1960s challenges to the power and influence of these styles grew substantially. The Pop Art of Andy Warhol and others could hardly have been more different than the Abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko. And in her highly influential 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs challenged the presumptions of modernist architecture and urban design, most directly that of Robert Moses who had forcefully rebuilt much of New York City to great detriment of many of its citizens, especially those in the South Bronx.[5] In such a context, one of the most radical ideological moves was to question narratives of progress, to ask whether greater knowledge, and an increase in available possibilities, was necessarily an improvement compared to that which came before or if such supposed "progress" was even necessary. Not surprisingly, such doubts were reflected in contemporary aesthetic discourses as well—but not without controversy.

Countercultural Pastoralism and Its Critiques

The influence of romantic pastoralism on the countercultures of the sixties has received substantial opprobrium from many scholars and music critics who have portrayed its musicians and audiences as both idealistically utopian, and disturbingly reactionary. Making use of ideas, images and sounds that recall a pre-industrial, bucolic world, these

[5] See Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 290-96.

scholars and critics argue, suggests that the conflicting demands of individual freedom and social engagement could be harmoniously reconciled through a mystical communion with nature rather than a materialist-based change in economic relations. Furthermore, such invocations of the pastoral are in tension with, if not outright contradict, countercultural faith in the liberatory power of technological progress.

While there certainly is a pastoral theme in a significant amount of the rock music from the Bay Area in the period of 1965-75 (indeed in the countercultures of this period more broadly), to understand its use as entirely the expression of ingenuous, unreflective fantasies riven with inconsistency is too simplistic. While these qualities characterize some countercultural individuals from this period, other artists and their audiences made use of the pastoral trope in highly conscious, critically self-aware ways. The focus of this dissertation on the Grateful Dead is partly motivated by the belief that they consistently narrated the latter rather than the former, consciously working through the contradictions of the pastoral vision, and its arguably fraught relationship with technology, within their dialogic, collectively improvised instrumental performances. As literary theorist Brent Wood notes about the poetry of Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter, the pastoral allows for the communication of metaphorical ideas "with a sense of timelessness," setting up "a tension between the setting of the story and the setting of its audience."[6] Rather than a simplistic escapism into the past or natural world, the pastoral functions as a process of "reinterpreting the old culture to the new through unusual approaches to conventional patterns," of which the Dead made extensive use.[7]

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[6] Brent Wood, "Robert Hunter's Oral Poetry: Mind, Metaphor, and Community," *Poetics Today* 24, no. 1 (2003), 47-48.
[7] Ibid, 48.

Many in the first half of the 1970s did not, however, see technology and the pastoral as necessarily in opposition to each other. Discussing the Dead's July 21, 1974 performance in Los Angeles at the Hollywood Bowl, music critic Richard Cromelin pointed out that the band's "relaxed pace and deliberate progress are apparently highly appreciated by its audience to whom the Dead remains a larger-than-music symbol of an ideal pastoral/electric life-style."[8] Although in arguable opposition to each other, here the pastoral and electric power are conceived of as symbiotic elements of an exemplary way of life that the Dead model in their music.

Although such an ideal may seem difficult to believe in or even accept as a possibility in the more cynical world of the 21st century, in the early 1970s this was clearly not the case. Rather than simply dismissed on account of a perceived lack of realism, such a perspective, and the music that was so integral to it, deserve to be taken seriously, especially since they continue to exert significant cultural influence today. Instead of functioning solely as escapist dream, as such a perspective has often been critically characterized, it has and continues to be a core element in the creation of epiphanic, revelatory aesthetic experiences: through the simultaneous juxtaposition, mutual production, and collectively improvised development of radically divergent musical and lyrical histories, spaces, and times, the veil of every-day normality can be temporarily removed and ecstatic experiences thereby optimally realized.

Musical practices in the early 1970s are especially interesting in such a context on account of how invocations of the pastoral were then often foregrounded, reflecting and diverging from the broader popularity of country-rock and primarily acoustic guitar-based singer-songwriters within the popular music industry. The Grateful Dead's 1973-

[8] "Grateful Dead in Concert," *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1974 (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 8, June 1974).

studio album *Wake of the Flood* is an especially germane example of a paradoxical invocation of the pastoral and its civilized urbanity antipode. Given the overwhelming importance of the Dead's live performances to themselves and their audience (far greater than that of their studio recordings), however, considering the performativity of their music is also vital. That is, understanding how the Dead "commented" on their songs through their live realizations. On account of the Dead's variation of their songs in live performance from one concert to another, while an analysis of them can begin with their studio recordings, they should certainly not end with them.

Leo Marx and The Machine in the Garden

The key theoretical lens for my discussion of uses of the pastoral by rock musicians in the San Francisco Bay Area in the early 1970s is the distinction Leo Marx makes between two forms of pastoralism: a "popular and sentimental" kind, and an "imaginative and complex" one.[9] Using a wide range of examples from those who have interpreted the American experience through literature, he argues that what distinguishes these two types of pastoralism is that their shared concern for what is lost through the encroachment of technology and industry is, in the complex kind, balanced with an awareness of the violence and isolation of the natural world outside of society's boundaries. Marx opposes this complex form of the pastoral to the purely escapist fantasy of the popular and sentimental kind. The former, he explains, "is located in a middle ground somewhere 'between,' yet in a transcendent relation to, the opposing forces of civilization and

[9] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford Univesity Press, 1964), 5.

nature."[10] Rather than simplistic pastoralism's denial of the fruits of civilization in favor of a radical integration with nature, which critics of the pastoral argue characterizes it as a whole, the focus of those working in terms of complex forms of pastoralism is on nature as the site of a temporary withdrawal from civilization. For Marx, it is defined by a process of self-discovery and renewal through the movement from civilization to nature and back again.

Using the examples of Prospero's island in *The Tempest*, the sea in *Moby-Dick*, the forest in *Walden*, and the river in *Huckleberry Finn*, Marx shows how these environments change those who experience them. The characters involved are transformed through the experience of nature's moral ambiguity and the subsequent realization of the lessons learned in fashioning a new relationship between their social and natural selves. Contrary to critics of the pastoral, these are no primitivist, utopian fantasies. While a reckoning with the natural world outside of civilization's boundaries is certainly called for, the concomitant dangers are also present as both a warning and guide back to the characters' reintegration as social beings.[11]

In her discussion of neo-romantic composition in the 1970s, Holly Watkins similarly argues against those who would too easily dismiss evocations of the pastoral. She points to a connection between the then-emerging environmental movement and the turn away from serialism by some music composers in the late 1960s and early 1970s in favor of neo-tonal, and neo-romantic styles. What they shared was a questioning of narratives of progress: that greater knowledge, and an increase in available possibilities

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[10] Ibid, 23.

[11] For a recent scholarly examination of Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* and the later development of Marx's thinking on pastoralism, see Peter F. Cannavò, "American Contradictions and Pastoral Visions: An Appraisal of Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*," *Organization & Environment* 14 no. 1 (March 2001), 74-92.

was necessarily an improvement compared to that which came before, or that such "progress" was at all even necessary. For many environmentalists such doubts led to the consideration of alternatives to modernization such as the replacement of industrial agriculture with permaculture farming and "organic" food production, as well as tribal and communal forms of living to replace the nuclear family and governing institutionalized bureaucracies. In the arts, such questioning of progress led, Watkins points out, to a "search for alternatives to modernism and its principles of artistic autonomy, abstraction, and the evolution of technique."[12] For a number of composers, such as Stephen Alberta, Libby Larsen, and Ellen Taafe Zwilich, such desires led to the emergence in the early 1970s of what Watkins calls the "neo-romantic pastoral" in which they "unabashedly adopt (and adapt) the conventional pastoral topoi of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."[13] Because such topoi are inseparable from the common practice tonality that so defined the music from these two centuries, "neo-romantic pastorals typically exhibit some form of neo-tonality."[14]

But it is, then, precisely for this reason that they are doubly dammed in the eyes of modernist critics. Not only is their use of tonality "reactionary" and "regressive," but "the pastoral's traditional themes of innocence and retreat into nature" are at best merely kitsch and at worse "dangerously out of touch with a world in need of concrete solutions to problems of global proportions."[15] Rather than reflecting or confronting the reality of post-industrial late capitalism, as true modernist composers supposedly should do, evocations of the pastoral are little but escapism disguised as art.

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[12] "The Pastoral After Environmentalism: Nature and Culture in Stephen Albert's *Symphony: RiverRun*," *Current* Musicology, no. 84 (Fall 2007), p. 7.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, 8.
[15] Ibid.

As Watkins points out, however, when the provisional status of the pastoral's retreat into nature is emphasized, as in the complex form delineated by (Leo) Marx, the pastoral is not only "vital to any environmentalist project," but also "an indispensable artistic forum for reflection on how human existence is (or has been, or might be) conceived in relation to the natural world."[16] And though the distance between the human-built environment and the natural world grew within the industrialized and post-industrialized world for the first two-thirds of the 20th century, in the 1960s and 1970s this distance began to shrink as the reality of their inseparability—and disastrous consequences if thought otherwise—became all too evident.

To then return to Marx's distinction between simplistic and complex pastoralism, one way that it is especially valuable in the context of this dissertation is helping to explain the Dead's paradoxical use, development and exploration of the most advanced electronics and sound reinforcement technology—their 1973-74 Wall of Sound PA system as perhaps the ultimate such example (see figure 3.1)—with, simultaneously, lyrical and purely musical invocations of both the comforts and dangers of the natural world and mythic histories in which a relationship between the social and the natural is so often the basis.[17] Instead of revealing inconsistency or hypocrisy, Marx's conception of complex pastoralism shows that there is no necessary contradiction between these themes and the technological innovations that facilitated their expression.

[16] Watkins here cites "the branch of literary criticism known as ecocriticism" as the primary proponents of the necessity of the pastoral in this context. Ibid.
[17] For further discussion of the Wall of Sound and its relation to the Dead's live performance practice see Michael Ethen, "A Spatial History of Arena Rock, 1964-79" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2011), 174-80.

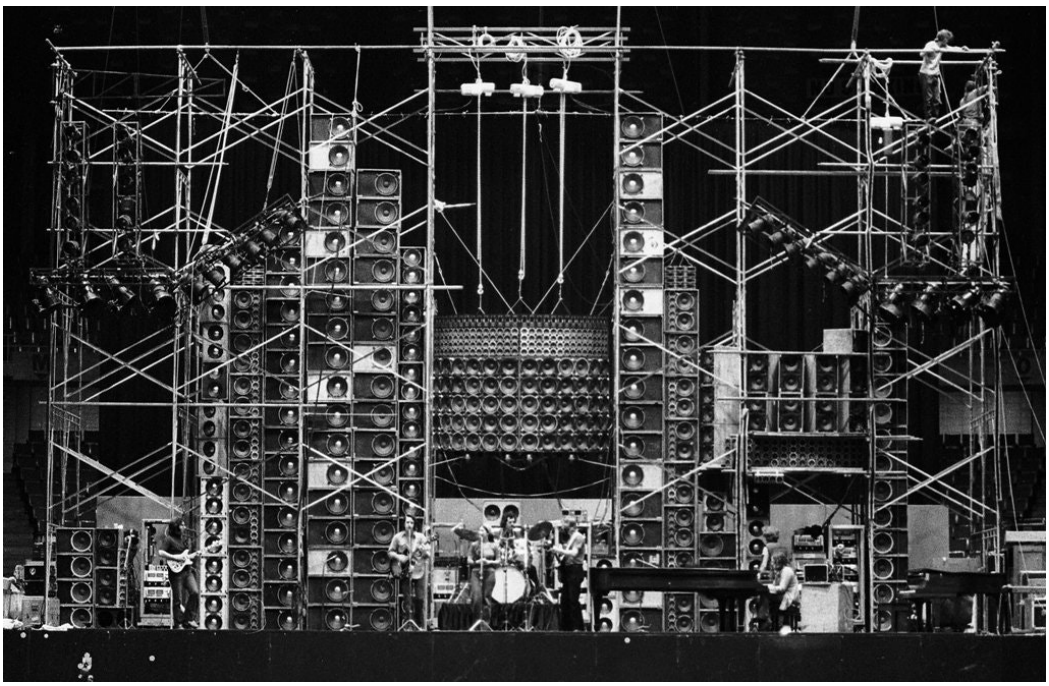

Figure 3.1

On California

As the site of one of the most prominent eruptions of counterculturalism in modern times, such diversity is apparent in not only the Summer of Love but in its longer California history. This should not be surprising given that, historian Richard Cándida Smith points out, it was in California "where the thinning of the line between bohemian and popular culture took place earliest, most clearly, and most systematically," allowing for a greater internal differentiation to develop than in areas with later, and less potent, countercultural articulations.[18] Some of these differences have been widely noted—for example, that of San Francisco vs. Los Angeles, or the hippies of the Haight vs. the so-called politicos from Berkeley. But less widely recognized are those differences *internal* to these various countercultural groupings, especially concerning the role of tradition, and, concomitantly, understandings of history and progress. As Cándida Smith also notes, "A strength of the

[18] Smith, *Utopia and Dissent,* xx.

counterculture lay in its merger of opposition with utterly traditional, even conservative images of the self."[19] Although this may seem paradoxical, if one accepts Marx and Engels' understanding of liberal-capitalism as inherently revolutionary, then an opposition that finds value in what that system has claimed to leave behind makes a great deal of sense.[20] While Marxists, and others who accept a similar teleological view of history (even if they disagree about the means by which progress happens), insist that alternatives to the liberal-capitalist status-quo must necessarily be found in the future, resulting from the resolution of past and present contradictions, other possibilities exist. If one rejects the supposed necessity of progress, and the belief in any utopian End of History in which all structural social contradictions would be permanently solved, then probable alternatives to the status quo are to be found in the past precisely because they, unlike future prognostications, have already existed. And if not for the liberal-capitalist revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries that so radically transformed the world, they might still exist today.[21]

Gary Snyder's work exemplifies the connection between sixties' counterculturalism and conservative themes within the history counterculturalism in California. For Snyder, there was perhaps no more important realization than an awareness of oneself as "at home" in all of one's relations.[22] And, he thinks, this sense of domesticity necessarily begins with one's family, towards which one's work and responsibilities should aim. Rather than focusing on professional ambition, Snyder's foregrounding of what he referred to as "real work," points to the greater importance of

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[19] Ibid, 368.
[20] *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 37-38.
[21] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 3-20.
[22] Smith, *Utopia and Dissent*, 382-83.

completing the tasks such responsibilities entail. Snyder also makes prominent use of Buddhist and Native American ideas to foreground the domestic sphere as the optimal micro-realization of macro material and spiritual processes.[23] And though the conspicuously displayed exoticism internal to Snyder's work suggests a high degree of apparent novelty, it masks the many similarities to and connections with Judeo-Christian traditions internal to the West.[24]

In the 2013 "Grateful Days" documentary, released as one of the DVD extras of the Grateful Dead concert film *Sunshine Daydream*, one can clearly see such a countercultural, Snyder-like return to ways of the past.[25] Describing the people who made up the organizers and audience of the August 27, 1972 performance outside of Eugene, Oregon memorialized in the film, one attendee states, "They were into community and family; that's what the people of Eugene were into. People were turning on to organic food. It was like a miracle!"[26] Though he then follows with, "It was like we were going to create a new world," one might well wonder, given how ancient many of these ideas were, if this would be, at least in some ways, instead the *re*-creation of an *old* world.

Another speaker in the documentary, echoing Snyder's advocacy of the "real work" of domestic life, describes the practical reality with which those who made up what another speaker calls the "hippie utopia" in and around Eugene had to contend.[27]

The work had to get done. The dishes had to be washed, the gardens had to be

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[23] Ibid, 383.
[24] Ibid.
[25] It can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWO9mh-Fenc.
[26] Gilbert Rosborne, Natural Foods Express, "Grateful Days," *Sunshine Daydream* DVD (Burbank, CA: Rhino Records, 2013), 2:13-26.
[27] Ibid, Bill Goodpasture, "Hippie utopia," 7:02.

> planted, the houses were being built. Relationships were being created amongst individuals and amongst the entire community and we were learning about how to create that stuff. It wasn't like any of us really knew how to do it. We weren't concerned about making so much money as we were building a lifestyle.[28]

Another interviewee described how "there were these big communes in various places, all rural. Everything was make it yourself!"[29] Yet another interviewee explained the motivation of those involved in this countercultural lifestyle: "just exploring alternatives to the dominant paradigm that was not getting us anywhere except into a war we didn't want and presidents we didn't want."[30]

This "dominant paradigm" is commonly conceived of as "conservative" and those seeking alternatives to it as "liberal." From a purely relational perspective this makes sense: "conservative" here meaning the preservation of the status quo, versus the "liberal" who wishes for change. But given the ideological *content* of this status quo—liberal-capitalism—such a conclusion is questionable since liberal-capitalism is defined by its never-satiated need to change, to progress.[31] Only thus can capital hope to reproduce and grow itself.

What is so notable about the aforementioned interviewees in "Grateful Days," in contrast, is their rejection of basic tenets of liberal-capitalism in favor of a return to what existed in older cultural orders. To celebrate family and community is to necessarily posit limits on individual autonomy since their well being is only possible if personal freedom is in some way restricted for the good of the collective. Organic food production revives

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[28] Ibid, Jef Jalof, Toonerville Commune, 8:02-29
[29] Ibid, Robin Winfree-Andrew, 8:30-35.
[30] Ibid, Tony Yosco, 7:13-23.
[31] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 37-38.

practices that existed prior to the rise of modern, industrial agriculture. Communes are implicit critiques of the modern nuclear family and its too restricted membership in favor of the larger, more tribal—a concept often invoked by those who made up the Summer of Love—familial relations that have characterized the vast majority of human cultures. To make things for oneself, rather than be dependent on the market to buy them, expresses the desire for self-sufficiency against the principle of division-of-labor efficiency that underlies liberal-capitalist economics, as does the movement from cities to the country that defines the back-to-the-land movement. These are all, to a significant degree, profoundly conservative, traditional cultural expressions.

In a 1967 essay on the San Francisco rock music scene, Richard Goldstein portrays it and its musicians in a highly pastoral way although one that fits Marx's simplistic rather than complex kind.

> "The big surprise in this music has nothing to do with electronics or some zany new camp. Performers in this city have knocked all that civility away. They are down in the dark, grainy roots. The sound of the Grateful Dead, or Moby Grape, or Country Joe and the Fish, is jug band scraping against jazz . . . Their music, they insist, is *a virgin forest, uncharted and filled with wild life*. This unwillingness to add technological effect is close to the spirit of folk music before Dylan electrified it."[32]

Nadya Zimmerman, as part of her overall critique of San Francisco-based rock musicians of the late 1960s, points out that this belief in the supposed virginity of the musicians' music is "critically suspect and ideologically naïve at best," suggesting troubling

[32] Italics added.

conclusions about such pastoral evocations.[33] Zimmerman does not recognize, however, the possibility that the Dead were well aware of the technologically mediated nature of their music, as well as of the complications and tensions it gave rise to in dialogue with their musical evocations of nature and a mythic past. Even though the pastoral's evocations of a retreat into nature may for some seem quaint or naïve, the pastoral, as Marx demonstrates, is precisely *about* the relationship between human beings and their environment. But whereas the simplistic or sentimental kind is about an escape into the natural world, complex pastoralism is as much about the human-built environment, and its relations to the non-human world, as it is about some hypostasized idea of Nature.

Earlier Pastoral Evocations in Bay Area Rock Renaissance

Although the Dead's evocations of the pastoral became perhaps most obvious with their strongly country-music inspired 1970 albums *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* (discussed in the previous chapter), as table 3.1 shows, their two previous albums from 1969, *Aoxomoxoa* and *Live/Dead* also contain numerous references to typical pastoral tropes of nature, gardens, flowers and so on.

[33] Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope*, 97.

"St. Stephen"	"St. Stephen with a **rose**/In and out of the **garden** he goes/**Country garden** and **the wind and the rain**/Wherever he goes the people all complain."
"William Tell Bridge"	"**High green chilly winds and windy vines in loops around the twining shafts of lavender, they're crawling to the sun/Underfoot the ground is patched with climbing arms of ivy wrapped around the manzanita, stark and shiny in the breeze/Wonder who will water all the children of the garden when they sigh about the barren lack of rain and droop so hungry 'neath the sky**...
"Rosemary"	"All around her **the garden grew**/scarlet and purple and crimson and blue/She came and she went and at last went away/**The garden was sealed when the flowers decayed**/On the wall of **the garden** a legend did say:/No one may come here since no one may stay."

Table 3.1

The back cover of *Aoxomoxoa* (see figure 3.2) is an obvious visual example, showing the Grateful Dead family in a highly pastoral milieu: a black and white photo of the members of the band sitting on the grass with other friends, children, a dog and a horse, with a scraggly tree in the background. The placement of the picture within a sphere suggests the scene as the Earth—perhaps this scene representing the world, as it ideally should be.[34]

An interesting object of comparison (and possible source of inspiration) is the inside cover of The Band's 1968 album *Music from the Big Pink*. Also featuring its musicians in an obviously rural setting interspersed with family members, the major difference between them is the more conservative sartorial style than the hippie regalia of the Dead and company. As one of the most notable early examples of roots-rock, *Big Pink* was not a great commercial success but was enormously influential on musicians and critics, and admittedly so in the case of Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia and lyricist

[34] For another discussion of this picture see Morrison, "Psychedelic Music," 230-31. Cándida Smith discusses the trope of images of children and families in a variety of West Coast art works in the 1960s. "Representations and reflections of the period added a symbolic value of Edenic innocence to the factual reality of families, children, and friendships … The use of family snapshots in art … linked the avant-garde to the common concerns of much of their generation." *Utopia and Dissent,* 253.

Robert Hunter (see figure 3.3).[35] Although the musical influence of The Band on the Dead would not fully show itself until *Workingman's Dead*, the similarity of these two pictures points to affinities between them during even the Dead's most overtly psychedelic period. Such connections also help explain the many references to gardens and nature in the lyrics on *Aoxomoxoa* and *Live/Dead,* revealing strongly pastoral themes within some of the Dead's more conspicuous sonic experimentation, as well as their connections with their later country-roots songs that would seem to be in some ways their polar opposites.

Figure 3.2

[35] Blair Jackson, *Garcia: An American Life* (New York: Viking, 1999), 163-64.

Figure 3.3

Complex Pastoralism in Song: An Exegesis of "Jack Straw"

An original song by the Dead that is especially appropriate for an interpretation in terms of Leo Marx's idea of complex pastoralism is "Jack Straw." Composed by guitarist and singer Bob Weir, with lyrics by Robert Hunter (and some apparent help by Weir), its live performance debut, along with that of a number of other original songs by the Dead, was on October 19, 1971, keyboardist Keith Godchaux's first show with the band. It was one of a number of original songs written by members of the band around the same time that

never saw a studio-recorded release. Instead, it was first released on record as part of the band's live release *Europe '72*—a three-LP collection of tracks culled from their 1972 European tour.[36] This is the version the following analysis is based on since it is likely the one that most people heard first and thus was, perhaps more than any other, that to which later versions were compared.

Unlike many other songs performed by the band, "Jack Straw" never fell out of their repertoire, and was used frequently as a show opener, a placement that was likely not a coincidence given its theme. Like another original song by the Dead that frequently appeared early in their performances, "Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodl-oo" (discussed later in this chapter), its lyrics suggest an invitation into the unknown from a place of comfort and safety, a message undergirded by the song's bifurcated tonal and rhythmic schemes that support a similarly bifurcated lyrical narrative.

"Jack Straw" is the allusive story of two seemingly down and out characters in the western United States, Shannon and the eponymous Jack, and the events that lead to the death of the former and flight of the latter to escape imprisonment or death.[37] But at first the lyrics do not mention either. Instead, the first lines suggest a disturbingly misogynistic male camaraderie: "We can share the women/We can share the wine." Such apparent unity of purpose and minds is supported by the clear E major tonality enunciated by the rhythm, lead and bass guitar in the introduction and seeming I-ii-vi-IV progression in E major (bars 5-6) to which they are set (see example 3.1).

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[36] Other original songs for which *Europe '72* was their first release on record include "He's Gone," "Tennessee Jed," "Brown-Eyed Women," "Ramble On Rose," and "Mr. Charlie."

[37] According to Weir he based the song on either (or perhaps both) reading or watching a film adaptation of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. See David Dodd, *Greatest Stories Ever Told* – "Jack Straw, http://www.dead.net/features/greatest-stories-ever-told/greatest-stories-ever-told-jack-straw.

Example 3.1

Jack Straw

Lyricist: Robert Hunter

Composer: Bob Weir

Intro

(Rhythm guitar)

(2x feel ends at repeat) (Lead guitar)

(Vox: Lesh)
(Vox: Weir)
(Vox: Garcia)

We can sh - are the wo-men we can share the wi - ne
Leav-ing Tex-as fourth day of Ju-ly

We can share what we've got of yours 'cause we're done sha-ring all of
Sun so hot the clou-ds so low the ea - gles filled the

mi - ne
sky

(Rhythm guitar)

Keep on rol-ling just a mi-le to go
Catch the Det-roit Light-ning out of Santa Fe

Keep on rol - ling my old bud - dy you're mov - in' much too slow
The Great Nor-thern out of Chey - enne from sea to shi - ning sea

Transcribed by Melvin Backstrom

What follows (bars 7-8), however, undercuts this first-person plural declaration of conviviality: "We can share what we've got of yours/'Cause we done shared all of mine." Rather than the declarative speaking in common of the first lines suggesting their mutual equality, here the "we" is imperatively spoken by one to the other, explicitly expressing the divide that their apparently unequal sharing has already implicitly made evident. And having previously avoided a strong cadential dominant-to-tonic movement to affirm E major as the tonic, the separation implied by the introduction of "yours/mine" is emphasized by the simultaneous introduction of the first harmonies outside of E major's compass, B minor followed by D major. These chords suggest instead A major as the real tonic, the closest key to E major in which these chords exist, and the entire progression heard so far, then, as possibly V-vi-iii-I-V-ii-IV-I-V in A major.

Yet such an interpretation of the song's tonality is itself subverted by the following transition beginning on "mine": E major, G# minor seventh, D major, A major. G# minor seventh is diatonic to E major but not A major, whereas D major is diatonic to

A major and not E major. And this uncertainty of key continues: after the following A major chord the music drops a perfect fourth to E major. But instead of resolving back to A as a V-I cadence, and thus affirming A as the actual tonic, the next lines repeat the same progression as the first stanza beginning on E (functionally, I-ii-vi-IV-I-v-bVII-IV-I) and thus again suggesting it, rather than A, as the actual tonic. This harmonic duality—E vs. A major—is mirrored on various levels of the form, but it also mirrors the duality at the heart of the song's narrative, that of Jack and Shannon, whose differences are further emphasized in the next stanza with the speaker telling his "old buddy" to "keep on rolling," but also, or perhaps because, he's "moving much too slow."

At this point in the song the obvious question is too slow for what? The following stanza provides the beginnings of an answer: "I just jumped the watchman/Right outside the fence/Took his ring, four bucks in change/Ain't that heaven sent." His companion, however, does not agree, again insisting on the differences between them while making clear the perpetrator's identity: "Hurts my ears to listen, Shannon/Burns my eyes to see/Cut down a man in cold blood, Shannon/Might as well be me." Not only does Jack not approve of what Shannon has done, but thinks it could just as well have been him whom he killed.

In contrast to the fairly quick harmonic rhythm that characterizes the root-movement progressions of the song up to this point, this dialogue is set to the relatively static setting of alternations between E dominant 7th suspended and E major for its first half followed by the same harmonic alternations on F# for its second half (see example

3.2). Furthermore, in order to emphasize the dialogic aspect of this section Jerry Garcia sings its first half, Shannon's part, while Bob Weir sings the second, Jack's.[38]

Example 3.2

2

16 E E7sus E E7sus E
(Rhythm guitar) 2x Feel Begins
(Vox: Garcia) I just jumped the watch-man right out side the fence
Got-ta go to Tul - sa first tra - in I can ride

19 E7sus E E7sus E
Took his rings four bucks and chan - ge Ain't that hea-ven sent?
Got - ta set - tle one old score One small point of pride.

21 F♯7sus F♯ F♯7sus F♯
(Vox: Weir) Hurts my ea - rs to lis - ten Sha - nnon Burns my eyes to see
Ain't a pla ce a man can hide Sha - nnon Keep him from the sun

23 F♯7sus F♯ F♯sus7 F♯ D A E C
Cut down a man in cold blood Sha-nnon Might as we - ll be me
Ain't no bed to give us rest man You keep us on the run

Counterpoised to the clarity of Jack's response to what Shannon has done, the meaning of the next stanza depends on who is speaking: Jack, Shannon or perhaps even both. And continuing with the harmonic ambivalence of before, it is set to the same tonally ambiguous chord progression (B minor-D major-A-major-E major) we heard earlier as the second half of the A section, again emphasizing the song's tonal ambiguity between E and A major.

> We used to play for silver/Now we play for life
> One's for sport and one's for blood/At the point of a knife
> Now the die is shaken/Now the die must fall
> There ain't no winner in this game/Who don't go home with all
> Not with all…

The ambiguity of these lines reflects the parallel tonal ambiguity, but they also suggest Shannon here responding to Jack's accusation. Whereas they used to merely "play for

[38] Garcia did not always sing in this section. The version of "Jack Straw" on *Europe '72*, recorded on May 3, 1972 at the Olympia Theatre in Paris, France, was seemingly the first time this vocal alternation occurred. Prior to this Weir sang the dialogue by himself.

silver" and for "sport," now they "play for life … at the point of a knife." That is, their own lives now depend on such cutthroat ways. And since "the die is shaken" and soon "must fall" their fates depend upon winning and thus going home "with all" rather then lose everything, including their own lives, in the kill or be killed situation in which they find themselves.

We do not get Jack's answer, at least immediately, but instead a shift of focus and of voice accompanied by a halving of the rhythmic feel, and a chromatic descent from G major to E major, bringing the song back to its beginning musical materials for its second half although with different lyrics: "Leaving Texas/Fourth day of July/Sun so hot, clouds so low/The eagles filled the sky." Here, personhood is left behind as a human-defined nature—an invocation of the pastoral—comes to the foreground though grounded in a specific geographic and historical context: somewhere in the American Southwest on that most symbolic of American days, Independence Day, the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.[39] The next stanza invokes two railroads and their origins—"the Detroit Lightning/Out of Santa Fe," and the "Great Northern out of Cheyenne" that goes to both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts—suggesting their route as the two men's planned journey: from Santa Fe, New Mexico, up to Cheyenne and then seemingly as far away as they can get. This is perhaps Jack proposing an escape from an otherwise doomed fate, a plea for them to get away.

Then comes Shannon's response, however: "Gotta get to Tulsa/First train we can ride/Got to settle one old score/And one small point of pride." That is, he seems to be saying, he is not going to run away. In fact, he wants to go backwards, to Tulsa,

[39] Although the song does not specify what kind of eagles "filled the sky," the dating of July 4th suggests the bald eagle, the national bird of the United States.

Oklahoma to settle a score that is for him a "point of pride." But Jack rejects this goal, warning of the consequences they will inevitably suffer: never finding rest from their pursuers because of what Shannon does to keep them "on the run."

The voice of the lyrics then changes to that of a third-person narrator telling us what becomes of the two although again ambiguously. "Jack Straw from Wichita/Cut his buddy down/Dug for him a shallow grave/And layed his body down." As a number of interpreters of this song have noted, there are two equally plausible interpretations of this stanza. "Cut his buddy down" could mean Jack killed Shannon because of his recklessness. But it could also refer to Jack taking his body down from the hanging he had tried to avoid. But whichever answer one decides, we learn in the following lines that he at least had the respect to bury the body even if he could only manage "a shallow grave." And again switching to a localized nature ("Half a mile from Tucson/By the morning light"), we learn that Shannon's death has not freed Jack: with "One man gone and another to go" he is again warned by his "old buddy" (the ghost of Shannon?) that he is "moving much too slow" to avoid a similar fate to his. A happy ending this most definitely is not.

It is in the context of this realization that we again hear the opening lines: "We can share the women/We can share the wine" set to the same seeming I-ii-vi-IV progression in E major as at the song's beginning. But rather than an expression of misogynistic male camaraderie, as it seemed before, here it takes on the sense of a warning rather than a celebration; that it was precisely such misogynistic male camaraderie that was their fatal flaw. And as an ultimate confirmation of the dualities—harmonic, rhythmic, lyrical—that structure the song, the harmonic ambiguity between E

and A major that has prevailed throughout extends until its very end. The last word, "wine," beginning over a C# minor chord, is drawn out over the subsequent final chord of A major, and held rather than resolved as a plagal cadence to the E major on which the song began.

"Jack Straw" is, then, a narrative of competing dualities: Jack vs. Shannon, them vs. the world, nature vs. civilization, winning vs. losing. And these are underpinned by corresponding harmonic and rhythmic dualities: the song's tonal schema involving a continual shifting between E and A major/E Mixolydian (with brief borrowings from D major); and the rhythm moving between a slow half-time feel and a faster double time that corresponds to the movement from descriptions of pastoral contentment to those of the characters' increasingly desperate situation. Although the pastoral is invoked it is neither idealized nor uncomplicated and offers no escape from the consequences of the characters' actions. The song's specifically sonic dualities not only mirror but comment on parallel lyrical dualities, expressing both a yearning for a unity with nature and the certainty that such unity is only possible in death. "Jack Straw" is in many ways, then, an ideal expression of Marx's complex pastoralism.

In his book *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*, Greil Marcus reflects on the relation between the songs created by Dylan in 1967 (along with the musicians who would later make up The Band), and the American experience they partake in and carry forward. In particular, he notes the sharp contrast between these songs and those that dominated the popular music industry in 1967—the year in which psychedelic rock's iconoclastic, rebelliously futuristic visions most suffused the popular

music industry.[40] Dylan's basement songs, in contrast, are far closer to the Headless Horseman and Rip Van Winkle of Washington Irving's early 19th-century Yankee America than the futuristic visions of such 1960s' icons as Marshall McLuhan or Buckminster Fuller. They evoke what Marcus has famously called the "old, weird America," where, as William Faulkner so famously wrote, "the past is never dead; it's not even past" because, contrary to progressive notions of temporal linearity, it is inevitably and continuously re-articulated in the present.[41] Describing Dylan's Basement Songs, and equally applicable to "Jack Straw" Marcus writes that in them there is

> this uncertain feeling, deepening into vertigo … the sense that the past is rushing forward, about to sweep all the conceits of the present away for good, to take away its knowledge, deprive its deeds of value, as if the past holds chits on the present and is ready to call them all in.[42]

This sense of vertigo is inseparable from the kind of complex pastoralism delineated by Marx. Unlike for that other more famous Marx, Karl, nature is not something to be conquered in order to liberate humanity from its oppressive demands.[43] In complex pastoralism it is instead the unavoidable reality in which human beings are not only formed, but in which our hubristic aspirations to be as gods are continually dashed by the certainty that on account of our mortality Nature *always* wins.

In his 2007 Bob Dylan biopic (of sorts) *I'm Not There*, Todd Haynes captures the sentiment of these songs in a scene in which the Dylan character, played by Richard

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[40] Greil Marcus, *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc, 1997), xiv.
[41] Ibid, 87-126. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Vintage Books, 1950), 73.
[42] Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, 82.
[43] Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 259. Jay references Theodor Adorno telling him that "Marx wanted to turn the whole world into a giant workhouse," 57.

Gere, witnesses an apparent funeral for a young girl, accompanied by a cover of one of the Basement Songs, Dylan's "Goin' to Acapulco."[44] Though clearly set in 19th-century America, there is something here of Victor Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization: making strange what is familiar in order to encourage its re-experiencing in more aesthetically powerful ways.[45] As well, the magical realism most commonly associated with Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, in which departures from realism, intensify its depictions—this scene's incongruous mixture of elements, for instance—making it somehow *more* real rather than less.[46] Moreover, the surreal yet somber mood militates against any nostalgic imaginings. It is a past that disturbs rather than comforts. Yet in its evocation of the pastoral's experience of nature it also speaks to something profoundly meaningful in the human condition: the inescapable truth that our humanity is defined by and through our relations with the natural world in which life and death are not opposed, but are, rather, necessary correlates.

The influence of Dylan on the Dead, and on Robert Hunter in particular, are well known.[47] And the similarities between Dylan's basement songs and "Jack Straw" speak to common expressive desires between them reflecting their similar post-diluvian situations. After the flood of sixties' iconoclastic rebellion, when the possibilities of radical social transformation had faded in the wake of the fall of the Haight-Ashbury community, the debacle of Altamont, the Nixon presidency, and for Dylan, his own retreat from the amphetamine-fueled creativity of '65-66, it is not surprising that these

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[44] It is available on Youtube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HN_is9hcW8.
[45] Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 3rd ed., ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2017), 11-12. 8-14
[46] Scott Simpkins, "Magical Strategies: The Supplement of Realism," *Twentieth Century Literature* 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1988), 143.
[47] See Brent Wood, "Robert Hunter's Oral Poetry: Mind, Metaphor, and Community," *Poetics Today* 24, no. 1 (2003), 45-46.

musicians would find inspiration in the kind of engagement with nature, and re-articulation of tradition, that defines complex pastoralism. And the evident power and continuing relevance in our modern or even postmodern world of these musical examples points to the necessity of historicizing and contextualizing the countercultures of the 1960s. Rather than constituting a wholesale rejection of tradition in favor of the hoped for realization of utopian ideals, as they are often portrayed, they were, and their descendants are, as defined by a search for alternatives to the endless search for newness that drives liberal-capitalism, in which a re-engagement with nature and tradition are inevitably central concerns.

Kezar Stadium: May 26, 1973

But how were such expressions of pastoralism received by contemporaneous rock music audiences? And how did they interact with the reality of rock music as a commercially driven art form? In this next section I explore the issues and debates that came out of the Grateful Dead's May 26, 1973 concert at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco in order to offer some answers to these questions.

Though one of the most prominent rock bands from San Francisco in the early 1970s, the Grateful Dead had never performed at Kezar Stadium in their old Haight-Ashbury neighborhood prior to May 26, 1973. One might think that the band returning to perform for the first time in years in an area that had taken a dramatic turn for the worse since the halcyon hippie heydays of 1966-67 would have been a cause for unreserved celebration.[48] But it was not to be. Instead, protests over the high price of tickets, the

[48] On the decline of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in the late 1960s see David E. Smith, John Luce, Ernest A. Dernburg, "The Health of Haight-Ashbury," *Trans-action* 7, no. 6 (April 1970), 36. The Dead's

location, and the lack of involvement of the Haight-Ashbury community in its planning and execution proliferated leading up to the event.

On the day before the concert the *Berkeley Barb*, arguably the most self-consciously politically radical newspaper in the Bay Area at the time, printed "An Open Letter to Bill Graham" addressed to the concert's promoter. Signed by various community leaders from the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, it expressed their unhappiness with Graham for not living up to agreements they thought he had made with them for their prior support of the concert. Specifically, they thought he had agreed through a representative to host not one but *two* concerts: the first, entitled "Jailhouse Rock," that Graham "would give help in finding a headline music group"; the second would be a "Bill Graham show" with, at that point, unknown performers. There were three other demands to which they thought he had agreed. The first was that, "as many non-technical jobs as were possible would be available to the Haight-Ashbury community" at the Graham show. The second was "that you [Graham] would make a donation of money to the community based on the profits." The third was that Graham would coordinate these details with one of their members.

Since this supposed agreement had been made, however, "information on your plans has begun to appear publicly with major discrepancies." Specifically, "in your public statements and in reports of your plans there appeared no mention of Jailhouse Rock, of jobs, of donations or of negotiations with members of the community." Although they agreed, "The Haight Ashbury is indeed 'where it all started'" and,

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last performance in the Haight prior to May 26, 1973 was an unauthorized, free show on Haight Street playing from a flatbed truck on March 3, 1968. It can be heard here: https://archive.org/details/gd68-03-03.aud.vernon.9374.sbeok.shnf. For the most detailed discussion of this performance see Nicholas Meriwether, "3/3/68: Haight Street at Cole, San Francisco, California," in *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium*, Vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1998), 152-53.

therefore, "it is proper for a 'band like the Grateful Dead' to play the first concer [sic] in Kezar Stadium … OUR concerns go further." They worried about the crowds and traffic the concert would bring, the lack of money and employment for many in the neighborhood, its stock of "dangerous and deteriorated housing," a lack of funds for the Sheriff's department, "and a cultural and racial composition significantly different than when the Grateful Dead lived here and there was 'dancing in the streets.'" Charging that Graham had "no particular expertise into these problems," in contrast to those writing the letter, they insisted that, "our participation is imperative if concerts are to be held in our neighborhood."[49]

It was not only Haight-Ashbury community leaders who were unhappy in the lead-up to the Kezar concert. Many fans of the Grateful Dead did not like the high-ticket cost nor that the Dead would even agree to play such a large venue. One wrote to the band, stating that he "was quite disturbed about that fact that you are starting to play in large, over-sized halls … I feel that it is my duty as a Dead freak to try to find out why you are playing in these places and what can be done to solve this problem." Contrasting the Dead with most other rock groups, he "always felt that you were one of the few groups that wouldn't sell out to fame and fortune … hav[ing] always avoided all elements of a commercial rock star trip." But given such apparent lack of commercial ambitions, he wanted "to know why the sudden change from ballroom to stadium." Finally, because he took the time to write this letter, he "would appreciate it very much … if you would care to take the time out to write a reply."[50]

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[49] Ed Dunn et al, "An Open Letter to Bill Graham," *Berkeley Barb*, May 25, 1973 (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 5, May 1973).
[50] Doug Albrecht, May 21, 1973, GDA MS 332 ser. 5 box 1:6.

Another letter writer, in contrast, was less interested in understanding the reasons for the Dead's stadium performances and higher priced tickets, and far more accusatory in his complaints. "I never thought I would have to write a letter showing a disatisfaction [sic] with the Dead," he began. But he felt he had to because of "the up coming performance of the Dead at Kezar stadium, and the outrageous ticket prices." He asked, "Don't you think that six bucks a head is a bit steep." He could, in contrast, "recall a time when the Dead played for free. A time when their music floated through the trees of Golden Gate Park. Floated freely on the breeze, at one with nature." Now, however, he disparagingly insisted, "the Dead play for the man with money. They play for the man with a bright, new, shiny porche [sic]. They play for the lady with fine new clothes and shoes to match." "What," he asked, "ever happened to the music for the common people? Music for the true Dead Heads, the people who see that new space. The people who have felt and developed spiritually with the Dead … Have the Dead sold out to the courupted [sic] capitalistic America of today?"[51]

Such accusations of "selling out," i.e. exchanging artistic integrity for commercial profit, have been one of the most common tropes within popular music discourse since at least the debate over Bob Dylan "going electric" in 1965.[52] As this letter shows, the significant increase in the Dead's fan-base in the early 1970s increased their potential relevance vis-à-vis the band as well.

I have been unable to find any of Graham's specific responses to the open letter or the protests over the location and prices of the Dead's Kezar concert, but he does discuss

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[51] Stephen Webb, Redwood City, CA, GDA MS 332 ser. 5 box 1:6.
[52] Printed examples of the "selling out" trope include Irwin Sibler, "Newport Folk Festival 1965" and "from *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*" in *The Pop, Rock, and Sul Reader*, ed. David Brackett (Oxford University Press, 2014), 156, 389-94. For a notable visual account see the reactions of some of Dylan's audience members during his 1966 tour of England: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkrauH07MjM.

the concert, as well as a following one at Kezar headlined by Led Zeppelin, in a profile article in the British popular music-focused magazine *Melody Maker* later that year. Characterizing them as the kind of "projects" he was then engaged in, "as opposed to the routine" he implies other concert promoters presumably follow, he answers his critics by pleading his lack of power over those whose performances he promotes. Rejecting an anti-commercial, romantic view of rock musicians, he insists, "There's one ultimate power in this business, the artist. Not the agent, not the promoter, not the manager, but the artist." Musicians may claim that they would, according to Graham, "like to play for free," "to play more," or not "charge seven dollars" He insists, however, that such protestations are "all bullshit!" The musicians, Graham contends, decide where and to whom they want to play, what they want to charge and with whom they want to play. But rather than blame the musicians who bear the real responsibility, fans or community leaders blame him when bands ignore contracted start times, refuse to do encores, perform benefit concerts or anything else for which they are unhappy. "The Sheriff calls up here and says, 'You promised me a benefit!' The act said no, so the Sheriff immediately decides 'Well, if Bill Graham tells someone to play, they'll play!' I say, 'Waddayou nuts?' I'm not a peasant but I'm certainly not the king."[53]

Although Graham had hoped for a third concert at Kezar, the disturbances to local residents caused by the second concert's headliner, Led Zeppelin ("the loudest group in

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[53] Todd Tolces, "Don't Mess With Bill," *Melody Maker* 48, no. 35 (Sept. 1, 1973), 47.
Ibid, 47. Given what Graham expresses in this article, it is interesting that not long before, according to an advertisement in *Billboard* magazine, he gave a keynote speech, "Where does the power lie?," at *Billboard*'s First International Talent Forum, June 4-7, 1975 at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, California. *Billboard* (April 12, 1975), 43. The chronology might even indicate that the *Melody Maker* article may have resulted from Graham's speech.

the world … heard [from] many many blocks away") made this a non-starter.[54] Overall, Graham defends his promotion of the Kezar concerts, tying their success explicitly to the (relatively) pastoral setting in which they took place: "I'm very proud of the Kezar shows. It's such a great feeling walking into Golden Gate Park."[55] Here, Graham cleverly turns attention away from the controversial stadium where they took place to focus instead on the park in which it is situated. As the site of the January 1967 Human Be-In, many free rock shows during the hippie heyday of 1966-67, and the kind of ideal pastoral setting that was often idealized by many rock music fans at the time, his rhetorical invocation of Golden Gate Park—notably *not* the stadium in which they actually took place—uses its associations with the highest ideals of the sixties' countercultures to counter his accusers' allegations of having "sold out."[56]

A few weeks after the Kezar concert another fan of the Dead wrote in to express his concerns with the band's performances and offer advice on what could be done to improve them. With experience of Grateful Dead performances going back to the Acid Test in the Watts-Compton area of Los Angeles on February 12, 1966, the author explains that he "eagerly awaited the festivities and rituals of cleansing and reintegrating my humanness. Each event retained its own special significanse [sic] and remained in my mind as moments of shamanic ecstasy." Particularly important to his experience of performances by the Dead was

> participation in the dance … [which] led my spirit to transcend my body and mingle and rejoice and be one with the spirits of all the others participating in the

[54] "If the Doobie Brothers were headlining the second show instead of Led Zeppelin I'm sure I could've gotten a third permit." Tolces, "Don't Mess With Bill," 21.
[55] Ibid, 21.
[56] For another discussion of the Grateful Dead and Led Zeppelin concerts at Kezar Stadium see Ethen, "A Spatial History of Arena Rock," 137-40.

> dance. Together all fo [sic] us touched those sources of eternal energy and were refreshed and restored so that we may continue to seek the path of Truth. Those who played out the rhythms expressed, for those who danced, the symbols of unity and harmony and oneness with all things. The communication of these symbols led to the power and energy of the dancers and their spirits aided and directed the players of the rhythms … All of the participants came to know and realize the importance of awareness in living. Through this awareness they saw things that were wrong and tried to correct them.[57]

Because of how suffused this letter is with "New Age" tropes one may be tempted to dismiss it. Yet some of its details make it worth paying attention to nonetheless, especially since it tells us what the music meant for people at the time rather than how it has subsequently been understood.[58] First, the importance of "the dance," i.e. physical movement with music, is obvious. A purely cerebral, intellectual response to music this is not. Second, the communal nature of the experience, and the role of non-verbal, inter-personal communication, is equally stressed both among "those who danced" and "the players of the rhythms," i.e. the musicians. Third, such experiences were, for the author, not hedonistic escapism but, rather, ritualistic openings into the awareness of transcendent truths that fueled a desire to change what was wrong in the world around them.[59] Although one may doubt the veracity of such experiences, that they seem to have

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[57] Letter from Wandering Mouse, Brentwood, CA (June 16, 1973), (GDA MS 332 ser. 5, box. 1:6).
[58] I am indebted to David Brackett for this point.
[59] And though the writer's contention, that "Those who played out the rhythms expressed … the symbols of unity and harmony and oneness with all things," may for some seem especially suspect, such a belief arguably corresponds to Spinoza's argument in his *Ethics* that there is only a single substance of which everything, including ourselves, are mere different manifestations or perspectives.

been felt by many different people (this being but one example of many similar testaments) argues for taking their perspective seriously.

These letters obviously reveal a great deal about how the Dead's audience understood the band and its music. But so does the fact that they were sent, held onto, and obviously read by members of the Dead family. For what is a clear response to the criticisms expressed in the above letters appeared in the May 1973 *Dead Head's Newsletter* sent to those on the Grateful Dead's mailing list. Entitled "State of the Changes: How the Dragon Urobouros (Giga Exponentia) Makes Us Go Round and Round," and written by band associate Alan Trist, it provides a likely unprecedented financial transparency for a wholly private (i.e. non-publicly subsidized) entertainment group. It explains, and solicits advice, on how to deal with the competing pressures the group was then facing.[60] With 70% of their income coming from concerts and only 30% from record royalties, "gigs," Trist writes, "offer the only means to earn more money when it is needed to maintain our operation in all its particulars." This is because they "cannot sell more records at will."[61] But such dependence on performances for revenue led to a vicious circle of escalation, metaphorically characterized by the mythic symbol of Urobouros, the dragon eating its tail (see figure 3.4).[62]

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[60] "Our overhead expense is $100,000 a month. In 1972 we grossed $1,424,543." A pie chart then breaks this total down into "who ate the pie": Salaries, 27%; Office, 17%, Tax, 8%, Road, 27%; Equipment, 18%; Operating Profit, 3%. David G. Dodd and Diana Spaulding, eds., *The Grateful Dead Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 96. Also available at http://deadsources.blogspot.ca/2012/09/may-1973-state-of-dead.html.
[61] Ibid, 97.
[62] http://www.tokenrock.com/explain-ouroboros-70.html.

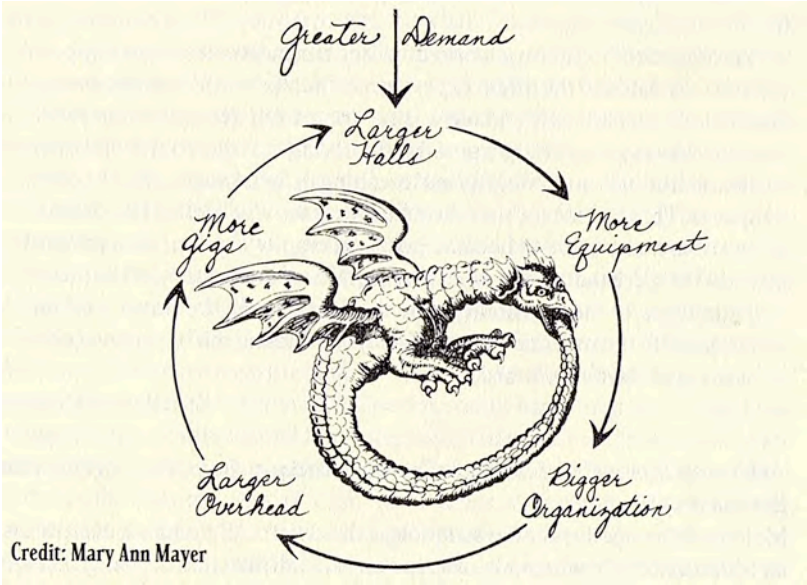

Figure 3.4

Five elements make up the circle: 1) Greater audience demand leads to larger performance venues, 2) which in turn requires more equipment, 3) necessitating a bigger organization to put on performances, 4) thus creating a larger overhead, 5) in turn requiring more gigs in ever larger venues to afford. Trist explains that their hope for a partial solution to these problems is to "form our own record manufacturing and distributing company." This would allow them to both "package and promote our product in an honest and human manner" as well as keep "more of the net dollar." For if record sales were to cover a higher percentage of their overhead "then the concert situation becomes more flexible," which would allow them to play the smaller and better sounding halls they, and (as the above letters demonstrate) a significant part of their audience, prefer.[63]

Although a possible partial answer to these problems, Trist did not think the record company would be necessarily sufficient. He therefore asked for suggestions. "What else might we do? Write and suggest it. Magic ideas welcome." Not only did they

[63] Dodd and Spaulding, *The Grateful Dead Reader*, 97.

hope to hear other possibilities, but the mail they receive "is an energy input" to the Grateful Dead organization that influences and inspires its actions.[64] The newsletter missive ends with the hope "that the message in the music can be reflected in the manner and purpose of conducting the business necessary to get the music heard."[65]

Trist's letter makes clear the importance of organicism—the interconnectivity and inseparability of different elements—to the Grateful Dead and their audience. Organic metaphors have been repeatedly criticized in recent years in music scholarship on account of their privileging of unity—and concomitant effacing of difference—and privileging of compositional genius over musical experience.[66] There is, however, little of the Romantic cult of the solitary genius at work here that has been the primary target of such critiques. Not only is the Dead's music self-consciously a product of a collective process of improvisational dialogue involving both musicians and their audience, but, as the final sentence of the newsletter makes clear, such dialogic relationships are seen as integral to all facets of the group's activities. Second, in contrast to one of the key tenets of aesthetic organicism, the whole is not prior to its parts.[67] Instead, the whole, as a specific musical experience, is an emergent property that comes to be through a process of dynamic interactivity among its constituent components, the guiding force of which is the practice

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[64] "This flow enters the common pool of plans and theories and ideas and speculations and fantasies and hopes and fears and futures and galaxies and stuff." Ibid, 98.
[65] Ibid, 98.
[66] Ruth Solie, "The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," *19th-Century Music* 4, no. 2 (Autumn, 1980), 152-56.
[67] "The difference between an inorganic and organic body lies in this: In the first … the whole is nothing more than a collection of the individual parts or phenomena." In the second, "the whole is everything, and the parts are nothing … Depend on it, whatever is grand, whatever is truly organic and living, the whole is prior to the parts." Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Philosophical Lectures* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 196.

of collective music making itself.[68] There is perhaps no better musical evidence of such processes than a song by the Dead that became one of their most favored vehicles for group improvisation.

"Playing in the Band"

Of all the original songs by members of the Grateful Dead, "Playing in the Band" was one of the most commonly played by the group, and likely within the group's top three most played songs in their thirty-year career.[69] Its performance debut was on a memorable night of debuts, six in all, on February 18, 1971 at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, New York.[70] Its first recorded release was on the Grateful Dead's 1971 live album *Grateful Dead*, with later, different versions on both Bob Weir's and Mickey

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[68] "In an article published not long after the Kezar concert(s), music critic Roger Downey responds to the message of the Dead's May 1973 newsletter in commenting on the band's June 26, 1973 performance at Seattle's Center Arena. Though he has "no desire to contribute another brief to the hoary argument about whether rock 'n' roll is an art form," he, at any rate, is certain that "the Grateful Dead are artists, performing music of as great complexity and subtlety as is being composed today." But despite the fact that "the experience the Grateful Dead offers is not musically different in kind from that offered by the Juilliard String Quartet," the Dead are forced to deal with less than ideal performance conditions: "not one time in a hundred will they play in a space which enhances that experience." The cause of this misfortune, Downey thinks, is the accessibility of their music. Below a certain level of popularity, "it remains possible for a group like the Dead to continue to create and grow." But above this level, "the group becomes so tightly involved with the economic superstructure of the music business that a kind of paralysis sets in," and which finds expression in the far-from-ideal, enormous venues in which they are forced to perform. "In foul air, often ankle-deep in garbage, crushed together like so many sweaty canned asparagus-spears, the audience for the music of the future stands." Given such "gruesome" experiences, Downey wonders what performance venues for rock 'n' roll would look like in "a saner society." "There could," he thinks, "be no richer exercise, none which would be as enlightening for practitioners of the art most strictly ruled by economics and social controls."

[69] The Setlist Program lists 587 performances of "Playing in the Band," as the third most often played song, original or cover, by the Dead. (http://www.setlists.net/.) Grateful Dead Tour Statistics, in contrast, lists 719 performances of it but also puts it third in number of performances.

[70] Other song debuts by the Grateful Dead on February 18, 1971 are "Bertha," "Greatest Story Ever Told," "Loser," and "Wharf Rat." "Johnny B. Goode" is another possible debut that night but they may have performed it in 1965 or 1966. It may, therefore, have been one of their earliest examples of "breaking out" a song they had previously played but had not been part of their performing repertoire for a significantly noticeable period of time. For an extended discussion of a part of the Dead's performance on this night see the section "February 18, 1971" in the chapter, "Ned Lagin and *Seastones*," in this dissertation.

Hart's 1972 solo albums: *Ace*, and *Rolling Thunder* respectively. Unlike many original songs by members of the Dead, it never fell out of the band's performing repertoire.

Most significantly, "Playing in the Band" was also one of the Grateful Dead songs whose form varied the most over the group's performing career. Its first recorded appearance on *Grateful Dead* lasts all of 4 minutes and 42 seconds. But by its next recorded release, on Weir's *Ace* (released in May of 1972), it included a lengthy instrumental improvisation, in the parallel minor of the song's D major modality, lengthening it to 7 minutes and 34 seconds. And by 1974 (May 21 to be specific), it had grown to over *46 minutes* in length.[71] By this time the Dead had also begun to use it to "sandwich" or "bookend" other songs—that is, to segue into one or more songs during the instrumental improvisation in D minor between its second and third choruses.[72] They would also by this time sometimes segue into another song after its second chorus, and thereby never finish the song, or in later years even reprise its final section on a later night.[73]

"Playing in the Band" is, then, one of the most experimented-upon songs of the Dead's. Although "Dark Star" is the song of the Dead's most commonly associated with

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[71] This performance can be heard here: https://archive.org/details/gd1974-05-21.mtx.seamons.109887.flac16.

[72] Shaugn O'Donnell discussed the form and harmonic relations of a thrice-performed "Playing in the Band" palindrome in 1973-74 made up of "Playing in the Band>Uncle John's Band>Morning Dew>Uncle John's Band>Playing in the Band." See his unpublished "Formal Design in a 'Playing In the Band' Palindrome," *So Many Roads: The World in the Grateful Dead* conference, San Jose State University, Nov. 6, 2013. David Davis lists 117 instances where the Dead used "Playing in the Band" to "sandwich" other songs. See his "Complete List of My Playing in the Band Sandwiches (with Links)," http://gratefulseconds.blogspot.ca/2015/10/complete-list-of-my-playing-in-band.html.

[73] These standalone final sections of "Playing in the Band" are commonly referred to as "Playing in the Band" (Reprise). David Davis lists its various instances, 18 in all, as well as if and when its first section was performed. As he shows, this breaking up of portions of the song in different performances usually occurred during a sequence of performances in the same venue. But sometimes they played the reprise without a corresponding first section. And in one case, March 31, 1985, the day before April Fool's Day significantly, they played the reprise and *then* played the first and second verses. See his "Playing In The Band (Reprised): A Surprising Analysis," http://gratefulseconds.blogspot.ca/2015/11/playing-in-band-reprised-surprising.html.

the group's improvisational experimentation, it did not have the same degree of formal restructuring of "Playing in the Band" even if its sonic palette was arguably wider.[74] It thus bears scrutiny in relation to what band associate Ned Lagin spoke about as to what had attracted him and the Dead to each other: the idea of a piece of music as a constantly changing, growing entity, each new performance adding to the possibilities to which it refers. In Lagin's 1970-75 piece *Seastones*, this additive process was realized in explicit fashion through the recording of performances that were then "accreted" (Lagin's word) to the piece as possibilities that could be used in later performances through multi-track recording and playback.[75] Given its length, formal variety, and long-time importance in the band's performance repertoire, "Playing in the Band" is a prime example of this "accretive" quality of the Dead's music. And a chapter focusing on the pastoral character of the Dead's music is an ideal place to discuss a piece of music constructed in such an organic fashion.

The performance history of "Playing in the Band" is actually older than February 18, 1971, however. Its roots go back to experiments the Dead made into non-4/4 time signatures from approximately late 1967 (beginning with the arrival of second drummer Mickey Hart) until 1970.[76] In duple, rather than the triple time of their most famous such

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[74] With a few exceptions "Playing in the Band" did not reach the same degree of sonic minimalism, a quiet-verging-on-silence, that many instances of "Dark Star" did. One notable exception would be its performance on December 2, 1973, officially released as *Dick's Picks 14*, but available to listen online at https://archive.org/details/gd73-12-02.aud.vernon.17278.sbeok.shnf. This is also an early instance of the Dead not finishing "Playing in the Band"; instead of returning to thematic material in D major to set up the final chorus, the band segues into "He's Gone" after a lengthy instrumental improvisation. And though the Dead also often modified the form of "Dark Star" post-1969, its comparable formal simplicity—two verses followed by a refrain—gave them fewer elements to play with.

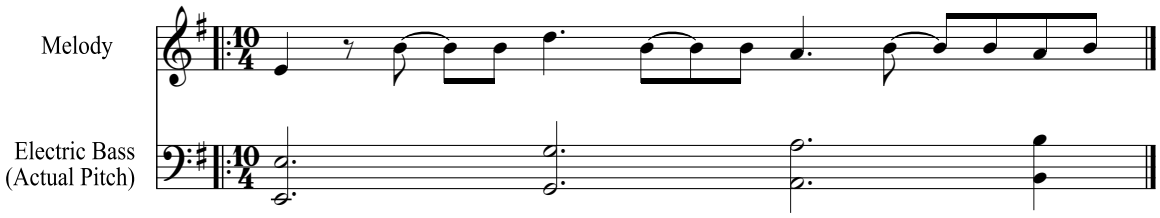
[75] See chapter four, "Ned Lagin and *Seastones*" in this dissertation for more on the additive nature of *Seastones* and Lagin's connection with the Dead.

[76] Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 131-32. One lesser-known example of these explorations of odd-time signatures by the Dead is "The Seven," of which only a few instances have survived on recording. Perhaps its best example is from September 29, 1969 at the Café au Go-Go, New York City: https://archive.org/details/gd69-09-29.aud.early.hollister.79.sbeok.shnf.

odd-time foray from this period "The Eleven" (on account of its 11/8 time signature), "Playing in the Band" is based around a cycle of 10 beats (i.e. in 10/4 time or two bars of 4/4 followed by a bar of 2/4). Subtitled "The Main Ten" on its release on Hart's *Rolling Thunder* album this seems to have been the name used by the band when it was without lyrics, larger form or vocal melody in 1969-70.[77]

Example 3.3

The Main Ten Riff

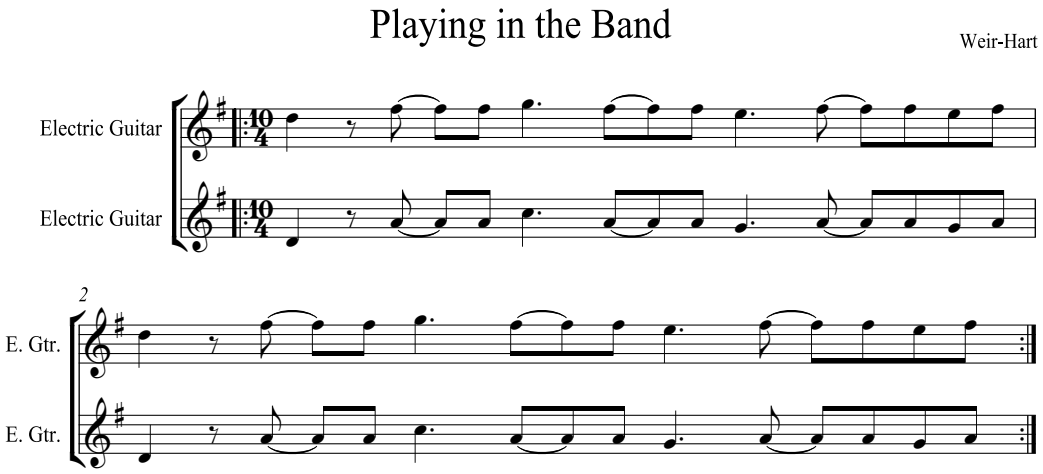


As shown in example 3.3, the compositional nucleus of "The Main Ten" in 1969-70 is a 10-beat, modally ambiguous (because it lacks a third or sixth) melodic pattern based on E. Although varying in minor details, its recorded versions share a common form characterized by: first, the repeated statement of the melody; second, the gradual movement away from the melody, using primarily the E minor pentatonic scale and E Dorian mode, while continuing to make clear the 10/4 meter; and third, the return to the main melody before seguing into another song. Also shown in example four is a part played by bassist Lesh in a number of versions of "The Main Ten" in its middle, more exploratory, section. Harmonically, it suggests a minor pentatonic scale-based I-bIII-IV-V progression.[78] More interesting, perhaps, is Lesh's implying of a triple meter (three groups of three + one) underneath the song's otherwise clear duple character.

[77] The pseudonymous Light Into Ashes lists nine known performances of "The Main Ten." See "The Dead's Early Thematic Jams," http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2010/01/deads-early-thematic-jams.html.
[78] For discussions of the use of triads built on the steps of pentatonic scales in rock music see Walter Everett, "Making Sense of Rock's Tonal Systems," *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 4 (Dec. 2004) and Nicole

The functions of "The Main Ten" and "Playing in the Band" are also very different. In 1969-70, "The Main Ten" is fundamentally a transitional episode that allows the band, and those dancing, to explore a non-4/4 meter. But when transformed into "Playing in the Band" (see example 3.4) the melody of "The Main Ten," played by guitarist Weir, is transposed to D and made unambiguously major (though with the Mixolydian minor seventh) through the addition of guitarist Garcia's harmonized counter-melody with its many F#s.

Example 3.4



Given such a compositional history, that the Dead developed "Playing in the Band" into such a far-reaching improvisational vehicle should perhaps not be surprising. Rather than the improvisation as an outgrowth of the composition, here the composition is, in a real sense, an outgrowth of what is fundamentally a largely improvised episode. Guitarist Garcia's shifting from F# to F natural, and therefore from the Mixolydian to the Dorian mode, is all that is necessary to return the band to the song's "Main Ten" roots. The reverse, Garcia switching back to F#, brings the band back to the song structure of "Playing in the Band." The use of such modal variations to realize developments within

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Biamonte, "Triadic Modal and Pentatonic Patterns in Rock Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 32, no. 2 (2010), 104-08.

and between songs became an increasingly important part of the Dead's musical practices in the early 1970s.

The Grateful Dead's Rock-Jazz Fusion

Among those who study the music of the Grateful Dead, 1972 to 1975 are widely recognized as the period in which jazz exerted the strongest influence over its members' musical practice.[79] Rather than a wholly retrospective conclusion, however, numerous critics recognized the influence of jazz at the time. Discussing the group's addition of two horn players for some shows in September of 1973, for example, one notes, "while The Band added horns (*Rock of Ages*) for a bluesy feel, The Dead added them for a jazz one."[80] A reviewer of the band's June 18, 1974 in Louisville, KY concurred: "In the past the Dead was noted for its lazy country sound. Lately, a subtle jazz influence is noticeable."[81] And comparing the group's 1972-73 music to what had come before, another critic notes, "The songs still possess elements of overall structure, but individual playing has become more personal, more removed from the structure and more jazz influenced." He then draws specific comparison to some of the most prominent jazz-fusion musicians of the time: "Their latest music indicates an awareness and resynthesis

[79] David Malvinni, *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation*, 142. Also, "'73/74 are thought of as the jazziest years because of these big jams where the Dead skitter around from one theme to another, dropping into noisy spaces or funk-jams or unknown spontaneous melodies at the drop of a hat - there's not much like that in rock music. The Blues for Allah period was perhaps the peak of jazzy Dead - in those '75 studio sessions we hear them playing with many new themes like Slipknot or Stronger Than Dirt just like a jazz combo. And then there's the September '73 tour where the Dead directly embraced jazz by adding a couple horn-players for the jams." Light Into Ashes, "The Dead and Jazz," *Grateful Dead Guide*, January 28, 2010 (deadessays.blogspot.ca/2010/01/dead-and-jazz.html). I would only add that these elements were also very much present in 1972, which is why I include that year within their most overtly jazz-influenced period.

[80] Mike Greenstein, "Horns Add A New Dimension To The Grateful Dead's Continued Growth," *Buffalo New Times*, September 30, 1973, p. 20.

[81] John Christensen, "Mellow Grateful Dead lays on the good sounds in concert here," *Louisville Times*, June 19, 1974 (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 8, June 1974).

of the directions of the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Miles Davis among others." And though still obviously sensing a strong degree of connection between the musicians, he also points to their independence: "Increasingly their music is becoming a conversation among musicians who are going their separate ways together."[82]

These quotations make clear that there was a shared understanding of the significant relations between the Dead and contemporaneous developments in jazz-fusion. Indeed, by 1973 the Dead had realized a fusion of jazz and rock of their own, but one that moved from rock *towards* jazz rather than the other way around as was more typical for jazz-fusion players.[83] Miles Davis, who had most notably inaugurated jazz-fusion with his albums *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, and his then electric quintet, had in fact opened for the Dead over four nights in April of 1970 at San Francisco's Fillmore West, an experience that bassist Phil Lesh recalls as highly influential on the group.[84]

The Dead were hardly unique in incorporating jazz influences as many other pop-rock musicians in the late 1960s and early '70s—such as Blood, Sweat & Tears; Santana; and Frank Zappa—also found inspiration in jazz and incorporated elements of it into their music. But the Dead undoubtedly foregrounded the improvisational element of jazz more than any other rock group at the time, along with a significant amount of its harmonic complexity, and at no time more so than in their live performances in 1972-75.

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[82] Judson Rosebush, "Dead Mirror Growth of a Generation," *New Times Glen Edition*, July 28, 1973, GDA, MS 332, series 4, box 6.
[83] These would include Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul and many others.
[84] Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 177-78. For an extensive discussion of these performances see Michael Parrish, "Miles Davis and the Dead, 4/10/70," *Cryptical Developments: Reflections on the Music in the Bay Area in the 60's, 70's and Beyond*, June 27, 2011 (http://cryptdev.blogspot.ca/2011/06/miles-davis-and-dead-41070.html).

Discussions of Dead concerts during this period consistently remarked upon their highly improvisational character. In a perceptive review of their March 21, 1973 performance in Utica, New York, John Kokot points out, "The Dead don't 'jam' in the sense of complete improvisation. Although the riffs may be spontaneous, the structure of their instrumentals is not." Although highly critical of the band's apparent "ignor[ing] the audience when they weren't (and sometimes when they were) playing)," another critic notes that they were "probably the best rock 'n roll band that's ever gonna play Milwaukee … Moving from country to acid to blues to folk with jazz influences abounding, the Dead displayed an unparalleled versatility." Especially impressive were the ways the band "expanded and embellished" their songs with "jam-type instrumental interludes." Even though there was a strong sense of individuality as the band members "exchang[ed] licks," the total effect was one of synergy: "there was a totality to the effort that was almost cosmic."[85]

In contrast, another reviewer, Mark Miller, lamented the Dead's "progression (or regression) from a struggling San Francisco country-rock band in the mid 60s … [into one that was] more and more heavily jazz-oriented." This change was made evident in the way "they used their regular album material as jumping-off points or as little frameworks for extended jamming at concerts." While the previously mentioned reviewers welcomed such musical elaborations, this one thought that the "jamming periods often passed the 'extended' safety mark, crossing well into the 'eternal' range. Not only was the end of a song rarely in sight, but it took so long to arrive that one questioned the value of the wait." For him, the performance was best "when the group

[85] Tom Schaefer, "Grateful Dead: A Great Band But…," unknown publication, Nov. 1-8, 1972, 4. Review of Oct. 23-34, 1972 performances at the Performing Arts Center, Milwaukee, WI (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 5, Oct. 1972).

stuck to their standard, proven repertoire." But as it "was merely sprinkled throughout an evening of slow-paced, self-indulgent, futuristic space-rock," they found "little consolation … considering the length of the concert and the Dead's enormous repertoire."[86]

Miller also didn't like the way in which the band related to the audience. He thought "there was … no rapport whatsoever, not one single word of greeting or acknowledgement from the band—strange for a group whose fans are considered among rock music's most loyal followers." Such apparent aloofness and "disregard for the audience" was, he thought, "a cardinal sin for any performer [and] made the concert impersonal and uninteresting." It also marred their "reputed professionalism" that was yet still on display despite their too lengthy jamming and "cool attitude toward their listeners."[87]

Not everyone who attended the performance felt the same way, however. James Faulkner, a resident of West Springfield, MA responded in a letter to the same newspaper. Entitled "Emotional Experience with 'Grateful Dead' he begins by stating that "Within the last hour" of writing, he "had experienced two strong emotions":

> The first was a sunset of most intense hues and shimmering light reflected on the windswept waters of the Connecticut River, evoking in me a reaffirmation of the magnificence and totality of the beauty of nature. The second was a sadness that Mark Miller, in his review of the Grateful Dead concert, shows that he seemed to have missed the chance to share in the kind of aesthetic experience Sunday night. The 'Dead's' music provokes in many the pure emotion of sunrises and sunsets as

[86] Mark Miller, "Grateful Dead Concert Proves to Be Endurance Test," *Springfield* [MA] *Daily News*, July 1, 1974, 15 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box. 8, July 1974).
[87] Ibid.

> well as astral projection to the cold dark places of unknown galaxies. To quote a fellow traveler next to me in the 'pits' 'It's morning again, I think I'm going to cry.'"

This was, according to Faulkner, "a spontaneous statement of someone who had an awakening to the non-lyrical communication of the 'Dead' transmitted to the listener through the vehicle of electricity from a formidable, glowing, and pulsating sound system activated by the thought processes of the individual musicians."[88]

He then goes on to answer the critic's objections to the performance. First, by quoting Jerry Garcia's answer to a question about the reasons for the band's "extended jamming": "our thoughts are longer than that." Second, by pointing out that in the three concerts given by the Dead in New England on the 26th, 28th, and 30th of June, "there was no repetition on the format, and any numbers repeated were extensively changed in time structure and texture according to the musicians' mood and audience feedback." In conclusion he argues, "there was a total experience open to you which you choose to ignore as did the Springfield 'boogie' crowd." He then quotes from the Dead song "Casey Jones" as to what is wrong with the reviewer: "you got two good eyes, but you still don't see."[89]

There is much that is interesting in this letter despite its sometimes-florid language. First, the author almost certainly attended the three performances in New England to which he refers since it is unlikely that he would have otherwise been able to know what the band had played at each so soon pre-Internet. Even though the phenomenon of people "going on tour," i.e. attending multiple performances in a row by

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[88] James Faulkner, "Emotional Experience With 'Grateful Dead,' *Springfield* [MA] *Daily News*, July 6, 1974 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box. 8, July 1974).
[89] Ibid.

the Dead (sometimes referred to as "tourheads") is often thought of as beginning in the late 1970s and early '80s, this letter makes it evident that even in 1974 fans of the band were attending multiple consecutive performances in different venues.[90] Second, though related to the first, the author expresses at this relatively early date a fairly sophisticated awareness of the improvised character of the band's performances in terms of their constantly changing set-lists, song variations, and the influence of the audience and the musicians' in-the-moment disposition.[91] Third, the parallels he draws between the Dead's music and the sublimity of nature evokes, again, the pastoral ("the pure emotion of sunrises and sunsets") but also the sublime ("the cold dark places of unknown galaxies). These qualities are expressed not only in the Dead's concert performances in 1972-74, but also in their first studio album since 1970's *American Beauty*.

The Grateful Dead's Wake of the Flood

The Dead's 1973 album *Wake of the Flood* is significant for a number of reasons. First, it was their first studio album since *American Beauty* in 1970, as well as the first album released by their then brand new, wholly independent record label, Grateful Dead Records.[92] The band had continued to introduce new original songs during this seemingly

[90] Dead bassist Phil Lesh, for example, points to the early 1980s as the time he became aware "that there was a community of Deadheads essentially travelling with us, driving from city to city, attending every show, staying at the same hotels that we were." *Searching for the Sound*, 264.

[91] However, one could question the author's claims as to the degree of variation in the form of the three concerts and of those songs they did repeat. Although the specific songs played were for the most part different in each concert, they were similar in their overall structure with shorter, discrete songs in the first set, and longer, mostly interconnected songs in the second set. And though there certainly were differences between those few songs that were repeated, these were arguably subtler than he portrays.

[92] Dave Marsh would later become one of the most prominent critics of the Grateful Dead, but in 1973 he was cautiously optimistic about the possibilities that their record company represented. "If the Dead fail [in their bid to run their own record company] … it will be easy for the cynics to seize the failure as the ultimate disintegration of the noble ideals of Haight-Ashbury. But should they succeed, it may mean a brand new way of getting the control of marketing and production of art into the hands of the artists. It may well turn out that that's not such a good idea—especially if you like pop, too. But Grateful Dead Records is

fallow period, however, but these instead made their official recorded appearance on live albums (*Grateful Dead*, *Europe '72*) or solo albums by guitarists Garcia and Weir. Second, it was the band's first album to not feature original singer, keyboardist, and harmonic player Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, who effectively left the band in the summer of 1972 and died in March of 1973. As the primary blues and R&B musician in the band his loss affected the group's music in profound ways given that his songs often acted as a foil to, and a rhetorically dramatic change from, the band's more experimental music.[93] Although Bob Weir would come to take on some of the same role later in the band's career, on *Wake of the Flood,* blues and rhythm & blues influences are significantly attenuated.

Third, most of its songs are related through a loose pastoral theme.[94] Although some earlier albums of theirs had featured songs with large-scale, through-composed forms, their previous few releases (e.g. *American Beauty*, the live-recorded *Grateful Dead* and *Europe '72*) had focused more on individual songs than larger formal relationships.[95] Fourth, its songs, in aggregate, feature a greater degree of harmonic

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the kind of grandiose experiment that had made rock exciting in the past, and might keep it interesting in the future." "Can the Dead Survive Putting Out Their Own Records?," *Newsday*, Nov. 18, 1973, Part II, 16.

[93] On the Dead's 1968 album *Anthem of the Sun*, for example, the McKernan sung, R&B song "Alligator" provides a dramatic contrast to the previous "That's It For the Other One>New Potato Caboose>Born Cross-Eyed" suite. And on 1969's *Live-Dead* his "Turn on Your Lovelight" serves to release the tension built up through the previous "Dark Star>St. Stephen>The Eleven" sequence. These are discussed in this dissertation's first chapter.

[94] "A lovely pastoral album … [on which] the organic cycle in 'Eyes of the World' extended throughout the album, from Weir's 'Weather Report Suite' to Rick Griffin's cover." McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 458-59. The one exception to the pastoral theme would be the second song "Let Me Sing Your Blues Away," which also happens to be the only song released on a Dead album composed and sung by the band's then keyboardist Keith Godchaux. It is also the only song on *Wake of the Flood* with obvious connections to R&B.

[95] Buzz Poole points out that the songs on *Workingman's Dead* also share a thematic continuity. Its recording engineer, Bob Matthews, "impressed by the narrative sequence of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, recognized the recurring themes of journeys, cyclical patterns, the presence of the natural world, and death. His sequencing of the songs on the rehearsal mix impressed the band so much that they ran with it." *Workingman's Dead—33 1/3* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 18.

complexity than do those on earlier Dead albums. Though the usual rock music lexicon of triads and dominant sevenths is obvious, so are a larger harmonic palette and more adventurous modulations: major sevenths, minor-major sevenths, minor sixths, fully diminished sevenths, suspended fourths, and third-related key movements are all on obvious display. In addition, though there are hints of the country and western musical and lyrical leanings that had been so prominently on the band's previous few albums, the rhythms used on *Wake of the Flood* are more diverse with clear links to those used in music from the Caribbean and South America such as the quasi-samba of "Eyes to the World," and the reggae of "Row Jimmy."[96]

Despite these musical developments, a number of reviewers were less than enthusiastic about *Wake of the Flood* considering it a poor studio album follow-up to *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*. One review, entitled "Lifeless Dead," notes, "The overall impression is one of profound disappointment … taken as a whole I can't whip up much enthusiasm for 'Wake of the Flood.'"[97] Another reviewer similarly complained, "Speaking of disappointments, there's 'Wake of the Flood' [Grateful Dead Records], in which the Dead reach new highs—or lows—of laid-backness." While she thought "there are a couple of pleasant enough things on it," overall "there's nothing outstanding enough to counter the general feeling of having heard it all before, played better, on the group's earlier releases."[98] One critic was even apparently tempted to overt

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[96] The previous few albums referred to here are the two previous studio ones credited to the band—*Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*—two live albums, *Grateful Dead* (commonly referred to as *Skull & Roses* on account of its cover art), and *Europe '72*, on which a number of original songs were debuted, but also the Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir solo albums, *Garcia* and *Ace*, that were released in 1971 and 1972 respectively. Many of the songs on these latter two albums quickly entered the Dead's performing repertoire.
[97] *Melody Maker*, October 20, 1973, p. 35.
[98] Lynn Van Matre, "Reaping a Harvest in the Rich Field of Folk Tradition," *Chicago Tribune* (Nov. 4, 1973), E10. See also Myles Palmer, "Grateful Dead: A Real American Beauty" (Dec. 1, 1973), 31-32.

violence: "They [the Grateful Dead] can make a studio album — like 'Wake of the Flood,' their last — that makes you feel like burning down every studio in San Francisco."[99]

On the other hand, a reviewer in *The Irish Times* thought it "the best Grateful Dead album since the immortal 'American Beauty.'" It was, then, "a highly suitable record with which to launch their own record company."[100] *Rolling Stone*, on the other hand, had a mixed verdict, noting, "The music … is ample, full and carefully rendered." But "despite an impressive stylistic smorgasbord, slick overdubbed production and the best intentions in the world, to my ears this band *still* sounds generally sick, usually woozy, and often afflicted with perpetual head cold." Perhaps worst of all given the largely vocal-focused nature of the album's songs, the reviewer lamented, "The poor bastards *still* can barely sing."[101]

The Songs of Wake of the Flood

Wake of the Flood is more "electric" than either *Workingman's* or *Beauty* on account of the presence of electric (rather than acoustic) guitars on every song. But conservationist, traditional tendencies and themes still suffuse the album. A common theme throughout the music, and referenced also in the title, is the invocation both of nature and history, often of a mythic kind.[102] This is evident in even the first stanza of its opening song, "Mississippi Half-Step Toodle-oo":

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[99] A. J., "Dead: Life on Mars," *Melody Maker* (July 20, 1974), 41.
[100] Parker, "Living Dead."
[101] Jim Miller, "*Wake of the Flood*: Not Rated," *Rolling Stone*, January 3, 1974. (http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/wake-of-the-flood-19740103).
[102] The title "Wake of the Flood" comes from the first line of the song "Here Comes Sunshine," the first song on the album's B side. And though lyricist Robert Hunter in his published collection of lyrics provides an autobiographical origin to the song ("Remembering the great Vanport, Washington flood of 1949, living

On the day that I was born/Daddy sat down and cried.
Had the mark just as plain as day/It could not be denied.
They say that Cain caught Abel/Throwing loaded dice
Ace of spades behind his ear/And him not thinking twice.

Here, the narrator's ontogenesis (and presumably ours as well) is connected to humanity's mythic phylogenesis from Adam and Eve through their sons' fratricide. The "plain as day" mark that "could not be denied," is, then, either the Mark of Cain placed on him by God to protect him and his descendants from revenge, or, from a Christian-Augustinian perspective, the Original Sin that burdens us since the exile from Eden.[103]

Such mythic references take on added significance within the context of the first verse of the album, standing in marked contrast to dismissive portrayals of the Dead and other "hippies" as naïve, nature-loving hedonists.[104] Rather than a jejune utopianism in which human beings are born free to wholly define ourselves however they wish, as some interpretations of sixties' counterculturalism maintain, this verse suggests the opposite: the inescapable burden of history and the dangers of a too-ingenuous attitude towards those even closest to us.

It is in the coda of "Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodle-oo," however, that its status as album opener fully comes to the fore. With a crescendo at the end of its final chorus, and through a repetition of its last line, "on my way!" over an E dominant 7th chord, the song realizes a dramatic modulation from A minor to the parallel key of A

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in other people's homes, a family abandoned by father; second grade"), invocations of "the Flood" cannot help but evoke the mythic one told in the Book of Genesis involving Noah and the Ark. See Robert Hunter, *Box of Rain*, 49.

[103] "But the LORD said to him, "Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him." Genesis 4:15. On Original Sin, see *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Original Sin" (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11312a.htm.)

[104] As discussed in the introduction, Nature-loving, incoherent hedonism is essentially what Nadya Zimmerman and David Ingram (among others) argue generally characterized the BAY AREA counterculture.

major, after which it continues as a simple alternation between one measure each of A major and D major. The single line of remaining repeated lyrics matches the simplicity of this harmonic setting: "Across the Rio Grand-e-o/Across the lazy river." Sung three times with guitarist Weir and vocalist Donna-Jean Godchaux joining in harmony after the first, it suggests—given the Rio Grande's status as marking the border between the United States and Mexico, and thus Anglo to Latin America, since the Treaty of Guadelupe-Hidalgo of 1848—a liminal state of passage into the Other, away from the comforts of home. As the opening song of the album (and most often as a relatively early song in the band's performances) it functions rhetorically as an invitation to listeners to venture into the unknown with the band through their music.[105]

The third song, "Row Jimmy," is significant in that it is the first Grateful Dead song, original or covered, to show the influence of reggae, a relatively new musical genre in North America in the early 1970s introduced primarily through the music of The Wailers and the soundtrack to the 1972 film *The Harder They Come*. Its Jamaican offbeat rhythms were a unique addition to the rhythms of popular music and influenced many rock musicians. In 1973 Led Zeppelin released the reggae-influenced "'Dyer Maker" on their album *Houses of the Holy*. And in 1974 Eric Clapton had a number one hit with his cover of Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff." Unlike these other rock-reggae songs, "Jimmy" is remarkably slow at approximately 50 beats per minute throughout. It is also, arguably, more harmonically complex than "Dyer Maker" or "I Shot the Sheriff." Rather

[105] A notable contrasting placement of "Mississippi Half-Step" is as the penultimate song, just before the appropriate ultimate "We Bid You Goodnight," at the Dead's final performance before their retirement from touring on October 20, 1974. Instead of functioning as an invitation into the unknown of the rest of the album or of a concert, in this instance the implicit unknown would seem to be that of the uncertain future that awaited the band and its audience. I am indebted to Eric Lewis for discussions of this interpretation of "Mississippi Half-Step Toodle-oo."

than the clear tonal centers of "Maker" and "Sheriff" (B major and G minor respectively), "Jimmy" is, on account of the frequent use of the subtonic (bVII) G major, based around a constant slippage between A major, with its dominant (V) E major, and its parallel A Mixolydian counterpart (the fifth mode of D major).[106] In the context of *Wake of the Flood*, the reggae character of the song, as the representative of a musical genre from the global South, is perhaps a realization of what was to be found "across the Rio Grande-o," as the ending of the earlier "Mississippi Half-Step" foretold.

The following and last song on side A of *Wake of the Flood*, "Stella Blue," maintains the slow tempo of "Jimmy," at 55 BPM, although its live performances were on average even slower, with BPMs as low as 40.[107] Its form is unusual. Other than its movement to the dominant (B major) for the bridge, it is structured around a repeating harmonic progression used in three levels of rhythm.[108] That is, the harmonic progression that largely makes up the song's form is used in two levels of diminution: while in the verses it lasts 16 bars, to make up the post-bridge (B section) instrumental transition back to the beginning of the A section for the third verse it is halved to eight, and then again to only four. This four-measure version is then repeated at the end of the song's coda to set up the final cadence to the song's E major tonic.) Such use of augmentation and

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[106] This shifting between a major key and its parallel Mixolydian mode is similar to the form of "Jack Straw," discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as numerous other songs by the Dead.
[107]For example, May 18, 1977: https://archive.org/details/gd1977-05-18.sbd.miller.79012.flac16.
[108] Another interesting aspect of "Stella Blue" is its shifting between E major and E minor within each verse. The E major seventh chord in its third and fourth measure gives way to an Asus4, with its chromatic D natural emphasized in the melody along with a G natural, in its fifth and sixth, followed by an A major in its seventh and eighth. Having introduced these pitches outside the compass of E major, but inside that of E minor, the subsequent move to E minor in the ninth measure, followed by C dominant seventh in the eleventh and twelve, feels quite normal. The following B dominant seventh, V in both E major and minor, functions as a pivot chord to return to E major for the following verse. The use of dominant seventh chords as pivot chords to modulate between parallel major and minor keys seems to have greatly inspired the Jerry Garcia's songwriting in 1972-73 as it also occurs, as already discussed, in "Mississippi Half-Step Toodle-oo," and, as will be discussed, in "China Doll." These three songs debuted in concert between June 1972 and February 1973.

diminution in compositional practice is uncommon in popular music, though it is widely used in Western art music stretching back most notably to Medieval and Renaissance choral music. It shows, perhaps, the influence of Ned Lagin on Garcia's compositional work given Lagin's claim that he extensively discussed compositional structures of music from these time periods with Garcia and Lesh during his five-year involvement with the Dead.[109]

"Eyes of the World>China Doll"

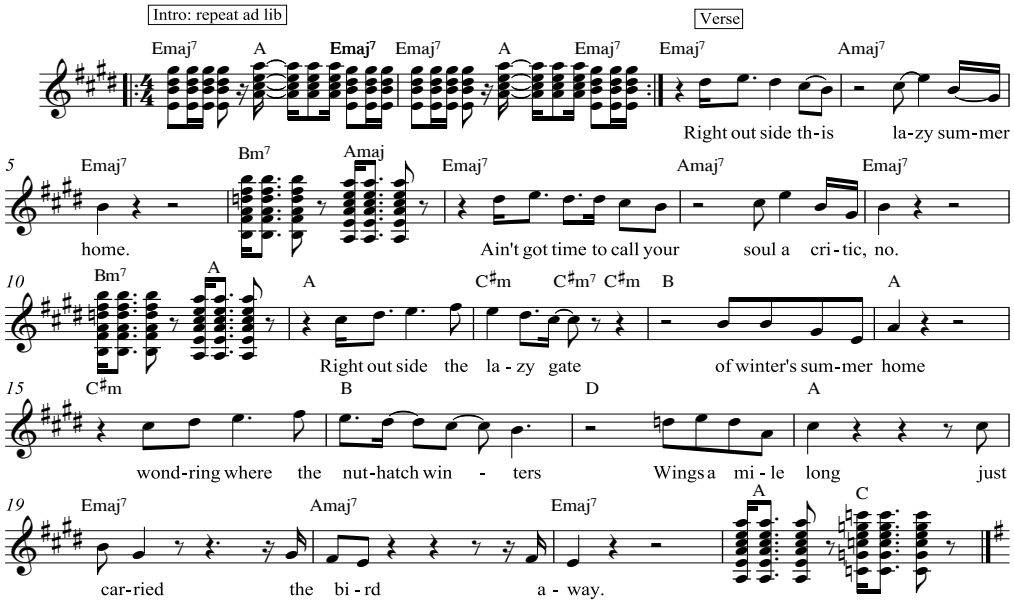
The influence of jazz is particularly evident in the music of "Eyes of the World" (hereafter EOTW), a song the Dead introduced in concert in early 1973, appeared in studio-recorded form on *Wake of the Flood*, and featured regularly in their set-lists until the group disbanded in 1995 after the death of lead guitarist Jerry Garcia. As with much of their repertoire, EOTW changed over the years reflecting the Dead's improvisational aesthetic and stated goal to never play a song exactly the same way twice, but the basic slightly modified verse-chorus form remained the same. Its versions from 1973-74 differ significantly from later ones, however, because of an instrumental coda section that always followed the song's final chorus. Featuring numerous shifts in modality and metrical modulation in a highly flexible form, this coda is a clear example of the jazz-like character of the Dead's music at this time. An analysis of its musical material thus offers

[109] "In 1970 and '71 and '72, I spent a lot of time out here [in the Bay Area] and back east, and when I was back east I was sending Jerry and Phil articles on serialism, Medieval and Renaissance theory, on Stockhausen, on Ives. We went and heard the 4th symphony [by Ives] performed, we had our scores with us, our big blue orchestra scores! So there was a lot of intellectual and musical communication. More so in the beginning with Garcia and then more so with Phil. So I may have had effects, or I may have stimulated, but I take no credit for it and have no specific knowledge of it. I primed the pump for a lot of ideas, for a lot of cultural and musical ideas. That's one of the reasons they liked me. Garcia called me the first case of information overload." Ned Lagin in conversation with author, September 30, 2013, Novato, CA.

valuable insights into the Dead's pre-retirement practices and thus into the evolution of their musical style.

Example 3.5

"Eyes of the World" intro and 1st verse



Before discussing the coda a few remarks on EOTW itself. That the song immediately acquired a long, extensively improvised coda is not surprising given its jazz-influenced character. As example 3.5 shows, rather than the triads or dominant 7th chords that serve as the basic harmonic structure for most rock songs, EOTW begins on, and continually returns to, an E major seventh chord. Although this sonority was not unheard of in the pop-rock music of the time (interestingly, Marvin Gaye's 1971 hit "What's Going On" also tonicizes an E major seventh chord—a source of inspiration perhaps?), its use as the primary harmonic color in up-tempo rock songs was then, and remains today, somewhat unusual. In jazz, in contrast, major sevenths, along with added sixths, are the usual extensions to non-dominant functioning major triads.[110]

[110] "Now, what makes the major-seventh sonority so distinctive and sonically attractive is its perfect fifths and major thirds. Of all the tetrachords it is the only one with exactly two major thirds and two perfect

Another jazz-connoted aspect of the song is its relative harmonic sophistication. As shown in example six, the clearly expressed E major tonality at the song's beginning is continually challenged by modal borrowings of B minor seventh (the minor dominant of E major) followed by the subdominant, A major, after the first two lines of each verse. As well, there is a touch of through-composition in the first verse, where the line "Wings a mile long…" is subtly text-painted with a setting to a chromatic D major triad, foreshadowing the even more surprising shift to the key of G major for the chorus (see example 3.6). Although harmonic third-relations, usually based on the minor pentatonic scale, are quite common in rock music, such third-related key changes (E major to G major) are considerably less so and, in the case of "Eyes," serve to dramatically emphasize the transition to the chorus.[111] At the chorus' end, the return to E major is brought about through another instance of the one-measure interjection of B minor seventh and A major. Although this brings the song back to its E major seventh "home" chord, the modulation is not confirmed by a move to its sub-dominant or dominant, as often occurs following a tonal modulation. Instead, E major seventh is reinterpreted modally as E Ionian with the band collectively improvising, then shifting to B minor seventh (modally B Dorian) two bars later. This four bar section is then repeated ad lib until band members decide to begin the next verse. With the exception of the aforementioned appearance of D major chord in the first verse, this form is repeated

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fifths." Allan Forte, "Harmonic Relations: American Popular Harmonies (1925-1950) and Their European Kin," *Contemporary Music Review* 19m no. 1 (2000), 5-36.

[111] See Alf Björnberg, "On Aeolian Harmony in Contemporary Popular Music" (http://www.tagg.org/others/bjbgeol.pdf).

twice to constitute the song's basic form. But as relatively complex the form of EOTW is for rock music in the early 1970s, its coda from 1973-74 goes considerably further.[112]

Example 3.6

"Eyes of the World" chorus and solo form

Chorus G C G Guitar C
Wake up_ to find out_ that you are_ the eyes of the world. But the
5 G C G Guitar C C C♯
heart has its bea-ches its home-land and thoughts of its own.
9 D C G Guitar C
Wake now, dis-cov - er__ that you are_ the song___ that the mor - ning brings But the
13 G C D Bm7 Amaj
heart has_ its sea-sons its eve - nings its songs of its own.
17 Emaj7 (Ionian) Bm7 (Dorian)

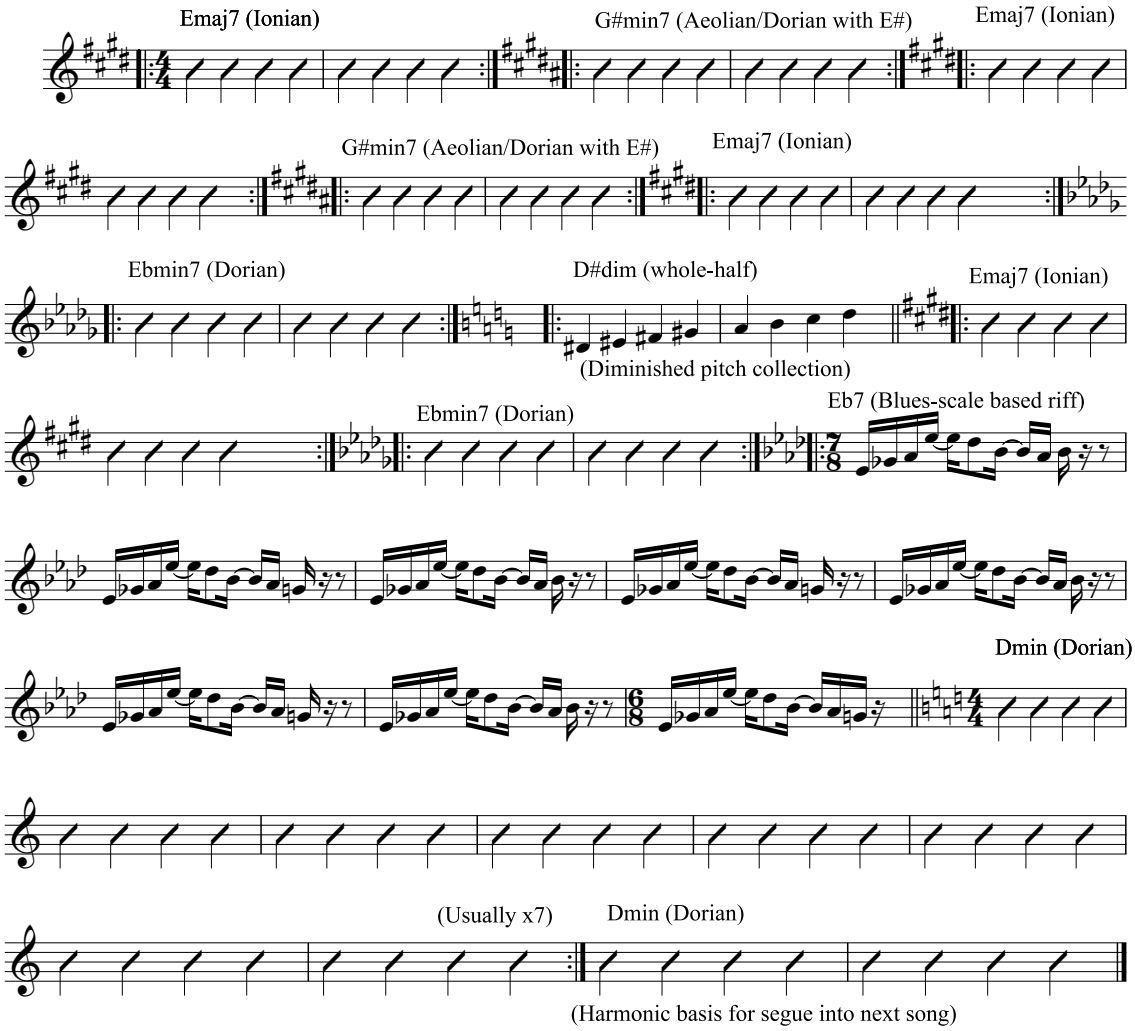
The coda seems to have developed fairly organically over the course of the first half of 1973, at which point it attained a relatively consistent overall form, while remaining flexible in terms of the length of each harmonic area. Because of the availability of recordings of nearly every performance of the Dead post-1970, one can trace its development out of nebulous beginnings in a collective improvisation at the end of the song's first performance on February 9, 1973 to its last complete performance on October 20, 1974, during the group's final concert before their retirement. The complete details of its evolution from the dozens of different examples in this 18-month period are beyond the scope of this dissertation. (That would be a dissertation in itself). Instead, the

[112] Transcriptions of "Eyes of the World" are by the author.

following analyzing is based on its more-or-less final form in conjunction with key examples from its evolution.[113]

Example 3.7

"Eyes of the World" coda analysis



As one can see in example 3.7, after the final chorus, the coda begins with the group collectively improvising solely in E Ionian rather than shifting to B minor seventh every two bars as in the earlier improvised sections between the first two choruses and

[113] For another discussion of this coda see David Malvinni, *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation*, 155-58. There are, however, significant differences between our analyses. To hear a notable example of the coda in its entirety see https://archive.org/details/gd74-10-19.sbd.miller.21927.sbeok.shnf beginning at 8:07.

2nd and 3rd verses. The musicians then work their way through the various diagrammed modes, i.e. collectively improvising within its harmonic and melodic space. The lengths of each are quite variable but generally occur in some multiple of four bars. (Here, they are condensed to two bars for the sake of space.) Although at first the modal shifts are relatively close—E Ionian shares all but a single note with G# Aeolian, and with G# Dorian all but two—the harmonic movements become increasingly adventurous: when moving from the E Ionian to Eb Dorian, for example, *four* notes must change.

The harmonic drama then builds even further as the group moves outside the diatonic pitch collections to improvise on the whole-half octatonic scale starting on C, D#, F# or A. Although C is at first usually emphasized in the bass of the various instruments' pitch collections, suggesting it as the root of the harmony, through the (usually) eighth bars that this pitch collection is the basis of their improvisation D#, F# and A often become equally prominent in the bass, thus subverting any clear choice of a definitive chord label or function.[114] The band uses this diminished pitch collection primarily modally; that is, as an independent harmony rather than as part of a functional chord progression. But once this harmonic space resolves to the following E major seventh-Ionian modality, D# becomes retrospectively the probable root of the diminished seventh chord by suggesting a functional progression, as the leading tone diminished seventh chord of the following E major chord.[115]

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[114] Because a fully diminished seventh chord is made up of four symmetrical minor thirds any of the notes can function as the chord's root.

[115] Malvinni, by contrast, labels it definitively as a fully diminished C-seventh chord. See his *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation*, 157. The shift into an octatonic modality in the coda to EOTW is hinted at in its first live instance on February 9, 1973. Just after the 13 minute mark, bassist Lesh changes from the Eb minor chord tones he had been using and begins to play prominent C and A naturals, implying the fully diminished seventh chord of which the band would later make such prominent use. In this instance, however, the rest of the band seems to not understand what he is doing and by 13:30 they all move back to E Ionian. This modal space only lasts another 30 or so seconds before they again move back to Eb Dorian,

The next harmonic movement is then back to E-flat Dorian before launching once again into the unexpected: rather than the root movement that has accompanied every other modal shift thus far, the band plays a riff in 7/8 meter, repeated seven times, and shortened to 6/8 its last. (See systems 4-6 of example 3.8.[116]) This riff resolves to D minor Dorian, again, suggesting a retrospective harmonic interpretation: that the previous E-flat dominant seventh-based riff be interpreted harmonically as E-flat dominant seventh, the tri-tone substitution of A7, the dominant of D minor.[117] The band then matches the number of repetitions of the 7/8 riff on a higher formal level with 7 repetitions of the 16-bar form beginning with the movement to E-flat dominant seventh before finally ending the outro in D minor Dorian. They then gradually segue into another song, almost always one with a slow tempo in marked contrast to what had come before.[118]

The most common destination out of the EOTW coda was the song "China Doll," which, though recorded for *Wake of the Flood*, was not officially released until its appearance on the band's 1974 album *From the Mars Hotel*.[119] Known first as "The

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which had prevailed before Lesh's attempted move to the diminished. Then, around the 14:30 mark, guitarist Garcia, followed quickly by Lesh, begins to make obvious use of the same octatonic pitch collection. Around 15:15 they again move back to E Ionian, which quickly gives way to Eb Dorian. Around 18:10 they hint again at the same octatonic pitch collection, but Garcia then makes an unprepared modulation to D minor, likely to set up the transition into the following "China Doll," which begins in that key.

[116] What this shift in time signature means is that what in 4/4 time was half of a primary beat, i.e. the eighth note since a quarter note represents the beat, instead becomes the primary beat. So instead of "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" the meter changes to "1 2 3 4 5 6 7."

[117] For possibly the best discussion of the theory of tri-tone substitutions and its relation to often identical augmented sixth chords see Nicole Biamonte, "Augmented Sixth Chords vs. Tritone Substitutes," *Music Theory Online* 14, no. 2 (June 2008): http://www.academia.edu/download/10669865/Aug%206th%20vs%20TT%20Sub.pdf.

[118] On a few occasions, such as the June 24, 1974 performance, there is no segue into a new tune and they instead come to a close on a D minor chord. For the official release of this performance see *Dick's Picks 12*.

[119] One can hear a version of "China Doll" recorded during the sessions for *Wake of the Flood* on the album's 2004 reissue.

Suicide Song" it maintained a steady though not common place in the band's repertoire.[120] Beginning in D minor with a dirge-like tempo of around 52 BPM, and making prominent use of a B fully diminished seventh chord, it realizes a dramatic modulation to the parallel D major at the end of its fifth strophe.[121] (The third of which is an instrumental guitar solo.) Its lyrics reflect this minor-to-major harmonic movement. The first section in D minor recounts a plea for understanding in the wake of some seemingly suicidal catastrophe. "A pistol shot at 5 o'clock/The bells of heaven ring/Tell me what you done it for/No I won't tell you a thing." In contrast, once it shifts to D major there is an assurance of survival, and of hope, that all is not lost: "Take up your china doll/It's only fractured/And just a little nervous from the fall."[122]

In contrast to such common Grateful Dead song pairings as "China Cat Sunflower>I Know You Rider" and "Scarlet Begonias>Fire On the Mountain," EOTW and "China Doll" are rarely, if ever, considered to form such a close relationship.[123] But though their pairing never matched the regularity of these other combinations even during 1973-74 when the coda of EOTW was part of the band's repertoire, not only was it by far the most common destination but the preceding analysis shows how closely linked the two songs were at this time.[124] The specific details of the coda clearly developed quite

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[120] "Its working title was 'The Suicide Song.'" David Dodd, *Greatest Stories Ever Told* - "China Doll" (http://www.dead.net/features/greatest-stories-ever-told/greatest-stories-ever-told-china-doll).

[121] The move to the parallel major for the coda of "China Doll" echoes the same modulation into the coda of "Mississippi Half-Step Toodle-oo."

[122] The message of optimism at the end of "China Doll" repeats that of an earlier song by the Dead that is also a response to a tragic event, "New Speedway Boogie." Its final line is also an example of hopeful insistence: "One way or another/This darkness has got to give." Two notable interpretations of "China Doll" are available: David Dodd, *Greatest Stories Ever Told* – "China Doll" (http://www.dead.net/features/greatest-stories-ever-told/greatest-stories-ever-told-china-doll; and Rob Meador, "A Subjective Interpretive Note" (http://artsites.ucsc.edu/GDead/agdl/doll.html#notes).

[123] These song pairings were so common that among fans of the group they were commonly referred to as "China-Rider" and "Scarlet-Fire."

[124] In contrast, I am unaware of another instance of the pairing of EOTW and "China Doll" once the band stopped performing the coda after returning from their 1975 hiatus.

organically over the course of 1973 through the band's collective improvisations, but the destination of D minor, the key at the beginning of "China Doll," seems to have defined its development even if on occasion "China Doll" did not follow.

Why might the band have wanted to link these two specific songs? The character of their lyrics and music could hardly be more different. EOTW, as its quick tempo, major modality, and chorus make abundantly clear, is a song of celebration and joy. Its lyrics are suffused with evocations of pastoral scenes realized through metaphorical relations between the human and nature but perhaps most obviously in the thrice-repeated chorus:

> Wake up to find out
> that you are the eyes of the world.
> But the heart has its beaches
> its homeland and thoughts of its own.
> Wake now, discover that you
> are the song that the morning brings.
> But the heart has its seasons
> its evenings and songs of its own.

Here personhood and nature are intertwined with the song's addressee as both the world's eyes and the morning's song. Furthermore, the heart, the metaphorical center of the emotions, is here the mediator between the human (thoughts, songs, homeland), and nature (beaches, seasons, evenings).

"China Doll," in marked contrast, is largely a song of sadness, and death, the negative associations of which are musically conveyed through the song's minor modality and dirge-like tempo. But it is also a plea for understanding (Tell me what you done it for? ... I will not condemn you, nor yet would I deny/I would ask the same of you but failing will not die") along with a concluding insistence, after the modulation to the parallel major modality, that despite what has happened, the "china doll"—an obvious

metaphor for the delicate reality of human life—is "only fractured/and just a little nervous from the fall" it has sustained.

Understood to form a cohesive whole, however, the pairing of EOTW and "China Doll, including the trials and tribulations represented by the intricate musical details and shift from major to minor modalities in the coda to EOTW, and return to major at the end of "China Doll," suggests an interpretation of their linking. EOTW on its own may seem to some a paradigmatic example of hippie "fluff" with its repeated anthemic calls "to find out that you are the eyes of the world." However, placed within the continuum that includes its coda, the dark D minor of most of "China Doll," and the hopeful final modulation to D major, it is but the beginning of a narrative of transformation through the sublime experience and power of nature, as the abundant lyrical references to it make clear, leading to a kind of death, but also a rebirth.

Conclusion

In a review of a 1973 performance by the Grateful Dead a critic points perceptively to the paradoxical movements towards progress and cycles at work in their music.

> [Weir] is fingerpicking through the Old English Prelude to 'Weather Report Suite.' 'Suite' is the perfect conclusion to this hour and a quarter of continuous music. By itself it is almost a musical odyssey, but placed at the end of a series it completes the cycle. In Part II of 'Suite' the tune changes to a lyrical Mexican theme, and ends finally with the loud assertion that, 'I am, I am, I am.' It is the

> snake biting his own tail. It is the great mandala. It is the picture, the symbol for that which is whole.[125]

Here, the cognizance of the developmental character of the group's music ("a musical odyssey") is crucial to its general understanding as the realization of a fundamentally cyclical narrative. Despite the mostly individuated character of songs on the group's studio albums, their live realizations demonstrate a directional musical practice of continual variation, as a perennially renewed, and necessarily experiential narrative of transformation and becoming.

This kind of musical practice was undoubtedly influenced by the modal improvisation pioneered by Miles Davis on *Kind of Blue*, as well as during his later electric phase, but also by the expansion of formal possibilities in popular music that progressive rock had realized by the early 1970s. In 1972-74, the Dead similarly integrated the possibility of endless polyphonic inventiveness with significant harmonic and rhythmic complexity in compositionally sophisticated forms, while remaining flexible to their in-performance collective improvisation.

Given such musical complexity, there would seem to be a strong argument for classifying them within the genre of progressive rock. Certainly some of their music on its own would fulfill whatever criteria one might think defines progressive rock, as this and previous chapters have demonstrated. That they are not more commonly considered an example of progressive rock is partly due to ignorance of the complexity of their music. Digging deeper, however, it is perhaps also because of an awareness of how their music challenges the modernist claims of progressive rock: that the realization of such

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[125] Dani Ruby, "On the road with the Grateful Dead," *The Daily Illini*, November 3, 1973 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box. 7, Nov. 1973).

musical complexity does not require the rejection of older, simpler forms and styles, or their use solely in parodic guise.

Although many musical characteristics from 1972-74 continued through the rest of the band's career, the extremities of formal experimentation, and some of the more explicit pastoral evocations, largely disappeared once they returned to touring after their 1975 hiatus. Despite the work they had done to develop and perfect the elaborate instrumental coda to EOTW in 1973-74, for example, its October 20, 1974 iteration was the last time they would perform it even though EOTW remained a consistent part of the group's repertoire until the group's demise in 1995.

The usual explanation for the Dead's decision to retire in late 1974 is that the band was exhausted from nine years of nearly constant touring made worse by the work and expense needed to set up, take down and move their "Wall of Sound" sound projection system. In addition, the sharp increase in fuel prices on account of the 1973-74 OPEC oil embargo made touring with such a massive sound system economically prohibitive. It is also possible (though speculative) that it was at least partially because of their awareness of the passing of the sixties—which arguably ended in 1974—the era had so defined their identity and music. Given the changes at work in North American society at the time, it is understandable that they might feel the need to get away from who they were, a constantly touring band, to figure out who and what they were going to be in the future.

It is therefore perhaps significant that the coda of EOTW in 1973-74 seems to have provided the group with some important starting points to later musical developments. In late 1973, lead guitarist Jerry Garcia began to play with a riff based on

a diminished scale in some of the group's improvisations that is closely related to the fully diminished seventh arpeggios in the coda of "Eyes"; at least twice (one of which was during its very last performance) Garcia played it during the coda itself.[126] In 1975 this riff would become the nucleus of a composition entitled "Slipknot" that would serve as an instrumental bridge between their songs "Help on the Way" and "Franklin's Tower." In addition, on account of their shared time signature and similar rhythmic pattern, it seems likely that the repeated 7/8 riff in the EOTW coda is in some way connected to the instrumental "King Solomon's Marbles>Stronger Than Dirt" that bassist Phil Lesh composed in 1975. These genealogies would also partly explain why the Dead never played the coda to EOTW after their 1975 hiatus: if they understood these later compositions as resulting from what they had been previously experimenting with, the coda would have served its purpose and represented a less sophisticated musical realization than what they had accomplished by 1976. But why would worked out compositions, rather than more loosely organized improvisations, have seemed more appropriate to the band in the later 1970s?

A brief excursus in political theory may provide an answer. In his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty," Isaiah Berlin defines two different, contradictory, understandings of liberty or freedom: positive and negative. In simplest terms, by negative liberty Berlin means the freedom to make choices unhindered by external restraint; by positive liberty,

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[126] For an early instance of Garcia hinting at "Slipknot!" see the "Playing in the Band," *Grateful Dead Live at Winterland Arena on 1974-02-22* (https://archive.org/details/gd74-02-22.sbd.patched.sirmick.21539.sbeok.shnf/gd74-02-22d2t01.shn), 5:00-5:40. For a discussion of the various instances of "Slipknot!" pre-1975 see Light Into Ashes, "Slipknot Jam," "The Dead's Early Thematic Jams," *Grateful Dead Guide: An ongoing series of articles on songs & performances of the early Grateful Dead.*

he means the freedom to fully realize one's individual capacities. These contradict because while the negative form of liberty is highly individualistic, the positive form is highly dependent on others since one's capacity to fully realize oneself, to achieve self-mastery, is very often inseparable from the social conditions that make it possible.[127]

There is a possible connection between these two forms of liberty and the movement by the Dead away from their earlier more freewheeling improvisational practices in the mid-1970s. For it was, arguably, the attempt to have the fullest extant of both negative and positive liberty, ignoring their tensions, upon which foundered the beliefs of so many in the 1960s that the world could be radically changed for the better. One cannot build a better society with greater equality if no limitations on the satisfaction of each individual's private desires are to be accepted. But neither can individuals accept their wholesale subsumption into a collectivity that presumes to know what is best for each. Both forms of liberty must be respected, while recognizing, as Berlin points out, that they can never be wholly reconciled. They are incommensurable because the complete realization of positive liberty would require complete social equality, which would, in turn, require the almost total abrogation of negative liberty since individuals' freedom to make choices is a major factor in creating inequality.

What the Grateful Dead seem to have tried to achieve after their 1975 hiatus suggests an awareness of the tension between these two forms of freedom, and an attempt to achieve a balance between them. Instead of the more utopian dreams of the sixties, in which many believed people could do whatever they wanted while simultaneously believing it possible to realize a radical transformation of society, the Dead's post-

[127] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, eds. Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 191-242.

retirement music seems to suggest an awareness of the limitations that such dreams must face: a greater emphasis on bringing the musically familiar into unfamiliar relations rather than a search for the wholly unfamiliar. It is, then, the group's eyes *to* the world, rather than any claim to know what the eyes *of* the world might see, that perhaps best defines their later musical direction.

Chapter 4:
Ned Lagin and *Seastones*

Following long hollow confessions – quiet glass eyes/Stepping stones inclose/
Light in the silence/Patches of winter[1]

One of the most striking examples of the use of avant-garde, experimental and "art-music" elements within popular music contexts, and also one of those about which the least is known, are the performances of Ned Lagin's composition *Seastones* in 1973-75, as well as its LP record release in 1975. Featuring a panoply of San Francisco rock music luminaries in its various live and recorded incarnations—including Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh and Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead, along with Grace Slick and David Freiburg (of the Jefferson Airplane/Starship) and David Crosby (Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, the Byrds)—*Seastones* is also a pioneering work of sound synthesis and signal processing. Its live performances were quite possibly the first to use an on-stage computer and to feature the processing of acoustic and electric sounds in real time.

Yet despite their historical significance, neither Lagin nor *Seastones* has received much in the way of popular or scholarly attention—for at least two reasons. First, Lagin walked away from his involvement with the Grateful Dead and the other rock musicians he had been working with in June of 1975, and asked that his previous involvement with them be minimized as much as possible in order to maintain his privacy.[2] Although he performed three more concerts of his music with members of the Dead that year (some

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[1] Ned Lagin, "Alone" (GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin).

[2] "I told Phil and Jerry, and to the others when I saw them, that I would just prefer not to be talked about and not have a public life." This desire to not be in the public eye even extended to his potential appearance in *The Grateful Dead Movie*, which was filmed during the band's "retirement" shows, October 16-20, 1974 during which Lagin performed. "I signed a release for the movie, with me removed from the movie as much as possible." David Gans, "Ned Lagin," *Conversations with the Dead* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 375.

also including David Crosby), he never again played with the band as a whole or, by the end of 1975, associated professionally or socially with its members. Second, his involvements were not widely publicized while they were ongoing. He received some press coverage in 1974 while performing with the Grateful Dead, as well as in 1975 due to the LP release of *Seastones* by Grateful Dead Record's then solo-album-focused sub-label, Round Records. As well, influential Grateful Dead taper Les Kippel wrote a short essay, "Seastones Who?" discussing its first performance in 1974, the recorded release of *Seastones* as well as a biography of Lagin himself.[3] And there are a number of published reviews of the album as well as of the then-new technology used in the performance and recording of *Seastones* from 1975.[4]

Although his performances with the Dead in 1974 were announced in the band's occasional newsletters to those on its mailing list, the actual extant of his involvement in the band's live performances was largely unknown prior to 2014.[5] Because the naming of band members during performances was a rare occurrence for the Dead, Lagin's presence on stage with them was seemingly never announced immediately prior to,

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[3] "Ned looks like he could smile and convince a cop that he is an all American Boy, who loves Mom and Apple Pie. It is Ned who 'plays' the computer and electronic keyboard which 'Warps' the sound that Phil pulls out of his bass. Ned, at that time, even though he played with the Dead on *American Beauty* and with the Dead in a few live concerts in 1971, seemed quite and unsure [sic] of himself and his role in the Dead organization." *Dead Relix #5* vol. 2, no 4 (July/August 1975), 18-19. A "taper" is someone who records concerts with audio-recording equipment for their own purposes and usually without the permission of the musicians they record.

[4] See, for example, "Mini Helps 'Grateful Dead' Compose Rock," *Computerworld Weekly*, August 13, 1975. Charles Perry, *Seastones* – Album Review, *Rolling Stone*, August 28, 1975. "New Record Uses Hookup to Computer," *The Hartford Courant*, September 14, 1975, 7A. Holly Spence, "Album Review: Head Sounds," *Lincoln, Nebraska Journal*, June 4, 1975, 12. Michael Snyder, "Seastoned,"

[5] For an example of the Dead publicizing Lagin's involvement in performances, see untitled document beginning with "We have been trying something new at some concerts on recent tours. Ned Lagin and Phil have been playing electronic cybernetic biomusic, 'music as metaphor for thought'" (GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin).

during or after a performance in which he took part.[6] It was only with the September 2014 online appearance of *Nedbase*, a website focused on Lagin's association with the Dead, that the extant of his involvement with the Grateful Dead from 1970 to 1975 was revealed.[7]

After walking away from his association with the members of the Grateful Dead in 1975, Lagin largely refrained from public commentary about his music and relations with members of the band. But in the last few years he has begun to speak more as growing interest in his music and involvement with the Dead have coincided with his work on releasing a new version of his composition *Seastones* that would more accurately reflect his original intentions than what he was able to accomplish on the 1975 LP given technological limitations at the time.

Based on the information in *Nedbase*, numerous conversations with Lagin, and newly available archival sources, this chapter presents the first scholarly discussion of Lagin, his music (*Seastones* in particular), and his connections to the stylistically ecumenical and significantly improvised music of the Grateful Dead.[8] Shedding light on a contemporary composer and his work, it offers significant insights into the musical and social development of the Grateful Dead, the history of crossovers between art and

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[6] The one time his presence should have been announced was before his final performance with all members of the Grateful Dead (though billed as "Jerry Garcia & Friends") on March 23, 1975 at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco during the SNACK Benefit Concert. Promoter Bill Graham announced the names of everyone else in the ensemble before they began their performance but forgot to include him. See Corry Arnold, "March 23, 1975: Kezar Stadium, San Francisco, CA: The SNACK Concert with Jerry Garcia And Friends (FM VIII)," *Lost Live Dead*, October 4, 2012 (http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2012/10/march-23-1975-kezar-stadium-san.html).

[7] See http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/.

[8] There is, in fact, an entire folder of Lagin-*Seastones* related material in the Grateful Dead Archive, the contents of which have been very useful for writing this chapter. Because Lagin lost almost all of his music manuscripts and other documents in a late 1970s' theft and the Marin County Flood of 1982, it is likely the greatest collection of Lagin-related documents from his time as an associate of the Dead (1970-75) in existence. When I sent him pictures of its contents, he told me that it was all material he had last seen when he walked away from his association with the band in 1975.

popular music, and a largely unknown but historically important contemporary American composer.

Lagin and the Grateful Dead

Much has been made of Tom Constanten's exit from the Dead on the band's musical direction in January of 1970.[9] With degrees in composition from the University of California – Berkeley and Mills College, where he studied with Luciano Berio (with whom he attended the International Summer Course for New Music in Darmstadt, Germany in 1964), the influence of Constanten's connections to the world of the modernist musical avant-garde had been obviously desired by guitarist Jerry Garcia and bassist Phil Lesh in the late 1960s.[10]

But Lagin's entry into the Grateful Dead's orbit only a few months later in May of 1970 as effectively Constanten's replacement has rarely been acknowledged. Although Lagin, unlike Constanten, was never a full-time member of the band, he served a similar role of bringing to the band art music, modernist, and avant-garde influences. Garcia and Lesh, as the clear leaders of the band at this time, clearly wanted this artistic element as an important part of their musical practices.[11] Lagin had the additional advantage over Constanten of having a greater knowledge of and experience with modern jazz, having

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[9] "By 1969 it was clear that the Dead were moving in another direction: away from psychedelic experiments and back to the rootsy, acoustic-based American music Garcia was playing back when Constanten was learning all about modern classical musical concepts like dissonance and minimalism. He ended up parting ways amicably with the band just before they began work on *Workingman's Dead* in February 1970." Tony Sclafani, *The Grateful Dead FAQ: All That's Left to Know about the Greatest Jam Band in History* (Milwaukee: Backbeat Books, 2013), 178-79.

[10] In his autobiography, Tom Constanten describes how after the recording sessions for the Grateful Dead album *Anthem of the Sun* in which he participated (discussed in the first chapter) Jerry Garcia turned to him and said, "I think we can use you." Constanten, *Between Rock & Hard Places*, 71.

[11] In my conversations with Lagin he repeatedly emphasized his self-understood role with the Grateful Dead, which he had taken over from Constanten, of being a channel to the modern jazz and Western art music worlds.

attended performances by many of the leading jazz artists of the 1960s in New York City (Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Bill Evans to name a few), along with studying jazz piano and arranging at the Berkeley School of Music, as well as improvisation with saxophonist, and noted jazz pedagogue, Lee Konitz.[12] It may have thus seemed especially fortuitous for Garcia and Lesh to meet Lagin only a few weeks after Miles Davis' electric quintet had opened for the Dead during a four-night stand at the Fillmore West in San Francisco, an experience that influenced the band immensely.[13]

Although it is impossible to untangle Lagin's relationship with the Dead, given its length, results, and seriousness with which band members treated it, it was certainly significant. That the Dead's musical, business, and live sound experimentations reached their zenith during the time of their association is not (I think) an accident. Because of the unveiling of the full Wall of Sound system on March 23, 1974 at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, and Ned Lagin's first performance of "Seastones" with the Grateful Dead in Miami later that year, 1974-75 is one of the crucial periods in understanding the experimental trajectory that the Dead had been following since the late 1960s, and

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[12] In one of my interviews with Lagin I asked him about the idea of him as having replaced Constanten. Backstrom: "Because it seems to me that, in a sense, you were replacing him in a certain way." Lagin: "I'm glad you used that word." Backstrom: "He and Phil had been super close. He'd been brought in because they seemed to want to incorporate his avant-garde influence. He left, maybe because he was a Scientologist, maybe for other reasons. But then you come in and in a sense replace that role. You would agree with that?" Lagin: [After my association with the band began] there was no discussion of TC. He was verboten. It wasn't until '74, actually the discussions about me going on the road began after the Palace of Fine Arts concert in November of '73. There were a lot of people who were worried that I was another TC. The only criticism I heard of TC from Phil and Jerry was that in their genre he didn't swing. One of the things they liked about me was that I was a jazz musician. They realized that my attack wasn't as traditionally bluesy-jazz west coast like Merl's [Saunders] was, but they weren't interested in that. Avant-garde jazz was east coast and Garcia loved that. So in '74, with *Seastones*, this was a continuation of a strain that had existed in Jerry and Phil, and in all of them to some degree, Pigpen even, that TC could not or did not fulfill, and his Scientology was adverse to the LSD community." Lagin interview, November 9, 2013, Novato, CA.

[13] These took place on April 9-12, 1970. For an in-depth discussion of these performances, particularly the 10th, see the recollections of Michael Parrish, "Miles Davis and the Dead 4/10/70," *Cryptical Developments: Reflections on the Music in the Bay Area in the 60's, 70's and Beyond* (http://cryptdev.blogspot.ca/2011/06/miles-davis-and-dead-41070.html.)

through them the history of experimentalism and engagements with the avant-garde in the Bay Area.[14]

The June 23, 1974 concert was not the first performance by the Dead to feature Lagin, however. He first met the band when they performed twice, May 6th and 7th, 1970, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where Lagin was then studying biology and music. After seeing the band play in December of 1969, he wrote Jerry Garcia a letter because he felt like he and the Dead were, in his words, "doing the same kinds of things from very different places."[15] In it he discussed his jazz and classical music training, his electronic music compositional work, "ideas [he] had about sound and music and magic of acoustic space" arising from his musicological studies making transcriptions of Renaissance choral music, and relations between music and biology coming out of his studies at MIT.[16] Although he never received a written response the letter clearly made a profound impression. When he introduced himself to Garcia as a

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[14] The description of the Wall of Sound as a "sound creation system" comes from Ron Wickersham, one of the engineers who built and ran the Wall of Sound, during a keynote lecture at *So Many Roads: The World in the Grateful Dead, A Conference & Symposium*, San Jose State University, November 8, 2014.

[15] Gans, "Ned Lagin," *Conversations With the Dead*, 348. Although Lagin claims that the performance he attended was "at the Ark, December 29th or 30th of 1969," it must have been at the Boston Tea Party in Boston since that is where the Dead played both nights. See *The Deadhead Taper's Compendium, Vol. 1*, 210-11.

[16] Ibid, 348-49. Lagin took a course, "Intellectual and Social Change," with Noam Chomsky during the tumultuous spring of 1968. Chomsky's theory of generative grammars would also be an important influence on his later musical direction. Backstrom: "What do you remember about that initial letter you wrote to Jerry? And what do you think connected and got Jerry and Phil so interested? Lagin: I think there were two things in particularly that I can remember. One of them was my, uh, baseball stats: science, music, jazz, jazz bands—that stuff. Whether it was real or not, it was proven when they met me versus the letter that this is who I am. The other was what I had learned particularly from transcribing Renaissance music, that, at least at the time, purportedly had a lot of philosophy, neo-Platonism in it, buried in secret structures that were numerological and rhythmic in nature, #1. # 2, that Renaissance music was written for its symbolism and audience and the places that it was performed in. The composers who worked for various people, the Dukes of Burgundy, for example in the 1450s, knew the acoustics of the chapels and cathedrals that their music would be performed in on small scales and on large scales. And those buildings were laid out not only in the sign of the cross but in all sorts of numerical symbolism from the Middle Ages, Plato's *Timaeus*, and so on. And all this I tied to nature and biology, because that's what I was doing, and the nature of sound and the sound of the earth, and the sound of everything … the fundamental nature of the cosmos being musical." Lagin interview, November 11, 2014.

member of the organizing committee for the concerts when the band arrived at MIT for their May 1970 concerts, Garcia "got out of the station wagon and ran away down the parking lot yelling, 'Phil! I found the guy! I found the guy!'"[17]

While the Dead were at MIT, Garcia, Phil Lesh and Mickey Hart attended a performance of an eight-channel, four-tape-recorder electronic music piece by Lagin in the MIT Chapel.[18] Obviously impressed they invited him to California to continue and expand his work with the brand new 16-track tape recorders the Dead were then using to make their albums.[19] When he arrived the band was in the process of recording their album *American Beauty* and Garcia asked Lagin to play piano on the album, although only his part on the song "Candyman" survived. The part he plays is quite simple and is almost as different as can be from the style he displays in later live performances with the Dead. It was modeled, Lagin related, following Garcia's direction, explicitly on the style of Floyd Cramer, one of the most important country music session piano players in Nashville in the 1950s and 1960s. Having achieved significant commercial success with their previous album *Workingman's Dead* the band, according to Lagin, "wanted a very

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[17] Ibid, 349. Although Lagin did not keep a copy of the letter and it has not, as far as I am aware, been found, he told me that he saw it in Garcia's guitar case in the mid-1970s before he walked away from his involvement with the band. One can only hope that it will turn up one day.

[18] Information about and pictures of the MIT Chapel can be found here: http://www.archdaily.com/112682/ad-classics-mit-chapel-eero-saarinen.

[19] Backstrom: "So when you met them at MIT, they went to the chapel where you played them a piece that…" Lagin: "That was written for that chapel, it had eight speakers around. It was kind of like Reich." Backstrom: "Steve Reich?" Lagin: "Yes, but not really because ideally they would have all been synchronized, I wasn't trying for the haphazard overlap of stuff. The chapel is a cylinder and it sits in a moat. And around the edge of the chapel wall on the inside is glass. So up the walls are water ripples all the way around. So you're sitting inside a tube where water ripples and skylight comes in from the top. Eight speakers around you, everybody, Phil, Jerry, Mickey and my friends and a few other interested parties, about 15 people, sat in a circle in the middle and for, I don't know, about 45 minutes or so listened to that piece. Mickey passed out; he had to be awakened. Jerry and Phil stood up and Jerry invited me to California. First he said, 'this guy would really like to play with a 16 track,' and Phil said, 'Yes, you have to come to California.' He said it several times in several different affirmative ways." Also, see Gans, "Ned Lagin," *Conversations With the Dead*, 350.

clear, transparent, simple sound that would be AM [radio]-compatible."[20] Borrowing elements from Nashville country music would certainly help realize such a goal. Although the Dead's music had for the most part previously appeared on the new free-form, "progressive," album-oriented FM radio format the band was clearly aware that the more concise and explicitly popular style of the songs on *Workingman's* and *Beauty* had potential to crossover onto more popular AM radio stations, relatively slight though that may have been in comparison to more popular groups.

The Genesis of Seastones

Lagin began work on what became *Seastones* in 1970 influenced by a wide range of sources. These included his compositional studies with John Harbison at MIT (while also playing piano in the MIT jazz band), as well as his jazz piano and composition studies at the Berklee School of Music. In addition, Noam Chomsky's concept of "generative grammar" led him to the concept of "generative music" in which a few rules could produce large amounts of musical material. Lagin also had a pronounced interest in the pre-compositional structures of Medieval and Renaissance polyphony that for him suggested connections with the motivic and cell-expansion techniques of Schoenberg and Webern. And his studies of biology and geology led him to the application of various metaphors derived from nature as compositional structural principles. Specifically, the concept of geological strata, and the sound manipulation possibilities allowed by 16-track recording, led him to the conception of *Seastones* as an open mobile form in which

[20] Gans, "Ned Lagin," *Conversations With the Dead*, 351. Lagin discusses the specifics of how he constructed his piano part in collaboration with Garcia.

compositional sections performed live would, through their recording, be added on to earlier ones to create new compositional layers.

Lagin was not unique among composers in the mid-20th century to find inspiration in the techniques of Medieval and Renaissance composers. In 1954, Pierre Boulez organized a concert series made up of works that "have a particular relevance for our own time." These include "the isorhythmic motets of Machaut and Dufay, the chromaticism of Gesualdo, and the formal inspiration of *The Musical Offering* by Johann Sebastian Bach."[21] Similarly, George Perle argued in the late 1940s that it was precisely the loosening of tonality's power that allowed for the newfound, twentieth-century appreciation of the music of Machaut and other Medieval and Renaissance composers.

> The enlargement of our musical understanding to include these wonderful works of many centuries ago is one of the ways that history has of compensating us for bringing us into a world at a time of ferment and strife, of negation and revolution, when fundamental principles, whose immutable government of musical structure had been considered forever assured, are being overthrown."[22]

Not only was it the so-called "death of tonality" that opened some people's ears to pre-tonal music, however. Pre-compositional structuring devices in medieval music—such as *color*, for pitch, *talea*, for rhythm, and the use, to varying degrees, of a pre-existing chant (whether stated more or less unchanged in the tenor, paraphrased or parodied)—had obvious parallels with serialist compositional practice and its pre-compositional orderings

[21] Dominique Jameux, *Pierre Boulez*, trans. Susan Bradshaw (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 61.
[22] George Perle, "Integrative Devices in the Music of Machaut," *The Musical Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (April 1948), 17

of all 12 chromatic pitches in a series (along with its 47 possible transformations) to form the basis of a composition.[23]

In an essay published within the booklet that accompanies the 1991 re-release of *Seastones* on compact disc, Lagin discusses the work's origins and influences.[24] What he there makes clear are the strong connections between his reflections on the natural world, his sense of self amid the world of the early 1970s, of his place within the continuum of various intersecting levels of temporality, and a highly McLuhan-influenced view of the impact of electronics on our forms of understanding and processes of inter-personal communications.[25] According to Lagin, many of these ideas were ones he had expressed in his initial letter to Garcia, and were the reason for their interest in him because they mirrored, though from a different perspective, those that Garcia and Lesh had themselves been developing in the Grateful Dead.

One of these ideas is reflected in a widespread belief among the Dead's audience: that in their performances the audience is encompassed within the space of the band's collective improvisation, influencing its direction as if it were, in a way, another member of the ensemble. Some have questioned the reality of such an audience involvement, but Lagin attests to the importance of this belief for the band as one he shared with its members. "One of the things that was important to both me as a composer/performer and to the Grateful Dead was extending the intuition and sensitivity of collective improvisation." He thought, "Much of the personality of the audience … could be

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[23] In the late 1940s and early 1950s various composers (perhaps first Oliver Messiaen in his aptly-titled 1949 piece *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*) extended the dodecaphonic process of serializing pitches, invented by Arnold Schoenberg in the early 1920s, to other musical parameters such as rhythm and dynamics.

[24] See appendix D for its text.

[25] See Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hall, 1964), 1-18.

included, subliminally or overtly, in what was going on in the music."[26] These beliefs, according to Lagin, were not mere platitudes. "With the Grateful Dead, that interaction and understanding with the audience, and feedback with the audience, was critical to me, it was critical to Phil, it was critical to Jerry, and it was critical to the entire family."[27] Such sentiments would have profound effects on the development of the band's music during Lagin's five-year involvement (1970-75), as well as on his composition of *Seastones* that he worked on during this time.

Performance History of Lagin and the Grateful Dead, 1970-72

Lagin first performed publicly with the Dead during the November 5th, 1970 performance at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, New York; the second instance was at the same venue three days later on the 8th. He did not, however, play during their entirety but only during the most experimental, improvised segments: on the 5th, during the "Other One>Dark Star>St. Stephen" sequence; on the 8th during "Dark Star>The Main Ten Jam>Dancing in the Streets." Since the Dead also played the two nights in between, one might well wonder why he was not involved either of these nights as well. Both, after all, feature extended improvisational segments.[28] According to Lagin, his absence on these nights was not because members of the band did not want him to participate; instead, some people within the Dead organization were unhappy with his potential influence and the direction he might lead the band. He was, for some, an uncomfortable reminder of an

[26] Gans, "Ned Lagin," in *Conversations With the Dead*, 367.
[27] http://www.gdhour.com/transcripts/lagin.010203.html
[28] On the 6th, "Alligator>Not Fade Away>Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad>Not Fade Away>Caution>Turn On Your Lovelight." On the 7th, the "Truckin'>Drums>The Other One."

influence on the band of which it had not too long before divested itself: Tom, "T.C.," Constanten.[29]

Unfortunately, his presence is well hidden on all available recordings of these two performances as well as the only other Dead concert he played in during 1970 so one can only guess what his specific influence was.[30] But despite the inaudibility of his contributions, those musical segments on which he did apparently play on are quite inspired. They reveal, as many have attested, the band at a high level of improvisational creativity.[31] The obvious similarity between the performances on the 5th and the 8th is that they both feature "Dark Star"—the Dead's most consistently experimental song at this time. According to Lagin this was no accident. Although never a full member of the Dead, his function was as something of a musical special guest for performances intended to be especially improvisatory and exploratory.

February 18, 1971 – Capitol Theatre, Port Chester, New York

The first Dead performance on which Lagin can be definitely heard, and arguably one of the most significant contributions that he made to their music, is his performance with the band on February 18, 1971, once again at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, NY. This

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[29] "The success of *American Beauty* and *Workingman's Dead* had created cash flow and some of the management people didn't want to disrupt that. The reason I sat in on November 5th [1970] and then didn't sit in until November 8th was because of things that happened to keep me off the stage that weren't the band." Lagin interview, September 27, 2013, Novato, CA.

[30] The third and final time in 1970 Lagin performed live with the Dead, and the first that he played through one of their concerts in its entirety, was on November 21, 1970 at Boston University's Sargent Gym. Pictures showing Ned seated at a keyboard on stage (though with his back to the camera) are available at *Nedbase*, http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/. "In 1970-1971, because of PA input limitations and/or whoever was mixing, it is hard for him [Lagin] to be heard. But there was no conscious effort to be absent, and not recorded. There was no reason not to record him if there were available mix channels, and he had no reason not to be recorded."

[31] Writing about the entire five-show run by the Dead at the Capitol Theatre, November 5-8. 1970, John Dwork and Kipp Armstrong suggest "fasten[ing] your seat belts for a run of shows that rides like a fantastic theme park attraction."

concert is notable for a number of reasons. First, it was the last to feature second drummer Mickey Hart until October 20, 1974. Second, it featured a number of new, original songs by the band: "Bertha," "Loser," "Greatest Story Ever Told (The Pump Song"), "Wharf Rat," and "Playing in the Band" were all performed for the first time. Third, this was one of the first times the band "sandwiched" another song inside of "Dark Star." That is, they segued out of "Dark Star" after its first verse into the premiere of "Wharf Rat" and then back into "Dark Star" for its second verse.[32] Fourth, many have regarded the transition from "Wharf Rat" back into "Dark Star" with particular affection. Entitled "Beautiful Jam" on the *So Many Roads* Grateful Dead compilation box set, it is one of the more celebrated moments of Grateful Dead improvisation.[33]

Even though the at-times prominent keyboard part in "Beautiful Jam" has been often attributed to band member Pigpen, it was actually Lagin playing.[34] The keyboard sound is obviously different from the Hammond B-3 organ that Pigpen used at this time, and is actually that of a clavichord that Lagin had brought with him to the concert. (At other points in the concert he played a Farfisa electric organ.) That the band's roadies managed to amplify the clavichord without excessive feedback is remarkable given its

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[32] The segues in the most well-known "Dark Star" version, on *Live/Dead* (recorded February 27, 1969 at the Fillmore West), happen at its beginning and end—*not* its middle. One of the earlier, if not the only, examples of such "sandwiching" is from November 8, 1969 when the band interpolates "The Other One" and an instrumental version of "Uncle John's Band" as bridges between three parts of "Dark Star." It can be heard here: https://archive.org/details/gd69-11-08.sbd.wise.82.sbeok.shnf.

[33] After David Gans played it for Phil Lesh on his radio show "Dead to the World" in 1997 this was their conversation: Gans: "Well, you asked me to turn you on to some Grateful Dead music, Phil, and that's about the prettiest passage I know." Lesh: "Wow. Ah. Ah. When was that from?" Gans: "February 18, 1971, Capitol Theater, Port Chester, NY. It was coming out of the first "Wharf Rat" ever and back into 'Dark Star.'" Lesh: "Ohhhh...." Gans: "Pretty stuff." Lesh: "Oh, that's just gorgeous.... Aw, that, that -- I'm sorry, that just, that brought tears to my eyes." Gans: "Well, good. I'm glad you liked it!" Lesh: "Yeah, that's gorgeous. Is it longer than that? I mean, is there more of it?" Gans: "No, that's pretty much it." See also Getz and Dwork, "2/18/71," 302-03 and Light Into Ashes, "Dark Star 1971," http://deadessays.blogspot.ca/2010/03/dark-star-1971.html. CD 2, Track 2, *So Many Roads: 1965-1995* (Arista: GDCD 4066, 1999).

[34] "Pigpen opens the song with a pretty harpsichord effect." Dougal Donaldson, "12/18/71," *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium Vol. 1*, 303.

notoriously low volume.[35] Although listening to the entire "Dark Star>Wharf Rat>Dark Star" sequence is worthwhile, the "Beautiful Jam" is commonly considered to begin when the musical materials of "Wharf Rat" are wholly absent, and end when those of "Dark Star" have definitely returned.[36]

What is particularly notable about this musical passage (and this term seems particularly apropos here on account of its functioning as a transition between two songs) is the seemingly telepathic connection the ensemble seems to realize.[37] While it is possible that they planned out, for example, the repeated shifts to B minor from the A major chord that is the tonic of "Dark Star" and "Wharf Rat" (lasting from approximately 1:10 to 3:18), that they seem to have never repeated this particular "jam" at a later performance, and that they appear to have never played it earlier, suggests that it may well have been a unique, improvisation-derived event.[38]

In my discussions with Lagin about this performance, he pointed to his discussions of re-harmonization and substitution with Garcia and Lesh as a significant influence on its musical direction. As the relative minor of D major, B minor is an

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[35] "I brought my clavichord down precisely to do acoustic music with Jerry."Gans, "Ned Lagin," *Conversations with the Dead*, 354.

[36] Although there are some intimations of "Dark Star" within the "Beautiful Jam" segment. See https://archive.org/details/gd1971-02-18.sbd.cantor-crouch-diebert-gmb.85478.sbeok.flac16.

[37] As one commenter on this section of music writes: "It was at that moment that I realized that the Grateful Dead weren't Bob Weir, Jerry Garcia, Pigpen, Mickey, and Bill … The Grateful Dead was a singular entity, a singular musical being that would come alive only after a few musicians and a crowd full of enthusiastic participants came together and brought the Grateful Dead back." See http://www.reddit.com/r/gratefuldead/comments/1ddrp1/021871dark_star_wharf_ratdark_star/.

[38] The claim as to the lack of any earlier or later examples of this "jam" is based on a combination of my own knowledge of the recorded history of Grateful Dead performances together with that of others with similar knowledge of this performance and Grateful Dead performance history. There are gaps in the recorded history of the band at this relatively early time in its career so it is possible that it, or something quite similar, was performed at a concert of which a recording was never made or has not survived. The author of a video discussing and analyzing "Beautiful Jam" also notes how remarkable is its singular nature. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKCp_5Bpa_4. Also: "The jam's theme is gorgeous and is never repeated on any other tape available. It must have been one of those moments of inspiration where the band played for the moment and the moment never came again." Dougal Donaldson, "12/18/71," *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium Vol. 1*, 303.

obvious substitute for its D major cousin. And since D major is one of the chords that "Dark Star" and "Wharf Rat" share (both songs are structured around movements between A major and E minor with the sometimes addition of D major) the movement in "Beautiful Jam" between A major and B minor acts as an exploration of a different, though closely related, harmonic space.

But it was not merely harmonic substitution theory that Lagin thinks influenced "Beautiful Jam." The idea of rhythmic substitutions, coming from his study of Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer's *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, also affected its creation.[39]

> The first level is the most fundamental in terms of Schenker and Grosvenor Cooper. And that was turning the basic A major to E minor progression of "Dark Star" and "Wharf Rat" backwards. Turning the music around because of what I thought about "Wharf Rat," and coming out of it. There was a rhythmic and harmonic flip, so what had been the second chord became the first, and what was rhythmically accentuated, as the first was the second and the second the first. And that set the stage for a kind of wistful country lyricism, poetic lyricism that made "Beautiful Jam" what it became.[40]

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[39] According to Lagin, Cooper and Meyer's book "treats rhythm and meter and upbeats and downbeats and stresses and anacrusis and all that on the same kind of levels that Schenkerian analysis and directed harmonic analysis treats harmony." Ned Lagin telephone interview, September 28, 2014.

[40] Ibid. Compare Cooper and Meyer's discussion of rhythm and mobility in contrasting the openings of the first and fourth movements of Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony. "The quasi-turn around C followed by a leap to F preceded by an appoggiatura [in bars 7-8 of the first movement] should be compared for its effect of relative mobility with the melody of [bars 1-4 of the fourth movement.] There, C was relatively stable and F was highly mobile. Here, C is highly mobile, although it is the tonic, and F, because it is the goal of the motion, is relatively stable … in spite of its general tonal mobility and, more importantly, in spite of its being the seventh in a dominant seventh chord." *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 121.

According to Lagin, he discussed these theories of musical analysis and transformation extensively with Garcia and Lesh in person, as well as sent them copies of related material beginning in 1970 and lasting until he moved to the Bay Area in the spring of 1973.

A significant, though subtle, fact about this performance was the accidental blending of Garcia's guitar sound with that of Lagin's clavichord. Due to the low dynamic level of the clavichord the Dead's roadies largely encased it and Lagin within baffling so that it could be amplified without feedback. But because he was sitting quite close to Garcia's amplifier, when he held down keys with his volume pedal open, "after Garcia played something, you'd hear feedback separate from Garcia but from the sound of his guitar creating sympathetic vibration in the clavichord."[41] Here, then, was an example of a musical synthesis of different instruments but one that went beyond merely the conscious interaction of their respective players. Garcia was, in a sense, playing Lagin's clavichord while Lagin was simultaneously using the sound of Garcia's guitar for his own performance—with the sound produced as a combination of both of their contributions. Although it would be three more years until Lagin's acquisition of one of the first commercial personal computers made the further development of this sonic concatenation possible, it prefigures an important development of Lagin's *Seastones* project.

April 8, 1971: The Boston Music Hall

In my discussions with Lagin he revealed a number of interesting facts about the next Dead concert he participated in, on April 8, 1971 at the Boston Music Hall. First, the

[41] New Lagin telephone interview, September 28, 2014.

Dead planned in advance which concerts would be more experimental and feature a greater degree of improvisation versus those that would be more grounded and song oriented. Although the Dead played the Boston Music Hall the night before, Lagin did not sit in with them because it was an instance where the band had decided to perform a more straight ahead, less heavily improvisational concert, saving their more adventurous musical practices for the following night. The concert on April 8, in contrast, "was set up to go into Dark Star."[42]

Lagin's presence, though generally not as obvious as on some moments in "Beautiful Jam," is at least noticeable on the soundboard recording of the concert that publicly circulates, particularly on "Playing in the Band," "China Cat Sunflower," and "Dark Star." But because of its subtlety it is difficult to make much in the way of conclusions about his keyboard playing or its role within the ensemble other than to note his obvious facility with the kind of improvisational looseness practiced by the Dead in both tonal and atonal sections.[43] In addition, although his contributions to Grateful Dead concerts in which he participated in 1970-71 are either low or wholly absent in the mix captured by available recordings, they are, again, notable for the quality and intensity of their improvisational interactivity. And the continuing interest of Garcia and Lesh in

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[42] Lagin: "There was a question about the day before, 4-7, why I didn't play that day. And the answer is they got set up and ready late, it was a shorter concert. And they had also decided, they agreed it was understood sometimes that they were going to do concerts with relatively less jamming. It wasn't that they were going to jam on every concert. So 4-7 is really straight forward, short show, which is one tune after another. And then 4-8 was set up to go into 'Dark Star.'" Backstrom: "These things were planned in advance?" Lagin: "Yeah. How far I can't tell you because I wasn't with them the day before; they had just come to Boston. But when I got there Garcia told me they were doing a short show, because of time and a curfew and they had set up and arrived late so they were going to do just tunes. They could never do just tunes, you know, AABA done." Backstrom: "But shorter." Ned: "Yeah. This show [4-8] was going to be a more complex show." Lagin interview with author November 9, 2014, Novato, CA.

[43] "Ned played a new Wurlitzer (black) electric piano, with a Cry Baby wah-wah (an earlier Jerry gift), a Uni-Vibe (Jerry's), and a Tonebender (early distortion box), through two of Jerry's spare Fender Twin Reverb amps with original tie-dyed speaker covers for stage monitors, and there was a direct box transformer line output." *Nedbase* (http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/).

having Lagin perform with the Dead attests to their belief in the positive nature of his influence on their music.[44]

Lagin's Move to the Bay Area – November 28, 1973: "Experiments in Quadrophonic Sound," Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco

In April of 1973 Lagin dropped out of his graduate studies in musicology at Brandeis University and moved to California to continue his work on *Seastones* and collaborate more closely with members of the Dead. But despite his then full-time presence within the Grateful Dead Family he played no public performances with the band that year. Though possibly considered strange that Lagin's public performances with the Dead would decrease after moving to live in close proximity with its members, there was a clear reason. Instead of having only the Dead's performances close to Lagin's former home in Boston to play with band members, once he moved to the Bay Area he could play with them privately on a regular basis. His only involvement during a public performance with any members of the Dead in 1973 was a one-off, not very well known concert organized by Mickey Hart. Advertised as "Jerry Garcia and Mickey Hart in Concert" with the subtitle "An Experiment in Quadrophonic Sound," it took place at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco on November 28, 1973.[45]

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[44] As for the other members' opinion as to Lagin's involvement, there is only drummer Bill Kreutzmann's comments in his autobiography. He is complimentary about Lagin's "far-out ideas about the integration of electronics and music creation and of using computers—in real time—as an instrument," believes he "predicted the electronica movement and EDM," and that his "science-fiction element" appealed to Lesh and Garcia. However, Kreutzmann did not think he "was the right fit for the Grateful Dead." Bill Kreutzmann with Benjy Eisen, *Deal: My Three Decades of Drumming, Dreams, and Drugs with the Grateful Dead* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 161-62.

[45] A poster for the concert can be seen at http://www.dead.net/archives/1973/artwork/jerry-mickey-palace-fine-arts. As the bottom-right hand of the poster notes, it was a benefit performance for "3HO North," a branch of the 3HO—Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization—led by Yogi Bhajan.

There has been significant speculation about this concert because although it is only Garcia and Hart who are advertised as performers, the involvement of Phil Lesh and Lagin has been widely noted. Another question pertaining to this concert has been whether the music performed was, at least in part, Lagin's work-in-progress *Seastones* or unrelated.[46] Thankfully, Lagin has set the record straight. It was indeed a *Seastones* performance: "the first 'Seastones' live/tape performance … [but only] a partial one, using pre-recorded "Seastones" tracks and the live musicians' performance, and some other pre-recorded tapes by Ned." But neither Lagin nor Lesh performed on stage with Garcia and Hart. Instead, Lagin "played an Arp Odyssey for most of the show seated at the mix board centered in the audience with Phil next to him mixing in quad [quadrophonic sound]."[47]

According to Lagin, the performance was motivated and organized by Mickey Hart who, at that time, was not a member of the Dead.[48] Although he had been fired from the band in February of 1971, he continued to have strong associations with its members

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[46] One reviewer of the concert's recording, for example, labels the music in its entirety as *Seastones* and that it is "based heavily around the experimental wizardry of Ned Lagin." Brian Dyke, "11/23/73," *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium, Vol. 1*, 504. In an essay on Lagin and his relationship with the band, Grateful Dead scholar Corry Arnold also labels the concert as a *Seastones* performance. (http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2010/05/august-14-15-1971-berkeley-community.html.) And although not a Grateful Dead performance, music historian Jesse Jarnow includes it in his show-by-show notes of Dead concerts in 1973, describing it as the "debut of seastones, ned lagin's group with garcia, lesh, hart, & croz [i.e. David Crosby] playing modular improv structures. dream wails, processed voices, quadrophonic balaphones. an avant-dead necessity." (http://www.jessejarnow.com/2013/12/deadfreaksunite-1973/.) On the other hand, other commentators have disagreed with ascribing its music to Lagin's *Seastones*: "11/28/73 is the Jerry & Mickey 'experiment in quad sound' [sic] show – just the two of them (w/Phil apparently behind the board) spacing out – not Seastones, as it is often mislabeled." (NickJ, http://lostsailorpub.forumup.it/post-39266-lostsailorpub.html.)

[47] http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/2014/09/annotated-nedbase-1970-1975.html

[48] Unfortunately, there is not much in the way of archival materials pertaining to the concert. Exceptions that support Lagin's claim that Hart was its main organizing force are a series of invoices for music equipment rentals for the concert that are all billed to Hart. See GDA MS 332, Grateful Dead Records, ser. 2: business, second accrual (in process), box 1006c.

and larger family.[49] He had released one solo album, *Rolling Thunder*, in September 1972 that featured performances by some members of the Dead (as well as other members of the San Francisco rock music community) recorded at a home studio he had built on his ranch in Novato, California.[50] Since his first visit to California in the summer of 1970, Lagin had spent a significant amount of time at Hart's ranch. He often worked in Hart's studio there (The Barn), and sometimes even lived there.

Lagin and Lesh were not exactly thrilled, however, when they heard that Hart, with Garcia scheduled to perform, was in the process of organizing a concert billed as "An Experiment in Quadrophonic Sound." It seemed to them an appropriation of what they, especially Lagin, had been working on. After their protestations, Lesh and Lagin's off-stage involvements were decided upon as a compromise given that the publicity, advertising it as a Hart and Garcia performance, had already begun. Despite the avowed communal aspect of the Dead's musical creativity, this episode reveals that arguments about ownership over intellectual property were not foreign to the group.

Luckily, recordings of significant portions of the performance circulate publicly. One seems to be a recording from the soundboard mixer made presumably by Lesh; the other is labelled, and the evident audience noise would seem to indicate that it was a recording made by a member of the audience.[51] The music is, to say the least,

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[49] That Hart was fired from the Dead in 1971 was a closely guarded secret for decades that has only recently become public knowledge.

[50] Colombia Records had apparently built it for Hart as part of their attempt to sign the Dead after their contract with Warner Brothers Records ended. For these and further details on the Grateful Dead's relations with record companies in the early 1970s see Corry Arnold, "Grateful Dead Solo Album Contracts, 1970-73," *Lost Live Dead* (January 15, 2011), http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2011/01/grateful-dead-solo-album-contracts-1970.html.

[51] They are available for online streaming here: https://archive.org/details/gd73-11-28.sbd-seastones.finney.968.sbefail.shnf. Ideally, these two recordings would be digitally combined to create a so-called "matrix" recording that balanced the clarity of the soundboard with the ambiance of the audience. The tracks are not well organized, however. The audience recording is what is labeled "Seastones 3"

unconventional. Although it sometimes bears similarity to the Grateful Dead at their most experimental, there are no references to popular music styles, or even much use of what could be discerned as a tonal center, to mollify listeners unfamiliar with such musical experimentalism.[52]

In the tracks labeled "Seastones 3," Hart makes use of what seems to be a wide array of percussion equipment, such as resonant drums, cymbals, and xylophones. In those labeled "Seastones 1," in contrast, his contributions are less clear. And in those labeled "Seastones 2" the obviousness of his contributions waxes and wanes. In tracks one and two of "Seastones 2," for example, it is difficult to distinguish whatever he is doing from Lagin's synthesizer sounds. But in track three, an almost gamelan-like percussion section at first underlies the dominant synthesizer voice but around 4:40 comes to the foreground as the synthesizer temporarily recedes. Although it returns to

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though its first track is separated from tracks two through eight. The soundboard recording is made up of what is labeled "Seastones 1," tracks 1-6, and "Seastones 2," tracks 1-7. In various places (e.g. http://jerrygarcia.com/show/1973-11-28-palace-of-fine-arts-theatre-san-francisco-ca/ and http://lostsailorpub.forumup.it/post-39266-lostsailorpub.html) these tracks are given names but there is no positive, and significant negative, evidence that these came from the musicians. Interspersed with these recordings are a number of tracks of "Tarot Outtakes," which have no connection to Lagin but are instead the work of former Grateful Dead band member Tom Constanten. *Tarot* was the name of a musical put on in New York City for which Constanten composed the music after having left the Dead. For further details about *Tarot*, see Constanten, *Between Rock and Hard Places*, 84-89.

[52] Besides the recordings and the above poster, the only other documentary evidence I have been able to find related to this performance is a series of invoices for the rental of instruments: two Fender Dual Showman amplifiers, four Barcus Berry pickups, two Gibson Echoplex units, one Univibe pedal, one 9' Steinway grand piano, one Arp Odyssey synthesizer, and one steel drum stand/ (GDA MS 332 Grateful Dead Records, ser. 2: business, second accrual (in process), box 1006c). Lagin explained their use (or lack of) in the concert. The Fender amplifiers, though primarily intended for electric guitars, were, in this instance, used not by Garcia but by Hart for several of his percussion instruments equipped with the Barcus Berry pickups. Garcia and Hart, as made evident by the delay-drenched sounds of their instruments on the recordings, shared the Echoplex units. Garcia's guitar sound in particular is heavily affected by the delay effect produced by the Echoplex, as well as the phasing/chorus effect of the Univibe, through which he plays primarily single line, atonal melodies, characterized largely by dissonant intervals.[52] As for the 9' Steinway piano, Lagin has no recollection of its presence at the performance and thinks Hart likely used it instead for his personal recording projects.[52] Because Lagin owned an Arp Odyssey, and remembers using it in the concert, the one Hart rented was also likely used in his studio. And though Lagin could not be sure, given the variety of percussion instruments Hart used in the concert, the drum stand was almost certainly for him as well.

prominence around 5:20, the percussion maintains its presence until it slowly dissipates towards the end of the track leaving only the sounds of the synthesizer.[53]

The performance was not entirely live, however. Lagin explains: "Prior to '72, *Seastones* was mostly acoustic … So some of the pre-recorded tapes [used in this performance] are acoustic *Seastones* that are now being processed through the board, through delays or whatever else we had."[54] It is then these tapes that are almost certainly the source of the sounds obviously not created live by Garcia and Hart: a tamboura, what is almost certainly an electric bass given that Lesh did not play bass during the concert (Seastones 1, track 5 in particular), likely some of the synthesizer contributions, as well as a number of other sounds. Indeed, it is quite possible that at least some of the obvious percussion and electric guitar sounds heard on the recordings were from tapes of earlier recorded performances rather than performed live. So though through a process of elimination one can say with a high degree of certainty what sounds were from tapes and *not* performed live, it is not clear as to which sounds *were* performed live.

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[53] The tracks labeled "Seastones 2" are also where the performance's relations to *Seastones* become most explicit. Its first track features clearly pre-recorded voices, one of which (almost certainly that of Grace Slick) says "Seastone" at 0:13. Then, starting at 0:18, what sounds like Garcia's voice enters, saying what sounds like "Seek seastones" and this is seemingly repeated, after some undecipherable speech (again, likely by Slick), around 1:12 though less clear because of the loudness of the synthesizer. The fourth track of "Seastones 2" also seems to evoke the piece's title through obvious sounds of water until 0:50 when echo-drenched simulations of seabird sounds take over the sound field. At 7:23 of track 5, what sounds like a tamboura begins with repeated melodic perfect fourths from A to D underneath echo-laden, trumpet-like atonal melodies lasting until the track's end. Track 6 begins with the re-introduction of Garcia's guitar as the melodic voice (taking over from the synthesized trumpet) over the tamboura's continued perfect fourths: mostly A-D but sometimes changing to B-E. Around 4:40 the tamboura fades out leaving only Garcia on guitar and the synthesizer in the background. Garcia then implies, for perhaps the first time in the performance, a tonal scale of some kind, E Mixolydian, before moving back into atonality. Track 7, the last of "Seastones 2," continues much the same as the end of track 6, dominated by Garcia's guitar with support from Lagin's synthesizer (and possibly Hart's echo-laden percussion), but the recording cuts off at 2:26.

[54] Lagin: "A third to a half of this concert had pre-recorded tapes, and all the pre-recorded tapes were *Seastones* tapes. So if you hear Grace or anybody else than you're hearing *Seastones*. And if you hear Buchla or Moog or other synthesized stuff, you're hearing Phil adjusting the mix at the board because those pre-recorded tapes were coming from the board and were being initiated or started and stopped by Phil or me up in the audience." Backstrom: "But you were also playing your Arp Odyssey live, right? Lagin: Yes, directly into the board." Ned Lagin phone interview, September 28, 2014.

How these three sets of recordings relate to each other is not easy to understand. It is possible that the "1" and "2" descriptors were chosen to reflect their chronology in the concert with "3," in contrast, so named because of its different source.[55] A comparison of their lengths suggests another, I think, more likely possibility. Adding up the length of each of the tracks for the three different recordings gives the following totals:

1. Seastones 1: 45:56
2. Seastones 2: 45:43
3. Seastones 3: 44:33

They are obviously all quite close in length. This fact, together with the title of the concert as "Experiments in Quadrophonic Sound," suggests a different possibility. Rather than recordings of different parts of the concert—a first and second set, for instance—"Seastones 1" and "Seastones 2" are possibly instead concurrent stereo, i.e. two track, recordings of an overall quadrophonic, i.e. four track, mix. Such a relationship would explain why neither seems to bear much similarity to "Seastones 3" since an audience tape would be a simultaneous recording of what is separated as "Seastones 1" and "Seastones 2" along with whatever acoustic sounds were not (or only partly) captured in the quadrophonic mix.[56]

Recording the two parts of the overall quad mix separately would also have made sense given Lagin's conception of *Seastones* as a work in which its performances would be "accreted" or added to it through their recording to make up new "seastones," i.e.

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[55] During the audience applause that extends through all of track 8 of "Seastones 3" a voice can be heard saying "Mickey Hart and Jerry Garcia" (0:08-0:10), which, together with the applause, would suggest that this was the end of the concert and not simply a set break.

[56] It is possible that Hart's greater sonic presence in the "Seastones 3" audience tape compared to the soundboard recordings is due to the greater acoustic presence of his instruments and their relative lack within the mix going through the PA from which the soundboard recording would likely have been taken.

moment forms, to be used in later performances, a point I will expand upon below. Keeping them separate, rather than mixing them together into a stereo mix, would give Lagin maximum flexibility in their later use.

I have unfortunately been unable to find any contemporaneous reviews of the concert to get a sense of what those in the audience thought of it. However, toward the end of the obviously audience-recorded “Seastones 3,” one can hear some obvious reactions. First, at 5:52 of track 7 the taper, or someone very close to them says, "holy shit" and then what I think is "I think that was . . ." with the rest of the sentence too muddled to make out with any certainty. My best guess is “I think that was pretty bad,” which would lend an obviously negative meaning to the preceding, otherwise ambivalent “holy shit.” Such a negative valuation would also explain what sounds subsequently like muffled laughter, an “Oh no” (again followed by indecipherable speech), and what sounds like people close to the taper getting up from their seats, presumably to leave, immediately prior to the beginning of applause. If true, then clearly some in the audience did not enjoy the performance, which is hardly surprising given the challenging character of the music, wholly unlike the rock music most associated with the two advertised performers, Garcia and Hart. Some in the audience, however, clearly *did* enjoy it given what hardly sounds like pro forma applause, accompanied by obvious whistles and cheering, in the final few seconds of track 7, and throughout track 8 (cutting off before its end), of “Seastones 3.”

The variety of reactions to this performance would have undoubtedly reflected the internal differentiation of the Grateful Dead’s audience. Whereas some audience members highly valued the more experimental, avant-gardist music that it exemplified,

for others it was either merely tolerated or was acceptable only within the performance structures used by the Grateful Dead: as improvisational episodes *within* a concert experience dominated by more traditional song forms and popular music styles. A performance such as this one would have undoubtedly pleased the first group as prime evidence of the band's penchant for musical experimentation. And though those in the second group would have found (and, as the audience recording suggests, *did* find) little to enjoy in this performance, they could easily distinguish it from the Dead's more popular music.

Besides this single performance in a small venue in San Francisco, another eight months would pass before *Seastones* would again be performed publicly. And by the time of its next public performance Lagin's acquisition of a just released Interdata 7/16 personal "minicomputer" would enable him to expand the synergistic possibilities of the piece beyond the mere interaction of live and taped performance to that of the parameters of sounds themselves.

Seastones *in Performance, June-October 1974*

On account of the uniqueness of the performing ensemble, and the "Experiments in Quadrophonic Sound" sub-title, the experimental character of the November 28, 1973 performance was surely expected by at least some of those in attendance. In contrast, there was nothing about the advertising or preparations for the Grateful Dead's June 23, 1974 concert at the Jai-Alai Fronton arena in Miami, Florida to give its attendees any warning of the similar experience in store for them. After finishing the first set with the delicate, slow song "China Doll," guitarist Bob Weir announced, as he was wont to do,

that the band would be taking a short break before beginning their second set. But this set break was to be unlike any previous one at a Grateful Dead performance—and possibly of any other popular music ensemble as well. Rather than the usual intermission in which no music was performed, bassist Lesh and Lagin performed approximately 12 minutes and 30 seconds of highly experimental, vocal-less music to a clearly unsuspecting audience.[57] An audience testimonial describes what happened:

> While we were relaxing, I heard a strange low rumble coming from the stage. I stood up, and noticed Phil Lesh sitting on the raised portion of the stage … The sounds coming off that wall of sound were truly intense, starting off from a low pulsating rumble and climbing to a high squeal … It climbed and dipped like a roller coaster and was intense in its variety and combinations of sound.[58]

As the recording reveals, what was performed bears virtually no resemblance to what is generally understood as popular music. It has no discernible melody or meter, formal repetition is highly abstract at best, and the sounds used are often, though not always, harsh and abrasive.

And this was not the only time such a musical performance would occur during Dead concerts. With a couple of exceptions, these between-sets sonic excursions of Lagin and Lesh (with other members of the band, particularly Garcia, sometimes joining in) were featured in every concert up to, and including, the band's final pre-retirement show on October 20, 1974.[59] Although there is some variation in their musical characteristics,

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[57] It can be heard as an audience recording, labeled as "Phil & Ned (Seastones)," here: https://archive.org/details/gd1974-06-23.aud-merin.weiner.7894.shnf.
[58] Les Kippel, "Seastones Who?" *Relix* no. 5 (July/August 1975), GDA, MS 332, ser. 2, box 18.
[59] Notes from a March 14, 1974 Grateful Dead band meeting reveal that Lagin and Lesh's on-stage collaborations had been in the planning for months prior to their debut. "Phil & Ned: Would like to play during G.D. breaks. Dave said the cost for one extra person for the summer tour (May – August) costs $5000 excluding hotels. It was decided Ned won't be going out on the May tour and 'when' would be

they are consistently similar in style and sonic experimentalism to the first one on June 23.

Given the challenging characteristics of Lagin and Lesh's performances it is not surprising that letters in the band's archive reveal that they were not welcomed by at least some of their audience. The authors of these letters were not afraid to let the Dead know how little they thought of the Lagin-Lesh segment while attesting to their love for the rest of the band's music. "Just thought I'd say hi and tell you that you have another devoted fan, me," writes one. But such devotion did not preclude criticism. "Just a message to Phil," the author continues, "sorry, but I thought that 'farout' electronic shit you did was lousy at the June 28th concert." Still, she hoped to see the band again soon.[60] Another wrote to say that they "recently attended the Dead's concert on the 21st along with many others. It was fantastic!" Such feelings did not extend to all of it, however. "There was one part, where the guy came out and played the Moog-Synthesiser, that wasn't too neat at all. He was pretty bad." But despite her dislike of such music, she tried to understand the reasons for such a performance: "then again I suppose it made the people jus [sic] that more anxious to see the Grateful Dead come out and send the people into the OZONE."[61]

A number of published reviewers of the Dead's concerts during this period were equally critical of these musical segments. A mostly negative review of their July 27, 1974 concert in Roanoke, Virginia notes, "A group member tried to divert the audience's attention with a clumsily orchestrated moog presentation. [But h]e was unsuccessful and

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discussed later." G.D. Meeting 3/14/74 GDA MS 332, ser. 3, box 2:9. According to Lagin, Garcia was involved more than it seems in the Lagin and Lesh sections because he would sometimes play while sitting in the racks behind the stage.

[60] Cheryl Kreidermacher, letter dated July 15, 1974, GDA, MS 332, ser. 5, box 2:7.

[61] Lori Gieschen, letter dated July 30, 1974, GDA, MS 332, ser. 5, box 2:7.

the crowd became bored, vocal and, at times, rowdy."[62] A reviewer of the band's July 29, 1974 performance at the Capitol Center in Washington, DC also did not think very highly of Lagin and Lesh's performance: "The strangest part of the evening came after intermission when bass player Phil Lesh and Ned Lagin (not a regular band member) on synthesizer combined for about 20 minutes of sonic noise, which was interesting, but not too musical."[63] And in an otherwise laudatory review of their July 29, 1974 performance, the author notes, "The break between sets was interrupted by a moog solo by Dead entourage member Ned Lagin accompanied by Weir on Bass [sic]. The crowd thought they were going to be taken on a cosmic trip by the sounds of the synthesizer but the solo quickly became tedious and the impatient patrons called for more Dead."[64]

Not all reviewers disliked Lagin and Lesh's performances, however. Discussing the band's August 4, 1974 concert one critic expressed great enthusiasm for it in its entirety and particularly enjoyed the Lagin-Lesh segment.[65] "One of the strangest things about this [the concert's] intermission is that ten minutes after the lights have gone up, they are turned down again and Lesh comes out with his bass and nothing or no one else." Although apparently unaware of Lagin's involvement in the between-set performance, the author found much to like in its sonic experimentation, evocatively describing its progression: "Lesh starts in and the atmosphere becomes very, very spacey; sudden eerie pitches followed by what seems to be a series of explosions but–better–sounds like a spaceship being launched." And continuing with the outer-space theme:

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[62] Ron Brown, "Grateful Dead aloof, boring," GDA MS 332 ser. 4, box 8 GDR: Clipping Files, July 1974.
[63] Alex Ward, "The Sound of the Grateful Dead," *Washington Post*, July 30, 1974, B7.
[64] Rob Waissman, "There's nothing like a Grateful Dead concert," *Havre de Grace Record* July 31, 1974, GDA MS 332 ser. 4, box 8 GDR: Clipping Files, July 1974.
[65] Although the date of concert is not mentioned in the review and there is no identifying information as to its source publication, I was able to determine the performance to which it refers from the set-list discussed in the review and its dating in the Grateful Dead Archive

"Soon, the whole place seems to be floating, drifting through space, passing from galaxy to galaxy, on further and further. Only a occasional meteorite shower or sun whorl is with us now, but Captain Lesh is an able pilot." Then it comes to an end: "twenty minutes into the flight we land comfortably. With a loud burst of noise, the landing gears are locked in place all is silent." Turning his attention to the audience, the author notes, "Everywhere I look people are standing rocking back and forth on their heels, or sitting in the lotus position, eyes closed and bodies slowly swaying. There is something here, some waves of energy, some force." And connecting it with the Dead's new album: "Suddenly, it all makes sense: the new album, *The Grateful Dead at the Mars Hotel*; indeed, Mars it is. And it's not such a bad place at that."[66]

This music critic was not the only one to react positively to Lagin and Lesh's musical experimentalism. In a letter to the band, one audience member expressed an exceptionally positive reaction to the experience of Lagin and Lesh's segment, as well as the Dead's "Dark Star>Morning Dew" combination later in the second set. It is quoted at length because it is one of the most unique first-hand audience accounts of Lagin and Lesh's, and the Dead's, most experimental, challenging music.

> From the first few minutes I knew that it was gonna be a great night—the sound was superb and completely different from the wobbles of Monday evening … Then you took your break—at least everyone assumed it was gonna be a break, but slowly strange sounds started to come through the system. I thought at first it was somebody checking something, but the stage and practically the whole hall was in darkness. The sounds got louder, and feedback was pouring out at me and it got louder and LOUDER AND LOUDER AND LOUDER!, until the notes

[66] GDA MS 332 ser. 4, box 8 GDR: clipping Files, August 1974.

> started to form into solid shapes and something was being built, created out of weird electronics. Galaxies were being formed right there in the hall. I was speechless, just standing there with my mouth open, trying to work out just what in fuck was happening. Whatever you were doing just shocked me speechless. Time just didn't exist—I seemed to be standing there for eons. Then the lifeforce/feedback started to alter flow, change direction, complete the tour of the galaxy, and gradually came to an end. Everything that had happened had been so unexpected, and I felt exhausted by the effort to think my way through it. Finally, in the second set, you came to Dark Star. If the electronics had been galaxies forming, then Dark Star was galaxies exploding, colliding, thrashing about. I just lay on the floor and let the monster take me over. I could feel Phil thundering away, feel his notes eat their way thru the floorboards and emerge underneath me, and then vibrate the whole of my body. By the time the song slowly changed into Morning Dew, I felt that I was at the outer reaches—or maybe the inner reaches—of my mind. I got higher that night than I'd ever believed possible. Much higher than a drug high, more of a getting-there, staying-there spacy feeling. I'm glad I was shown that 'signpost to new space"[67]

The phrase, "signpost to new space," comes from a published interview given by Garcia (with occasional interjections by his partner Mountain Girl [Carolyn Adams]) and published originally in *Rolling Stone*. In it, Garcia portrays the Grateful Dead as functioning as a "signpost to new space," i.e. pointing to unexplored forms of knowledge

[67] Letter from Jake, Newport, Manchester, UK, October 1974 in GDA MS 332 ser. 5, box 2: 8. The performance described in this letter was on Tuesday, September 10, 1974 at the Alexandra Palace, London, UK. The "Dark Star>Morning Dew" is an especially powerful linking of these two songs (https://archive.org/details/gd1974-09-10.135654.mtx.powell.flac16).

and experience.[68] The audience member's description of his experience at this Grateful Dead concert would seem to describe precisely this kind of role for the band.

Long-time fan of the Dead (having seen them first in 1969) Michael Parrish, recounting his own experience of the Dead's concert on October 18, 1974, expresses a similar experience of a Lagin and Lesh performance and its interaction with that of the Grateful Dead as a whole. "The show's masterpiece begins innocuously enough, with Ned Lagin's insectlike keyboard noises, joined in short order by Phil's musique concrete bass booms."[69] Significantly, rather than a break between Lagin and Lesh's performance and the second set featuring the entire band, as usually occurred, on this night they created a continuous musical segue into "Dark Star" and then "Morning Dew."[70] "Whether it was Lagin's attempts at musical biofeedback or simply the state of group consciousness, the Dead's part of this set evoked one of the most intense audience responses I ever saw at a show." Many of those around me," Parrish recounts, "were literally in tears by the time the band drove into the extended, and equally wrenching, version of "Morning Dew" that concluded the nearly seventy-five-minute improvisation that was that night's second set.

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[68] Garcia, Reich, and Wenner, *Garcia*, 48.

[69] "10/18/74: Winterland Arena, San Francisco, California," *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium, Vol. 1*, 552. According to Lagin, members of the Dead, Garcia in particular, considered this musical sequence such an excellent realization of Lagin's involvement with the band that although the concerts on the next two nights would also feature Lagin-Lesh segments, they were discreet sets without segues into the following songs. Garcia felt that they had already achieved what he had wanted for the film (what would be eventually released in 1977 as *The Grateful Dead Movie*) that would be made from the footage of the October 16-20 concerts.

[70] "After nearly a half hour of duo improvisation [from Lagin and Lesh], the remaining band members troop on silently and join what becomes a strange, slow, and elegant jam that leads into what proves to be the last 'Dark Star' for over four years and one of the most emotional versions ever." Ibid.

Another attendee of the Dead's final "run" at Winterland before their touring hiatus recounted his experience of the Wall of Sound, *Seastones*, and the interaction between the band and the audience during the October 17th, 1974 concert.

> Standing there in front of those massive columns of speakers seemingly squeezed into every available space behind the stage it was not long before I realized that the sound was not merely entering my ears, but rather piercing every part of my body as it made its way into and around the existence that was me. *Seastones* that night was a stand-alone piece . . . there was a small percentage of the crowd that was very much into the exercise. The vast majority was curious but clearly more concerned with Jerry returning to the stage. The second set began and the band made their way through the set arriving at "He's Gone." The slow shuffle like ballad gave way to an instrumental jam that slowly revved itself up and took off toward a date with "The Other One." Somewhere in the middle of that madness I found myself "knowing" that this was not music at all but a very sophisticated form of communication between the band and the crowd. The energy transfer was palpable and lives were changing before our very eyes. It could be sensed, it could be felt, it could be tasted. This was not fodder for the ears or even the mind, this was nutrition for one's soul that would not digest and be gone when the sound stopped. It was received and held for life. It was an outrageous moment in time.[71]

[71] Steve Benavidez, in email correspondence. Corry Arnold, who also attended the Dead's October 17th, 1974 concert, describes the context of Lagin and Lesh's performance. "After the first set ended on October 17, there was the usual milling around. I can't recall if Phil came out before the lights went down or after, but there was the usual whooping. I think everyone expected Jerry and the boys to follow him out there. Instead, there was just Phil and a not-Keith [Godchaux] playing an electric piano. Phil made some weird low noises, and I realized that other sounds were coming from the not-Keith guy. At first I wondered if they were introing a song, but after a while I realized it wasn't like that. No announcer said anything like 'ladies and gentlemen, Phil Lesh and Ned Lagin,' nor was Ned's name even mentioned at the concert." Corry342

These testimonials of positive reactions to Lagin and Lesh's performances, together with that of the Dead, attest to their significance for at least some who experienced them. While obviously not definitive—no more so than the negative reactions quoted above—they at least demonstrate the partial success of such musical experimentalism within a popular music context. Despite the stark division of opinion from fans and critics, it should not therefore be surprising that Lagin and Lesh continued to perform *Seastones*, with a couple of exceptions, in all of the Dead's performances up to and including their final pre-retirement concert on October 20, 1974.

But what was going on in these performances of *Seastones*? Specifically, what degree of what Lagin and Lesh (along with on occasion Garcia) played was improvised versus composed? And how did their interactivity—a crucial characteristic of *Seastones*—work in these circumstances? According to Lagin, despite his best intentions their performances were rarely as successful as he had hoped they would be for a number of reasons.

First, the Wall of Sound system they played through was not designed with his contributions in mind. The output of both Lagin and Lesh was quadrophonic but, whereas each of the Dead instrumentalists had their own dedicated speaker array (allowing Lesh to place the output of the four strings of his bass from different areas of his speaker stacks), Lagin played through the stereo vocal system as the only auxiliary input in the system. Although his quadrophonic output was sometimes properly mixed down to

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comment on *Nedbase* (Sept. 24, 2014, 5:38 PM) http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/2014/09/annotated-nedbase-1970-1975.html?showComment=1411605490086#c2792422532388854897.

stereo, in other performances only two channels were plugged in meaning the other two channels were not amplified.[72]

Second, Lagin's use of pre-recorded tapes and electronic sequences did not always work. His intention was to bring these in or use them as slow envelopes to control other musical parameters including the controls of the ring modulator that Lesh played through. But because of technical failures or Lesh's in-the-moment differing intentions, in turn responded to by Lagin, they were often ignored. Contrary to what some may think, Lagin insisted that his and Lesh's performances were not wholly improvised. They "weren't set to be totally free, unstructured improvisations. I would have never done that. My goal was not to be on stage with the Grateful Dead doing anti-music. I wasn't anti form; I wasn't anti music."[73]

Third, Lagin's involvement in the concerts was intended to extend further than simply the Lagin & Lesh segments between the Grateful Dead's first and second sets. Although, this greater involvement did happen on occasion (as the above audience testimonials make clear) it was less often, and less musically expansive, than Lagin had hoped. The presence on stage of his Fender 88 Rhodes electric piano was, Lagin pointed out, telling since it was not used in *Seastones*. "We were going to do music more with Garcia than it turned out we did, to get to all those little cozy spaces, to develop another way of playing." But because of problems within the Grateful Dead organization, and the intransigence of some of those involved, "that rarely happened."[74]

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[72] "They [the Grateful Dead's roadies] would sometimes just plug two channels in. So the first thing is you're not hearing everything, on most of the Ned & Phil sets, you're not hearing everything that was played." Lagin interview, September 27, 2013.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

In a 1974 interview Lesh gave his perspective on his and Lagin's performances. He explains that Lagin's computer "is like a score in a way, he lays out certain functions, let's say changes, that'll go down in the course of the music, and he programmes it into the computer and then when he starts the computer, the changes all occur automatically within a certain time period."[75] Unfortunately, the bass synthesizer that Lesh had hoped to have to balance what Lagin could do with his computer and various synthesizers "is not happening because the guy who was going to build it completely crapped out in the middle of the job." What he could do compared to Lagin was, therefore, limited since, "there's no possible way that one guy with two pedals and a ring modulator can possibly compete with an entire computer/synthesiser system." Consequently, his role in their performances was "to be the drone, the ground, the pre-conscious state out of which the synthesiser, which he's playing, rings thoughts."[76] And though he did not "think that the middle of a Grateful Dead show is the best place for this music … in some places the response has been amazing." Their performance on July 21st, 1974 at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles was a particularly notable such example.

According to Lesh, prior to the Lagin-Lesh segment the audience had been quite riled up and angry because of violence perpetrated by some of the security personnel. In response to their music, however, "they just sort of relaxed, they just got into the zone, in the space of long slow changes which, if you're pretty high and feeling like killing, it might just change your thinking." He claimed to still not "know exactly what it will do to a person," but he was certain that at least in this instance the effect of their music was

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[75] Andy Childs, "A Conversation with Phil Lesh," *Zigzag* (September 1974), http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/a-conversation-with-phil-lesh.
[76] Ibid. Although its meaning is not at all clear, "rings thoughts" is indeed what is printed in the article. This is possibly a misprint of "rings through."

undoubtedly positive: "the vibe was totally different after we'd finished."[77] This performance would offer at least some evidence to support Lagin's theory as to the psychological power of sound.

Generative Music

Lesh's description of the role of Lagin's computer in the 1974-75 performances of *Seastones* as a score of sorts, preprogrammed to automatically make various changes, points to another dimension of *Seastones* reflective of Lagin's intellectual history and interests: generative music. Although now most commonly associated with the work of Brian Eno, Lagin claims to have developed the concept independently of, and prior to, Eno, influenced by the linguistics work of Noam Chomsky, one of his professors at MIT.[78]

> As a linguist, and as one of the people who actually influenced computer science and neuro-physiology as well, Chomsky's book on transformational grammar was just amazing.[79] Every MIT student read it just for the thought processes. And in

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[77] Ibid. The Grateful Dead's July 21, 1974 performance is available in a good audience recording for listening and downloading at https://archive.org/details/gd74-07-21.bertrando.weiner.8241.sbeok.shnf.

[78] Eno discusses his history with, and the development of his thinking on, generative music in a speech published as "Generative music: evolving metaphors, in my opinion, is what artists do," *In Motion Magazine* (http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/eno1.html). For a scholarly discussion of generative music see the special issue of *Contemporary Music Review* on it, in particular the opening editorial: Nick Collins & Andrew R. Brown, "Generative Music Editorial," CMR 28, no. 1 (2009), 1-4. According to Lagin, Eno likely attended the Grateful Dead's performance in London on September 11, 1974 during which there was a particularly powerful performance of *Seastones*. (See "Phil & Ned>Seastones," https://archive.org/details/gd1974-09-11.sbd.unknown.4647.shnf.) It is therefore possible that Eno's subsequent turn to ambient and generative music was to some degree influenced by Lagin and *Seastones*. The extended, a-metrical, lush major-mode synthesizer pads that exist in some performances of *Seastones*, including from 2:38 to 5:17 in its December 1975 version released on CD in 1990, bear a strong resemblance to Eno's late 1970s' ambient work.

[79] Although Lagin did not specify which book by Chomsky to which he is referring, it is likely the highly influential *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, published in 1965, since that is where Chomsky's theory of transformational grammar is first thoroughly elaborated. For a discussion of this book and its place within Chomsky's overall work on linguistics, see John R. Searle, "A Special Supplement: Chomsky's Revolution

> there he invents the word 'generative.' And I started doing generative music because I was interested in generative grammars. Grammars, in computer science, could be just a few sets of rules that could generate a whole bunch of stuff.[80]

As an example of this generative music, Lagin pointed to the first few minutes of his and Lesh's performance on October 19, 1974. Lagin explained that for a change he had asked Lesh not to come in for five or so minutes. Beginning with what sounds like gusts of wind (0:53 on the recording), at 1:13 a repetitive electronic rhythm then fades in over which over which Lagin layers various other electronic sounds until Lesh's clear entrance at 6:43.[81] About this performance Lagin noted, "I built a rhythm box that synthesized rhythm sounds from popular electronics. They're tuned filters, resonant filters that resonate when you ping them controlled by a sequencer. But the sequencer is itself controlled by a program that sends it random or not random values that evolve over time."[82] That is, rather than a computer programmed with detailed instructions as to what sounds to produce in which order, Lagin's conception of generative music relies on constructing a system with some basic rules that generate ordered, but constantly changing, and not wholly predictable musical details.

The Wall of Sound's Psychological and Physiological Motivations

Another important component of the 1974 performances of *Seastones* was the use of the Wall of Sound to enhance the physical and psychological power of its sonic manipulations. Recounting how some people within the management of the Grateful

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in Linguistics," *The New York Review of Books* (June 29, 1972), http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1972/06/29/a-special-supplement-chomskys-revolution-in-lingui/.

[80] Lagin interview, Sept. 29, 2013.

[81] See "Phil and Ned," https://archive.org/details/gd74-10-19.sbd.miller.21927.sbeok.shnf.

[82] Lagin interview, November 11, 2014.

Dead were not happy with the time and money spent on designing, building, transporting, and setting up the Wall of Sound, Lagin explains that their lack of enthusiasm was overcome because

> the PA [i.e. the Wall of Sound] and *Seastones* and jamming were all self-supporting, catalytic factors. And particularly in '74 obviously with the Wall of Sound, taking drugs that enhanced feeling the music through your body, which the PA allowed, both for the band on stage and particularly for the audience, was very different from traditional PA experiences and concert experiences.[83]

Garcia explained that the performance of *Seastones* was as an on-going experiment into "the physiological effects of sound" with the goal of better understanding the "physiological and psychological effect[s of such music] on the body and emotions" in terms of certain sounds affect one's physiological or emotional space." But this was not to be just any such space. What they were trying to achieve was the realization of a "new sound-body relationship" akin to "recorded" or "electronic drugs."[84] In other words, they wanted to make people high, as if on drugs, through the experience of sound rather than chemicals.[85]

Discussing specifically the performances of *Seastones*, Garcia explained how the variety of sounds it makes use of affects the body in different ways.

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[83] Lagin interview, Nov. 11, 2014. As noted elsewhere in this dissertation although Lagin here refers to the Wall of Sound as a PA, i.e. Public Address, system, one of its primary designers, Ron Wickersham, is adamant that it was *not* a PA system but instead a *sound creation* system.

[84] "Lesh Creates Vinyl Drug," *Circus Magazine* (April, 1975), GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, April 1975.

[85] In a 1971 interview, Garcia notably discounts the influence of drugs on the appreciation of the Dead's music. "[Questioner] How about drugs? You seem such a part of that whole acid rock, San Francisco thing. *Garcia*: That whole acid rock trip is like some dumb fucking label that some newspaperman hit on in '65 or '66. The thing that you can't understand the music without drugs is ridiculous. I always get more turned on when some completely straight person gets into it cause that means that what we're doing is a little bit more inclusive. I'm not really interested in eliminating anybody or excluding anybody." Marlene Ann James, "Jerry Garcia, Guitar," *Circus* 5, no. 4 (March 1971), 21.

> You hear these incredible things—sub-harmonic thumpings between 14, 15 cycles [per second], below what the ear can register as pitch, and it starts to turn into a physical thing. Your body is feeling it, but your ears aren't hearing it. And they have super high-frequency things that sound as if they're originating inside your head and make you kinda [sic] uncomfortable and do weird things to your spinal column.[86]

One individual who experienced *Seastones* in performance through the Wall of Sound concurs with Garcia's assessment recalling a "feeling of the sound coming from the bottom of my feet and working its way through … There was definitely a physical sensation that went along with it." He and his friends even had a name for it: "internal organ music."[87] An attendee of the Dead's October 17, 1974 performance, experiencing one of the last performances of *Seastones* through the Wall of Sound, recounts,

> On this night Phil hit some bombs that were so low they were inaudible to the human ear, but not inaudible to the human bowel.[88] The minute Phil hit that first lower than low note half the crowd made a dash for the exits. It is my understanding that the toilets were backed up for the remainder of the evening.[89]

I have found no evidence to support this recollection, but then again it might well be true. After all, realizing physical effects on bodies through sound was, according to Lagin and Garcia, a major, even primary, motivation for *Seastones*.

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Gary Reaves, email correspondence.
[88] A "bomb" in Grateful Dead-related parlance is a powerful low note played by bassist Lesh, often with a note a fifth above, often used at particularly affective moments.
[89] Evan S. Hunt, "Grateful Dead Live at Winterland Arena on 1974-10-17" (Oct. 18, 2010), *Internet Archive*, https://archive.org/details/gd1974-10-17.sbd.smith.gems.99032.flac24.

Seastones — *The Album*

Notwithstanding the explicit hostility of some towards Lagin's *Seastones* material, members of the Dead (at least Garcia and Lesh) liked it enough that Round Records, the sub-label of the Grateful Dead Record Company for non-Grateful Dead, solo records, released a full length LP, *Seastones*, in 1975. But before the record company even existed Garcia and Lesh had tried to have *Seastones* released on a major label. Their subsequent failure to do was one of the reasons why they ultimately decided to embark on the daring venture to start their own wholly independent record company.

In 1972, Garcia, Lesh, and Lagin went to a meeting in Manhattan with head of CBS Records, Clive Davis, to discuss the possibility of releasing *Seastones* on one of its labels. Having already submitted an early, mostly acoustic, version of the piece to CBS, they came to hear his verdict. At the time CBS was riding high on the success of Wendy Carlos' Top-10 electronic-classical album, *Switched on Bach*, and further crossover albums involving electronic sounds were apparently a welcome possibility to the label. Davis' answer, however, was negative: the electronic music specialists at CBS did not even consider *Seastones* to *be* music.

Disappointed, the three took the elevator down from Davis' offices during which, according to Lagin, Garcia said, "we're going to find another way to do it." And though the Dead were still under contract with Warner Brothers Records, Garcia's do-it-yourself attitude was, according to Lagin, a significant factor in motivating the band's decision to not re-sign with a major label but to instead start their own record company.[90]

To understand the audacity of such a decision it is important to distinguish Grateful Dead-Round Records from the various vanity labels that had sprung up in the

[90] Lagin interview, Novato, CA, September 27, 2013.

previous few years within the rock music industry.[91] These included Apple Records (the Beatles), Grunt Records (Jefferson Airplane), Swansong Records (Led Zeppelin), and the eponymous Rolling Stones Records. Though nominally independent they were all linked to a major label that took care of manufacturing and distribution and thus continued to have a stake in the commercial success or failure of the respective group and thus some influence over its decisions.[92] In contrast, Grateful Dead and Round Records were completely independent of the major labels in terms of manufacturing, publicity and distribution.[93]

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[91] "When pop stars want to flex their muscles, they often do so by setting up their own record companies. Although generally viewed with skepticism -- such companies are widely referred to within the music business as vanity labels -- personal imprints remain a powerful and seemingly irresistible status symbol: a confirmation that the artist-proprietor is a superstar. 'It's a lube job for the ego,' says Peter Grant, a pop manager whose clients included Led Zeppelin and who managed its Swan Song label." Fred Goodman, "Vanity Labels: Good Business Or an Ego Boost?," *The New York Times* (May 10, 1992), http://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/10/arts/pop-music-vanity-labels-good-business-or-an-ego-boost.html.

[92] "[Charles Reich] The last time we talked about what you might do as a business by starting a small record company. Is that any more real now? [Garcia] It's as real as it was then, that is to say, it still depends on where or not … what it depends on is us getting out of our present contract, or it expiring. Then we're in a position where we can start to think about that. We've been planning to do it seriously and really, but it's still a question of how best to … it's still an idea. See, Grunt Records [Jefferson Airplane's vanity label] is still RCA. There's no question about it. It's not *truly* independent. And our fantasy is to be *completely* independent if we can do it." Jerry Garcia, Charles Reich, and Jann Wenner, *Garcia: A Signpost to New Space* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 78.

[93] "Some artists manage to develop their own label such as Grunt (Jefferson Airplane, Starship Family) or Apple (Beatle Family) or DisCreet (Zappa's creation), but they're under the corporate wing of an established record company with tons of controls by that company." Phoebe Kzale, "'Dead' Bring Life to Record Industry," *The Fifth Estate* 9, no. 20 (October 10-16, 1974), 12. Although the overseas' (i.e. non-North American) distribution rights of Grateful Dead-Round Records were owned by United Artists, to whom they later sold the North American distribution rights in May of 1975, their relatively small overseas' sales gave UA little leverage over the band. So though the DIY, do-it-yourself movement is commonly associated with the later punk rock movement, the Grateful Dead were arguably the first DIY rock musicians.

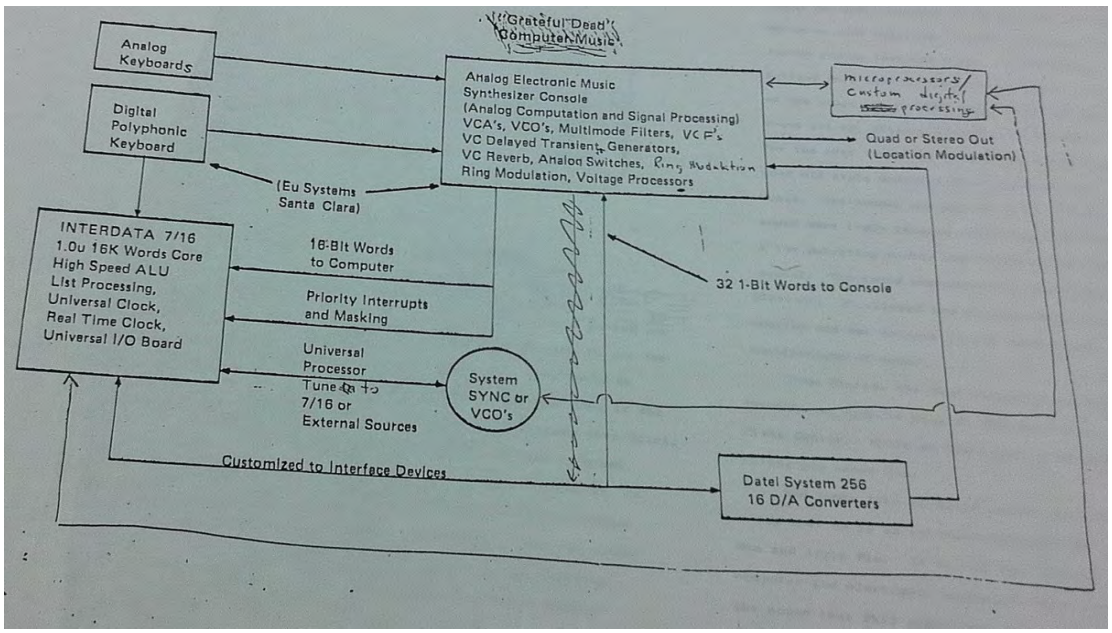

Figure 4.1

Such independence was key to the realization of a number of the ideas at the core of Lagin's *Seastones* that paralleled the Grateful Dead's aesthetic in important ways.[94] First, was that of facilitating new forms of interaction among musicians, and their audiences, through a variety of media. Lagin's digital computer, along with the necessary converters to transform analog sounds into digital information and vice versa (see figure 4.1), allowed him to process and mix the qualities of different musicians' playing, including his own.[95] It was, in fact, one of the first instances of a computer processing sounds in real time during a performance. It was also possibly the first case of having musicians directly interact and control each other's pitches, amplitude envelopes, or filtering.[96]

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[94] It was, according to Lagin, precisely this similarity that drew him to the Dead and that had so intrigued its members in his own musical practices.
[95] GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin.
[96] "An important **Seastones** compositional and improvisational dimension dating from 1970 allowed the identity of the players and their creative musical personas to manifest in other ways in addition to directly as individual identifiable audio. In **Seastones**, recorded and live, instruments and voices were not only processed separately and individually, but also were electronically and compositionally interconnected and

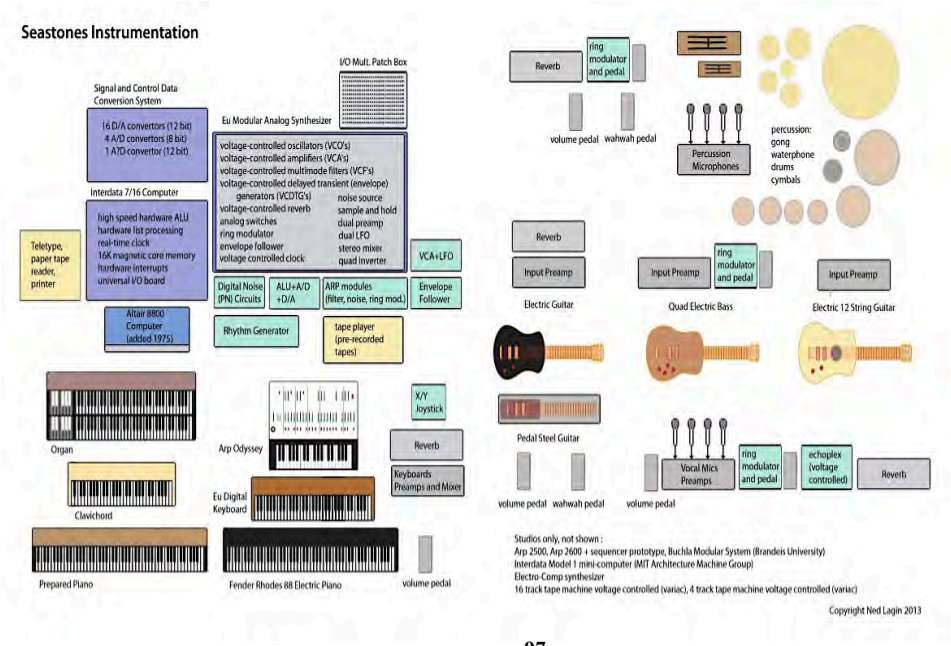

Figure 4.2[97]

Lagin has recently released a diagram of the performance setup of *Seastones* featuring Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, Mickey Hart and David Crosby (see figure 4.2). Lagin is on the left side. Garcia, on electric and pedal steel guitars, is in the center. To the right, on quad electric bass, is Lesh, and then Crosby on electric 12-string guitar. Behind them is Hart's percussion area. Lagin explained what their connectivity made possible: "An envelope follower tracking Garcia could be controlling Mickey's drums, or Phil could be controlling Garcia . . . all through the synthesizer."[98] Lagin could make it so that the sound of one performer depended for one of its parameters—such as amplitude or

processed through analog and hybrid analog-digital synthesizer modules. In this way, one musician's instrument sound, notes, phrases, and voice sound and words, could modulate or otherwise affect those of other musicians' audio in real time. Musicians playing together, but with multiple parallel channels, strata, layers as manifestation of each person's music creativity, intuition, telepathy, and persona. The individual's musical shape shifting [was] made possible with electronic tools and media." Ned Lagin, http://spiritcats.com/music.html.

[97] http://spiritcats.com/seastonesinstrumentation.html.

[98] Interview with Ned Lagin September 27, 2013.

envelope—on a different performer's sounds. If one of them did not play, no sound would be produced, lacking as it would a necessary sonic characteristic.[99]

In a short 1975 article, seemingly a paid advertisement by Interdata (the company that built the computer enabling such sonic processing), Lagin explained,

> The computer allows electronic synthesis and processing techniques to be stored and used in real-time … [and] enables performance with formal changes on both macroscopic and microscopic levels at relative speeds … Pitch, timbre and rhythm time frames of reference can be used interchangeably in very complex relationships . . . We hope this leads to organic, artificial, musical intelligence.[100]

There is a whiff of hyperbole in this last sentence. What Lagin would seem to be referring to, however, is the further development of the generative music he had already explored on October 19th, 1974 (discussed above) in which a simple computer program could produce continuous, and continuously changing, music. Given the role of the computer in *Seastones* of facilitating new forms of inter-personal musical connections such generative music would, then, suggest the possibility of a musical system in which computer musical generation could be melded with the integrated performances of the various linked musicians to produce new forms of musical creativity.

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[99] "So, for example, I'd take Garcia's input, take Garcia's channel, and put it through an envelope follower and get a gate trigger and an envelope out of his playing. So if I played piano or synthesizer, unless Garcia played a note also you couldn't hear me because my VCA [voltage-controlled amplifier] was controlled by his envelope. Or vice-versa. Similarly, with a ring modulator you have two inputs or a built-in carrier oscillator. We had these ring modulators, Maestro ring modulators, so you could either, with a knob, set the oscillator against which you played statically, or you had a pedal that was the equivalent of the knob so that you could vary the pitch, which no one could ever really get control over, or you could send pitches to the ring modulator that Phil or Jerry had from my console so that I could tune the ring modulators to whatever I compositionally wanted it to be. But if both signals weren't going through the ring modulator you couldn't hear either signal." Lagin in interview by the author, Nov. 9, 2014, Novato, CA.

[100] "Mini Helps 'Grateful Dead' Compose Rock," *Computerworld Weekly*, August 13, 1975 (GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18 GDR: Business – Seastones, Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin). The phrase "organic, artificial, musical intelligence" also appears in the first section, "General Formal," of the *Seastones* Sources document in appendix C.

These seemingly new forms of inter-personal relations were not wholly new. They recall the beliefs that were at the core of the Dead's aesthetic—music as the catalyst for heightened forms of inter-personal interaction—and are, in fact, extensions of the kind of electronically mediated collective improvisation that the band had been developing since 1965. Such technologically enabled forms of musical communication would have especially resonated with the members of the Grateful Dead because of the band's own self-conscious practice of "bleshing" (a portmanteau of "blending" and "meshing" taken from Theodor Sturgeon's 1953 novel, *More Than Human*) to describe the merging of band members, and ideally their audiences as well, to allow them to act as a single organism (what Sturgeon referred to in the novel as *Homo Gestalt*) in their collective improvisations.[101] It is, then, hardly surprising that Lagin's furthering of such forms of musical connectivity would have been especially appealing to the Grateful Dead as not merely an ephemeral improvisational influence, but, through the use of nascent digital technology, as basic compositional elements.

In his review of the *Seastones* LP in *Rolling Stone*, Charles Perry wondered, "what importance is it that the performers include three Deadniks, three Airplaine/Starshipers and one ex-Byrd, ex- (okay, maybe not ex-) CSN&Y?" His answer is two-fold. On the one hand, purely pragmatically, he probably would not have bothered to listen to it otherwise; "I have half a dozen electronic music albums and I'd figured that was plenty." On the other hand, he thinks the performing personnel is unimportant because it "smacks of groupyism and the auteur theory" to claim a greater insight into the

[101] McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 90. See also Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 36.

music because of prior familiarity with their more famous work. "In music of such distinct personality and purity, it's irrelevant."[102]

Perry surely intended this irrelevance positively: that an appreciation of the album's music did not require bringing to it any pre-existing opinions about the musicians. But for Lagin, Perry had missed a crucial dimension of the music. For Lagin, one of the most important realizations that came out of such digitally mediated connection was that musical personalities could transcend their instruments, their medium. Although he could superimpose one performer's note envelops, gates, triggers or rhythmic pulses on his tones, on the tones of another performer, or his musical parameters on any of the others the personality of the individual performers remained within the composite sound.[103]

The Geological Inspirations of Seastones

Another key concept of *Seastones* is its additive character, derived from Lagin's study of geology. Through the multi-track recording of each performance, they became the potential basis of later performances. In Lagin's words, "We would do live sets that

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[102] Review "Seastones," *Rolling Stone* (August 28, 1975).

[103] Lagin: "Charles Perry wrote a review of *Seastones* in *Rolling Stone* where he questioned, because you couldn't identify the famous people what was the value of the famous people. I like Charles Perry but I didn't want to explain to him, that *the musical personalities transcend the instruments*. So I could superimpose, like quantum mechanics super-position, I could superimpose on my piano playing Garcia's envelopes or Ned's envelopes on Garcia's tones. In other words, musical personalities could persist independent of the medium." Backstrom: "Right. And be combined." Lagin: "Yeah. So there are times in *Seastones* where you can hear, oh that's pedal steel. There are other times when you can hear synthesizer and stuff and you don't understand that the envelope is coming from an instrument of Phil or Jerry or vice versa. You're actually hearing sounds being made, heavily modulated or processed or filtered sounds that are them on their instruments, that are being modulated or pitched or gated or triggered by me." Lagin interview, Nov. 9, 2014. In a 1975 interview David Crosby explained his involvement with *Seastones*. "Lagin's fascinating. Mostly I'm working with him to learn how to create a vocal synthesizer and how to work up a set of chops with it. Work up the instrument and then bring it back into our [Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's] arena to stretch what we're doing." Although he admitted that "the synthesizer is a very facile tool … and all to easy to go astray with" he felt that he needed "to feel that I'm expanding what I'm able to do and what I'm conceptually aware of." "Two's Company," *Melody Maker* 50, no. 44 (Nov. 1, 1975), 27.

would create clips that would be accreted to, sedimented like in geology onto the base of sea stones to create more sea stones. So an earlier performance would become the pre-recorded tape of a later performance or part of it."[104] Such an additive idea of musical performance was also one of the qualities that drew Lagin to the Grateful Dead because it is the same, though less precise, way that the band's sets and musical sequences developed.

Because of the highly improvised character of Dead performances, each of their performances (both on the level of individual songs and entire sets) depended on their entire prior history as previous paths taken that could be followed, merged or altered to varying degrees depending on the musicians' collective choices and remembrance. In such a context, past performances are not wholly past because they are perpetually re-articulated—what has and has not happened before, the presences and absences—through their continuous shaping of the possibilities of the present.

This kind of improvised, additive musical practice is very different from that of most other musicians whether in rock, Western art music, or even jazz. As a number of

[104] "As parts of the 'Seastones' open form composition, some of the Ned and Phil (and others) 'Seastones' live performances (1973-1975) became 'accreted moment forms' in the complete composition." Ned Lagin, *Nedbase*, http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/. "We were doing a geological musical process, of igneous rocks and metamorphic rocks processing, digital and analog processing, and sedimentation, recorded and putting that back in to the music again. So an earlier performance would become the pre-recorded tape of a later performance or part of it. That was something we could rehearse but eluded the guys in the moment of performance. And it's my responsibility; I didn't spend more time after '75 working to do that. So the metaphor exists, and it exists in the studio *Seastones* quite well as a compositional metaphor, mobile forms, emergent forms, emergent wholes, precomposition. And precomposition goes all the way back to Obrecht and Ockeghem and their secret structures, and using Gregorian chants as the cantus firmus for their masses. And going to these illuminated manuscripts that I got from the Vatican and looking at the pictures, and looking at the chant and identifying the chant, and there was Ambrosian chant, and all these other different chant forms—it wasn't unified as it is today—and understanding the mythology and neo-Platonism of the Renaissance and how it was interpreted and understood by the audience who knew the Gregorian chant…But no one ever thought about identifying the components as having precompositional, symbolic, spiritual, magical, Pythagoran importance. Well that's all through *Seastones*. And it connected exactly to Webern and Schoenberg with motivic and cell expansions. And they got that, I maintain, whether they like it or not, they didn't get that from Wagner, they didn't get that from Brahms, they got that from Debussy and the Impressionists who were using all of their stuff to do with mezzo-structures, all these middle structures inside their music." Lagin interview, September 27, 2013.

scholars have pointed out, rock music is for the most part defined by the ontological centrality of studio recordings. Carl Belz, in one of the first historical studies of rock argues, "that rock has existed primarily on records."[105] More recently, Theodor Gracyk has defined rock as, "a tradition of popular music whose creation and dissemination centers on recording technology."[106] Rather than a substitute for live performance, as recordings were initially conceived, in rock music it is the reverse: "studio recordings have become the standard for judging live performances."[107] Albin Zak notes, in his illuminating study of what he calls "recording consciousness," that "Even if rock and roll had its roots in live performance traditions, it was nevertheless, and unlike any of its precursors, first and foremost a recorded music."[108] Furthermore, as Gracyk and Zak both point out, the role of the studio recording in most rock (and more broadly popular) music is comparable to the score in Western art music; both represent ideal forms that musicians try to recreate as accurately as possible in live performance.[109]

Because of the importance placed on improvisation in jazz, it largely lacks such an ontological ideal. But with some notable exceptions there is comparatively little of the kind of long-term collective structural improvisation that so defined the Dead's musical practices.[110] Although there were some personnel changes in the group over its 30-year

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[105] *The Story of Rock* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), viii. Given the date of its publication this is likely the book that Charles Reich is referring to in his interview with Jerry Garcia. "[Reich] I read a book on rock and roll recently that said the real medium of rock and roll is records and that concerts are only repeats of records. I guess the Grateful Dead represents the opposite of that idea. [Garcia] Right. Our records are definitely not it or ever have been. The things we do depend so much upon the situation we're in and upon a sort of a magic thing." Garcia, Reich, Wenner, *Garcia*, 98.
[106] *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 1.
[107] Ibid, 84.
[108] *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 12.
[109] In ontological terms, the recording or score is the type, whereas the performances are the tokens. See Julian Dodd, *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46.
[110] The classic John Coltrane quartet, made up of Elvin Jones, Jimmy Garrison, and McCoy Tyner along with Coltrane, which existed from 1962 to 1965, would be one such exception. Although lasting only three

existence, four members (Garcia, Lesh, Kreutzmann and Weir) were a part of it for the entire 30 years, and one other (Hart) was a member for 25 years.

Musicologist Graeme Boone notes in his studies of the song "Dark Star" that when dealing with the music of the Grateful Dead, one must give up the usual dependence in music analysis on the presumption of a stable and unchanging primary object, whether a score or a definitive studio recording. Although there are connections between what "Dark Star" is in its initial 2 minutes and 45 seconds 1967 studio recording, and the 30 to 40 minute-long sonic explorations that it became by 1972, thus justifying their identification as the same song, there are also enormous differences.[111] It is only by tracing the song's entire performance history, as Boone has done so impressively, that the complete identity of such music comes into focus.[112]

In response to my question as to whether the things that the various musicians sang or played were planned in advance or were improvisations that Lagin later processed in some way, he explained, it was "mostly the former. So they were told pitches, or shown pitches, shown words to sing, pictures, coached" and these were products of

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years this ensemble developed their repertoire of songs in remarkable ways. See the discussion of the development of the song "My Favorite Things" by the Coltrane Quartet during this time in Nicholls, "It Does Too Matter," 1-40. Miles Davis' so-called Second Quartet and the Art Ensemble of Chicago are two other examples of longer-term improvisational collectives.

[111] The "Dark Star" single can be heard here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUcMyVi9xJk.

[112] "Dark Star Mandala," *The Grateful Dead Live in Concert: Essays in Live Improvisation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 89-106. Lagin: "Another central tenet was the fact that that's basically how Grateful Dead sets and sequences also evolved. And jazz for that matter. It's a natural musical phenomenon. You think of individual 'Dark Stars' but you also think of *Dark Star*, the serial work." Backstrom: "That is defined by every previous performance." Ned: Right. And there's a tree of 'Dark Stars,' there's the primary one and there are ones you can categorize by various dimensions." Backstrom: "As you said, in Grateful Dead sets, the performance of their songs depends upon their entire prior history." Lagin: "So Phil and Jerry knew that. They knew that what I was doing compositionally mirrored what they were naturally doing. That's why we were also a natural fit on a larger intellectual, philosophical level, which both of those guys were very much into, we were in tune." Lagin interview, September 11, 2014, Novato, CA. David Gans quotes "sound man and longtime Deadhead Cotter Michaels" expressing a similar view: "It's almost as if each 'Dark Star' continues where the last one left off … one long song that spans 30 years. Every time they played it, it was like tuning into a radio station that is already playing." "The 9/19/70 Dark Star," presentation handout, 2014 South-West Popular Culture Association annual meeting.

“metaphors extracted from nature, chemistry and electronics” especially “in terms of process.”

What then of the “formal musical score” that Lagin mentions in his CD booklet essay? And how was it configured given that there is no fixed order to the moment-forms that make up *Seastones*, and that each moment-form is significantly, if not largely, improvised? One document in particular in a folder of Lagin-related material (see figure 4.1) is especially curious because it is the only example of musical notation in the Grateful Dead Archive dated between 1966 and 1975.

It would seem to be a score, or at least a part of one, for a performance given the delineated “performance form” at its bottom explaining how the three sections are to be played. The first section, entitled “Alone,” is made up first of a treble staff labeled “row” that is a serial ordering of the 12 pitches of the chromatic scale; the first step in creating a 12-tone, dodecaphonic piece. Below that is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs), labeled “melody” and “bass,” containing two-part counterpoint that begins as an ordered statement of the above row but after the fifth pitch class, D#, breaks off. Instead of the B natural that follows in the row there is, in sequence on the grand staff, a C, F, and Ab. The breaking from the row could indicate Lagin’s use of one of the 47 possible transformations of the original row. But I have so far been unable to identify which if any it could be thus indicating that what comes after the D# is seemingly free atonality.

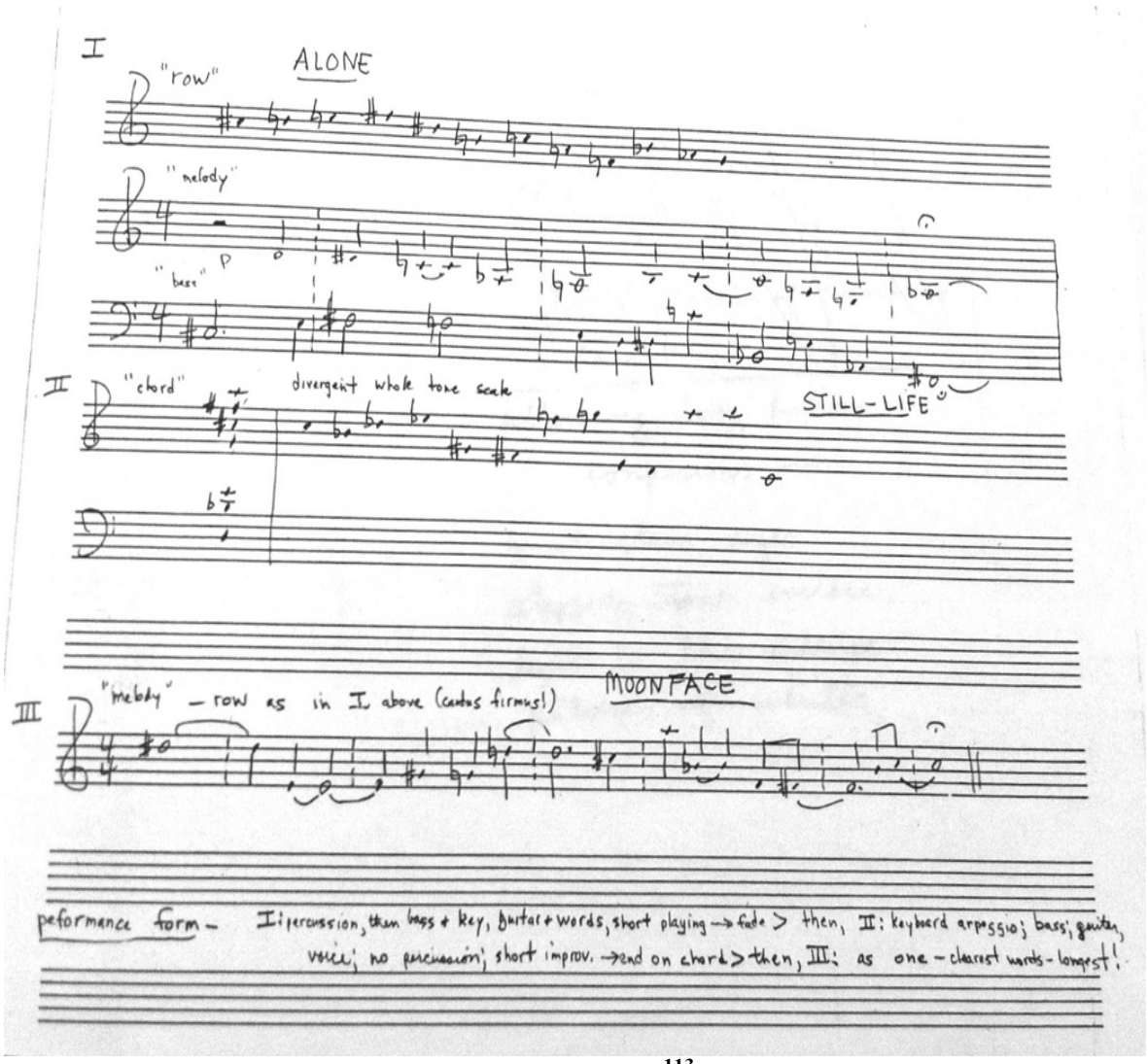

Figure 4.1[113]

The second section, entitled "Still-Life" begins with a grand staff chord made up of the notes, from lowest to highest: D, Bb, E, G, C#, F#, A. As a collection of simultaneous pitches it is indeed a chord but one that has no clear tonal identity. It is a kind of poly-chord: its lowest four notes form a 3rd inversion E half-diminished seventh, while its highest three notes form a 2nd inversion F# minor triad. This harmonic simultaneity is quite dissonant on account of the three highest notes being each a major

[113] GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin. See appendix D for a clearer transcription of this notation.

7th or 14th (a seventh plus an octave) above three out of the four bottom pitches (D-C#, Bb-A, G-F#). Following this is a "divergent whole tone scale," a name and scale arrangement that may be unique to Lagin. Unlike a standard whole-tone scale made up entirely of whole steps, with six notes from its origin to its octave, here all twelve chromatic pitches are used but in an alternating series of descending and ascending whole steps beginning and ending on C.

The third section, entitled "Moonface," has a single line atonal melody with the description "row as in I above (cantus firmus!)" Because the melody does not appear to be based on the row in the first section nor on any of its 47 transformations its relation perhaps lies instead in its designation as a cantus firmus (i.e. a melody used as the basis of a polyphonic composition) for other, probably improvised, material.

The performance form makes clear that the pitched material in the three sections is the source of what is played and sung even if the precise fashion in which they are used is unclear. For section I, the instructions are: "percussion, then bass + key[boards], guitar + words, short playing —>fade." But was the row in section I played or only the two parts labeled "melody" and "bass"? Given that it is a specific ordering of all twelve-pitch classes perhaps each performer is meant to improvise melodies using notes of the row in the order of the series in combination with the two-part counterpoint.

For section II, the beginning chord would likely be what the keyboard is directed to first arpeggiate. The bass, guitar and voice would then presumably join to realize the directed "short improv" using the ordered series of notes of the divergent whole tone scale before ending together on the opening chord. The directions for section III are the simplest of the three: "as one – clearest words – longest!".

The lyrics for these three sections are on subsequent, titled, hand-written pages in the same archival folder. (They are reproduced as appendix E.) The first two, "Alone" and "Still-Life," are impressionistically symbolic fragments with no clear subject referents: e.g. "Quiet glass eyes/Stepping stones inclose/Light in the silence/Patches of winter" (from "Alone"). The third, "Moonface," in contrast, describes a first person singular experience of another: "Until one day, breath by breath/I felt as if someone were there, waiting, alone."[114] However, the performance of these lyrics in relation to the notated melodies is unclear: there is nothing to indicate on the score how they are to be sung. In addition, the melodies seem too short to set all of the words of each section. And given its labeling as a cantus firmus, did only the instrumentalists play the melody, cantus firmus-like, while the voice(s) recited over top? Or were the words sung to the melody? Only Lagin likely knows for certain.[115]

Despite all the questions this score (of sorts) raises, at least one conclusion can be drawn from it. Even though *Seastones* had a significant improvisational component, as well as of electronic and electro-acoustic influences, its origins were at least partly in traditionally notated music composition. But given that the musicians Lagin worked with on *Seastones* largely played by "ear" (according to Lagin, this was even true of Phil Lesh whose experience with notated music was as a violinist, trumpet player and composer—never as an electric bassist), the notation itself would have likely been of little use to them. A score such as this, then, may have served for them as more of a mnemonic aid for music previously transmitted orally—used to recall relative pitch and rhythmic

[114] This sense of solitude is followed by an elusive evocation of possibly sexual intercourse or at least male ejaculation: "a wilderness within tight hot cells/wet with happiness/snow water/love is a touchless laugh."
[115] I sent Lagin copies of the material I found in the Grateful Dead Archive relating to him and his work, including this page of notated music. Although he confirmed that it was by him he had little to say concerning its interpretation.

relationships, e.g. higher or lower, longer or shorter— rather than as specific musical directions. It is also possible that some of the musicians could read the notation or even that only Lagin directly used it.

Whatever the role of such notation may have been in the creation of *Seastones*, according to Lesh what he and the other performers played was largely improvised. "The way he [Lagin] had us do it was he played white noise, or actually pink noise (pink noise is white noise that has been filtered), and he just had us improvise, more or less, upon this white noise … [as well as] a synthesizer track which was like bleeps and swoops and that sort of thing." Each instrumentalist or singer would record a part to which Lagin would respond with one of his own, "but none of us [other than Lagin presumably] would ever hear what any of the other had done." But despite their ignorance of the others' contributions, "it was amazing how synchronised the whole thing turned out to be. It just totally blew me away."[116] Although Lesh's amazement at the synchronicity of separate, largely improvised performances may well reflect his lack of understanding of Lagin's methods, it also reveals how highly he thought of his work.

Returning to the musical notation example discussed above, it would, perhaps, be an example of one of the "historic music forms" that Lagin mentions in his description of the "moment forms" out of which *Seastones* is made.[117] In my conversations with him he explained that its compositional process was intended to, in a sense, recapitulate the history of scored composition from Medieval neumes, through cantus-firmus-based Renaissance polyphony, Baroque free polyphony, Classical and Romantic tonality, Modern atonality, Post-war graphic scores, and finally multi-track tape recording. In

[116] Childs, "A Conversation with Phil Lesh."
[117] Lagin, http://spiritcats.com/music.html.

other words, the ontogenesis of the composition—its development from "birth" to "maturity"—recapitulates the phylogenetic evolution of musical composition from its beginnings in the ninth century A.D until the 1970s.[118]

Another important element in the development of *Seastones* is the concept of "moment form." Although sharing the name and basic idea as a compositional technique of Karlheinz Stockhausen, first formulated in the composition of his *Kontakte* (1958-60) and then *Momente* (1962-69), Lagin claims to have invented the concept independently.[119] For Stockhausen, a moment is a "formal unit in a particular composition recognizable by a personal and unmistakable character."[120] Lagin thinks of them similarly as "individual, independent, self-contained forms … [as well as] synthesized and/or played, improvisational forms. Like real seastones, they are each a placetime, a time island, a droplet of time."[121] There is obviously, then, considerable overlap in their understanding of the compositional purpose of "moment forms." For Stockhausen and Lagin their use was motivated by similar anti-teleological intentionality. Compositions that made use of them, according to Stockhausen, "neither aim at *the* climax, nor at prepared (and consequently expected) multiple climaxes, and the usual introductory, rising, transitional and fading-away stages are not delineated in a

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[118] Interview with Lagin, November 11, 2014. For an extensive discussion of the history and influence of the "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" hypothesis see Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1977), passim. See appendix F for a document "Seastones – Sources" in which Lagin explains such connections and influences.

[119] "When I was young playing and improvising on the piano I evolved my own ideas about individual moments as musical forms and forms of time, derived from music associated or made for TV, radio, movies, composed music that I knew, and jazz improvisation. (I learned when I was older that the term "moment form" had been used by others to describe their own music)." Lagin, http://spiritcats.com/music.html.

[120] "Momentform: Neue Beziehungen zwischen Aufführungsdauer, Werkdauer und Moment." In *Texte zur Musik*, vol. 1 (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg), 200. For a scholarly discussion of Stockhausen's "moment forms" see Jonathan D. Kramer, "Moment Form in Twentieth-Century Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (April 1978), 179-82.

[121] Lagin, http://spiritcats.com/music.html.

development curve encompassing the entire duration of the work." Rather than part of a necessary cause-and-effect progression from a beginning to an end, they are meant to realize a "concentration on the Now—on every Now … that would cut through a horizontal temporal conception to a timelessness I call eternity: an eternity that does not begin at the end of time but is attainable in every moment."[122]

For Lagin, *Seastones,* and the moment forms out of which it is constructed, were created with not dissimilar motivations and conceptual frameworks. In his words, *Seastones* was "composed as an 'emergent whole' of different orderings or sequences of the constituent moment forms. There is no one beginning, middle, or end. The listener can choose one or more or all of the moment forms (tracks) in any desired order to make a set or collection (performance) of moments."[123] Such an approach was motivated by his belief that

> Life moves through moments of form, and beauty can come from a collection of carefully selected (or crafted) moments perceived not as a linear sequence or progression alone, in which the present moment is the consequence of the previous one and the prelude of the coming one, but perceived all at once, shimmering and alive with movement and energy, outside the illusion of a linear and continuous flow of time.[124]

Rather than a composition with a given beginning that leads to a seemingly necessary end through a chain of precisely delineated consequences, Lagin intended his moment forms

[122] "Momentform," *Texte zur Musik*, vol. 1, 198-99.
[123] Lagin, http://spiritcats.com/music.html.
[124] Ibid.

to be appreciated in and for themselves with no necessary connection to what precedes or follows.[125]

Formal Analysis of ***Seastones***

There are then two fundamental processes that define *Seastones*: 1) the merging of different musicians' performances, and 2) its additive, accretive quality. These mirrored, though in more technologically mediated ways, the usual practices and aesthetics of the Grateful Dead, which is what drew Lagin and its members—Garcia and Lesh most of all—to each other. But what of the form of *Seastones* in its LP and CD releases?

On the original 1975 LP, *Seastones* is broken up into seven parts, with the third, fourth, and fifth parts further divided into A and B subsections for a total of 10 sections overall. The timings of each are given on the record's center labels (see figure 4.3).[126] The 1990 CD version, however, differs in significant ways from that on the LP. Rather than made up of 10 overall parts, there are only *nine* on the CD. Because there are no track divisions within the two versions on the CD the only obvious indication that this is the case is in its liner notes: "The two studio realizations (*cycles*) of the *Seastones* score appear on this album in the following order: 1) December, 1975, the previously unreleased version containing 6 sections (31:05); 2) February 1975, the original Round

[125] A philosophical progenitor of the eternity-evoking moment forms of Stockhausen and Lagin is Henri Bergson. Specifically, his concept of *la durée*: the temporally defined immediate experience of consciousness that he defines as a heterogeneous, continuous, and interpenetrating qualitative multiplicity. In such an experience, past moments are conserved and added on to the experience of the present making it constantly different than what has come before. For a scholarly elucidation see Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard Leonard, "Henri Bergson," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016), ed. Edward N. Zalta (http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/bergson/). For original source see Henri Bergson, "An Introduction to Metaphysics," in *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 2007), 133-69.

[126] One can also differentiate the parts due to the visible grooves in the record that mark where a track ends and the next one begins.

Records LP version containing 9 sections (42:34)." Unlike on the LP, there are no timings or track divisions for any of the sections of the two versions on the CD. Through careful comparative listening of the *Seastones* LP and the February 1975 version released on the 1990 CD (using a digital audio editor, and based on the timings of the different parts given on the LP), I have been able to discover exactly what differences exist between them as well as offer a probable reason for why they were made (see table 4.1).

Figure 4.3

Most of the tracks are close in length, with the minor differences likely due to how they were mastered. The obvious exception is Parts IVb and Va. On the 1990 CD, IVb is 1:52 shorter and Va is wholly absent. Why might these cuts have been made? Adding up the timings of the two versions released on the CD suggests a likely answer: Feb. '75, 42:34 + Dec. '75, 31:17 = 73:51. Given that the usual maximum length of a CD is 74 minutes it seems almost certain that removing the 2:30 (1:52 from Part IVb + Part Va's 0:38) was to bring the total length of the two versions under this maximum running time. When I asked Lagin about the timing differences between the LP and CD versions, and my explanation for them, he neither directly confirmed nor denied my speculation. Instead, he said that the production of both the LP and CD required many compromises

because of the disjuncture between what his desire for *Seastones* had been and the technological limitations of the times in which they were made (more so in 1975) and the media (LP vs. CD) of its release.

	1975 *Seastones* LP	**1990 CD - Feb. '75**	**1990 CD – Dec. '75**[127]
Part I	3:30	3:27	5:17
Part II	4:02	4:02	1:24
Part IIIa	4:38	4:38	0:56
Part IIIb	5:36	5:40	
Part IVa	0:18	0:19	11:11
Part IVb	2:08	0:16	
Part Va	0:38	Absent	3:34
Part Vb	4:40	4:48	
Part VI	5:36	5:35	8:51
Part VII	13:34	13:42	

Table 4.1 – Timings of Released Recordings of *Seastones*

Especially regrettable about the absence of divisions between the different parts of the two versions on the 1990 CD is that for Lagin any ordering of the sections was as correct as any other. Because of the limitations of the medium on which they were released, "the 1975 and 1990 versions layered multiple forms into sections in one lineal sequence." However, "the number and ordering of *Seastones*' constituent moment forms (musical compositions, tracks) are not meant to be listened to (or played live) only as one fixed linear progression." Instead, Lagin composed *Seastones* "as an 'emergent whole' of different orderings or sequences of the constituent moment forms. There is no one beginning, middle, or end." His goal was to allow the listener to, "choose one or more or all of the moment forms (tracks) in any desired order to make a set or collection (performance) of moments."[128]

[127] The timings for the parts of the December 1975 version are approximate and reflect my best guess as to where the divisions are within it. They are given here for comparison only since its six parts (only Lagin knows whether any of them should be grouped into "a" or "b" parts) are completely different from those of the same numbers in the February 1975 LP and CD versions.
[128] Ned Lagin, http://www.spiritcats.com/music.html.

During the production process for the CD, Lagin had intended the parts of the two versions it contained to be broken into individual tracks. But for reasons he is still unsure of, likely cost, his instructions were ignored during the mastering process leaving instead only one track for each version. The new, soon-to-be released, two-CD version of *Seastones*, in contrast, "follows the original compositional intent of creating mobile musical forms for open nonlineal random access media listening."[129] It will thus be finally possible to experience *Seastones* in the way that Lagin had always intended it to be.

Seastones *in Performance: June-November 1975*

The only public performance of *Seastones* involving Garcia, Hart and Crosby, along with Lesh and Lagin, was on June 6th, 1975 in Angelica Hall, at Dominican College, in San Rafael, California. Writing in *Rolling Stone*, Charles Perry (who also reviewed the *Seastones* LP for the magazine) thought that "altogether it was a strong showing … despite an unfamiliar musical vocabulary." It even seems to have drawn "a better than break-even crowd" despite a relatively minimal amount of advertising. Still, the audience was not united in their appreciation. Perry wondered if the notably shouted "No!" in the first set

> came from somebody who felt that the ominous-imploring-horrified-ecstatic sounds had simply gotten too close to him, or from somebody who'd suddenly

[129] Ibid.

realized it was going to be an *entire evening* of electronic music and that the assembled Deadniks weren't going to play anything remotely *like* 'Truckin'."[130]

The recording reveals the truth of Perry's description.[131] In the approximately 60 minutes covered by the nine tracks there is never even a moment of metrical regularity, or an implication of any tonal music relationships. In the world of popular music the closest thing this performance can be compared to would be the Grateful Dead at their most experimental and adventurous. But it is much closer in character to contemporary electronic and electro-acoustic music.[132]

Another reviewer largely agreed, noting, "Those who expected 'I Know You Rider' are driven from the room like exorcised demons."[133] In contrast, "The fascinated are drawn into the endless variety of noises, the limitless range of tones" in the music. Especially remarkable for this reviewer is that compared to these musicians, "Few are plumbing the depths of expression that amplified and electronic instruments offer." Drawing connections between "the patterns these musicians weave" and *musique concrète* he describes the music in highly evocative ways.

Their particular rumbles and whines create passing planetoids, empty midieval [sic] churches and hellish animal madness out of blips, beeps, white noise and

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[130] "Ned Lagin & Phil Lesh; Angelica Hall, Dominican College; San Rafael, California, June 6th, 1975," *Rolling Stone*, GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin.
[131] Available for online streaming at https://archive.org/details/gd73-11-28.sbd-seastones.finney.968.sbefail.shnf.
[132] The first track of this recording begins with a fade-in, and its last track ends with an abrupt cut so it is difficult to know how much of the concert's total time it captures. In his review, Charles Perry notes that there were three sets performed: "following a brief second set the music got mired down in a final segment." Given that the total time of the nine tracks is around 60 minutes, it is possible that the recording bridges both sets, having begun after the beginning of the first and been cut off before the end of the second. But though a 60-minute set seems abnormally long, each of the nine tracks seem to flow into each other thereby suggesting that they may well cover a part of one long set, either the first or third.
[133] The paragraph continues, "'No!' screams a distraught member of the audience. 'Arrgghh!' moans another. 'Boogie!' shouts a third, a few seats away from me, and splits." Michael Snyder, "Seastoned," *Berkeley Barb* (June 13-19, 1975), 12.

> flux … Melodies are minimal, repeated into drone and windsound. Garcia wrings asylum cries out of his axe. He and Crosby whisper a choral effect under rolling tympani. Crashes interlace Ned's soft electronic piano triplets. Would-be astral travellers who hear the music in the footfalls and leaky faucets, are brought deep beneath its dark surface. A puff of El Confuso and they're seriously close to motion sickness.

With a "hiss-pop" the performers "return from the void" and then leave the stage to a deserved ovation, "beatific." Although "most of the folks linger to coerce an encore … it is not to be." A "reconstituted Grateful Dead" it is not but at least, "nobody calls out desperate requests for 'Uncle John's Band' or 'Sugar Magnolia'," two of the Dead's more popular songs.[134] Despite the thoroughly unpopular character of the concert's music, and the obvious dislike of some in the audience, this reviewer suggests Lagin's goal of evoking new forms of sonic experience seems to have been realized for many in attendance.

The next *Seastones*' performance was on September 19, 1975, at the Palace of Fine Arts Theater in San Francisco, the same venue as the first public performance of *Seastones* nearly two years before. No recording of this concert circulates publicly, but there is at least one published review. The author describes the scene prior to the performance's beginning:

> Onstage, Ned Lagin was scarcely visible behind the formidable armada of computer banks, synthesisers and amplifiers all erected in horseshoe shape at center stage. To the right, lanky Phil Lesh adjusted his glasses and stood with bass in hand. To the left, David Crosby sat down in front of a music stand that cleverly

[134] Ibid.

obscured him from sight and all but eliminated catcalls for "Almost Cut My Hair."[135]

Notably, Garcia is not mentioned as a performer, in contrast to Lagin's recollection of his involvement.[136] But based on his review of the recording he possesses Lagin insists, "for the early part of the performance there were two processed guitars and voices," one of which would have been Garcia.[137] And an audience member concurs with Lagin as to Garcia's involvement: "Jerry & Crosby were miked to sing … It was *Seastones* so the vocals came out as a drone like murmur. Both Jerry & David were playing guitars."[138] Though it seems strange that the reviewer would not have mentioned Garcia's presence given his high stature among rock music fans these other recollections suggest that he was indeed there for at least part of the concert.

Other than Garcia's only partial involvement and Hart's absence it seems to have been similar to the concert on June 6th. While the reviewer appreciated the discipline and seriousness that Lagin, Lesh, and Crosby brought to their performance, he was less than complimentary about what they performed: "it was electronic music that seemed to be an essential and (and at the same time) random selection of various synthesized pops, burps, guffaws, strings, cacophony and whirrs, intermingled with Lesh's bass guitar phasing in and out of focus with Crosby's occasionally audible electric guitar." About the specifics of their performances he thought, "Crosby's vocals consisted of improvisational murmerings [sic], whispers, and swishing noises … while Lesh seemed content to stand

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[135] Todd Tolces, "Lesh/Lagin," *Melody Maker* 60, no. 40 (October 4, 1975), 54.
[136] "09-19-75 - Palace of Fine Arts Theater, San Francisco, CA - Ned performs "Seastones" and other compositions with Phil, Jerry, and David Crosby." http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/.
[137] Also, "There were reps from UA [United Artists] there that night - another reason for Jerry to be there for awhile at least." Lagin, email correspondence.
[138] JB, http://jgmf.blogspot.ca/2011/04/jgb-september-19-1975-crabshaw-corner.html?showComment=1390599473008#c7655392464612311963.

quietly with his bass, sometimes playing more violently as the composition moved into a climatic area." He particularly noted the contrast between the "so freeform, so wild and undisciplined" music and the demeanor of the performers: "these guys were up onstage, putting people to sleep by the score, and turning pages of music as they went along!" But despite the unfamiliarity and challenging nature of the music, "only once or twice did the audience react violently to anything that was cranked out onstage, and that seemed to be when a spontaneous peak of sound was agreed upon by bass guitar, and synthesizer."[139]

The reviewer concludes by proffering the possibility that "when 'Seastones' gets the bugs worked out of it, it'll be suitable for public consumption," a view seemingly shared at least partly by Lesh whom he quotes at the concert's end stating, "well, that's it … but we're still working on it." Overall, he thought it was "an unsuccessful, but gallant effort to reproduce what could possibly be one of the most inspired pieces of electronic music recorded in years … [despite] the seemingly neurotic lack of rhythm, metre, continuity, and anything else that might even begin to make your toe tap."[140] The disjuncture between the expectations of a popular music audience, even one weaned on the freest explorations of the Grateful Dead, and the kind of sonic adventures of *Seastones* was, for this reviewer, simply too great.

The final public performances of *Seastones*, as well as Lagin's last (until the time of this writing), took place on November 22, 1975 at the Paloma Theatre in Encinitas, California. Accompanied only by Phil Lesh (no Garcia, Hart or Crosby), they performed two concerts that evening. We are fortunate to have an audio recording of the early show

[139] Tolces, "Lesh/Lagin," 54.
[140] Ibid.

along with an advertisement and a review.[141] The advertisement states a quasi-warning as to the potential effects of the music claiming it has "produced strong biophysical electromagnetic, psychochemical & sexual reactions in both living and nonliving matter." The concert listing directly above the advertisement labels Lagin a "master of computerized music," and what would be performed as "electronic bio music" (see figure 4.4).[142]

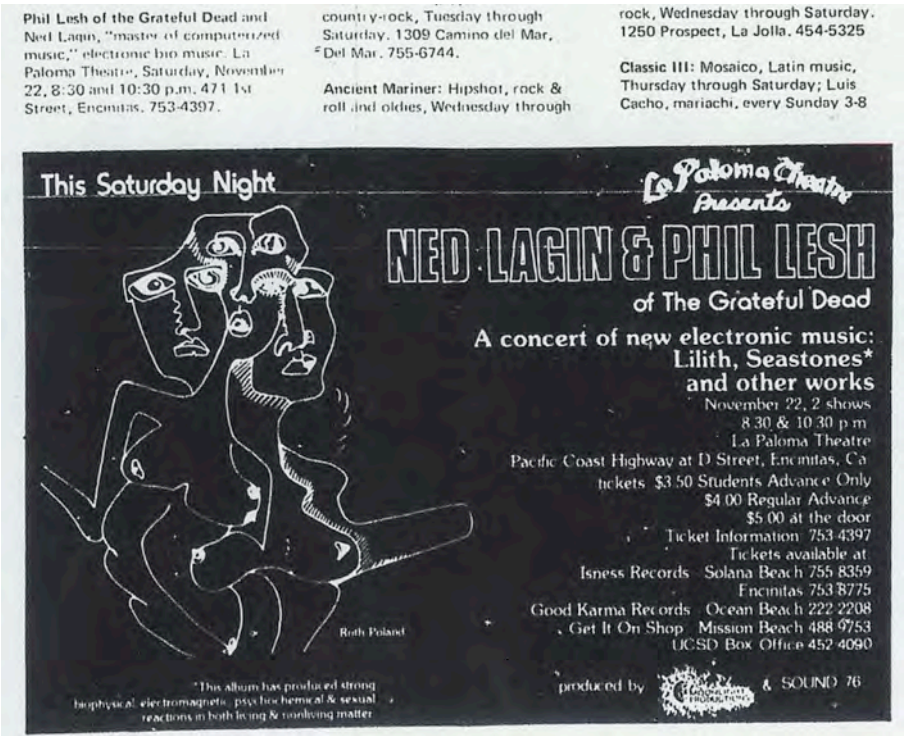


Figure 4.4

As the end point of a series of concerts stretching back almost two years to the November 28, 1973 performance at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco, Lagin and Lesh might have tried to more closely align their performance with audience

[141] It can be heard here: https://archive.org/details/paf1975-11-22.early.124127.aud.flac16. It is, however, mislabeled. It was not a "Phil and Friends" performance, an ensemble name that only came into use in the late 1990s for a generally rotating membership group that Lesh continues to perform with, off and on, until today. It was, rather, billed as "Ned Lagin & Phil Lesh."

[142] "Reader Music Scene," *San Diego Reader* (Nov. 20-26, 1975), 34. *Lilith* is another original composition by Lagin that is related to, and bears significant similarities to *Seastones*. It is, I think, what Lagin refers to as *L*, an unfinished composition, concurrent with *Seastones*, with which it shares parts. See Lagin, http://spiritcats.com/music.html.

expectations—of which they would have undoubtedly become well aware by this time. But the recording and published review reveals that this was not the case. Instead, the music performed was as abstract, challenging and experimental as any they had previously performed together.

Setting the scene for his discussion of the music the reviewer notes, "Lagin, surrounded by an arsenal of ring modulators and echo-analog synthesizers, looked delightfully dazed throughout, bobbing his head counter-clockwise in a rhythmic jack-in-the-box fashion as he piled on layers of controlled, orchestrated sound effects." The result, he thought, "was impressive, and the conjured impressions, undeniable: the screeching of nails against blackboards, the crashing of bowling pins peaking into tidal wave roars, coffee-pots percolating underneath stretches of elongated white noise, and babbling brook pauses." Even though the reviewer admired the performance he did so only in as much as it was "aesthetic principle turned into practice"—not because he especially enjoyed listening to it. Comparing it negatively to the contemporaneous examples of King Crimson's *Starless and Bible Black*, and Robert Fripp and Brian Eno's *No Pussyfooting*, he preferred these for their "eccentric nature of flowing, modulating melodies clashing with stringent rhythms and quirky 'effects' [that] shows humans in control of machines." In contrast, he felt that Lagin and Lesh, along with groups such as Tangerine Dream and Kraftwork, "reverses the playing order, and no matter how I try, it's hard to love even the most human machine."[143] Lagin's aforementioned hope of creating "organic, artificial, musical intelligence" seems to have here fallen on deaf ears.

All in the audience would seemingly not have shared the reviewer's sentiments, however, as each of the three tracks that make up the available recording end with

[143] Steve Esmedina, "Did I Really Like This?," *San Diego Reader* (Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 1975), 7.

boisterous applause and cheers. There are also a number of instances during the performance of audience members singing, humming along or cheering particular moments. Through the three tracks the music ranges from long-held, filter-sweeped tones overlaid with short, percussive electric bass notes and synthesizer squiggles; to the sound of wind, waves, and rain; synthesizer string pads; repetitive, electronic rhythms in seemingly generative (i.e. constantly changing) sequences; distorted, modulating saw-tooth waves, and so on. What the music lacks are tonal or metrical implications, or any obvious formal repetition that would suggest the outlines of a piece or, *a fortiori*, a song. Although it was most definitely not popular music as is commonly conceived, many of those in the audience not only did not seem to mind, but also seemingly understood and appreciated what Lagin (and Lesh) wanted them to get out of the performance.

The Marketing of Seastones

Seastones was released on LP on April 1, 1975, and despite, or perhaps because, of its esoteric nature, there was considerable effort made in promoting it and its stand-alone performances. A Round Records labeled document from June of 1975 lists radio stations in major American cities along with indications as to whether *Seastones* had been added to or dropped from their playlist, and what level of play it was receiving on each station (see figure 4.5).[144] Another series of documents lists record distributors and associated radio stations to which promotional copies were to be shipped along with related shipping instructions.[145]

[144] GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin.
[145] Ibid.

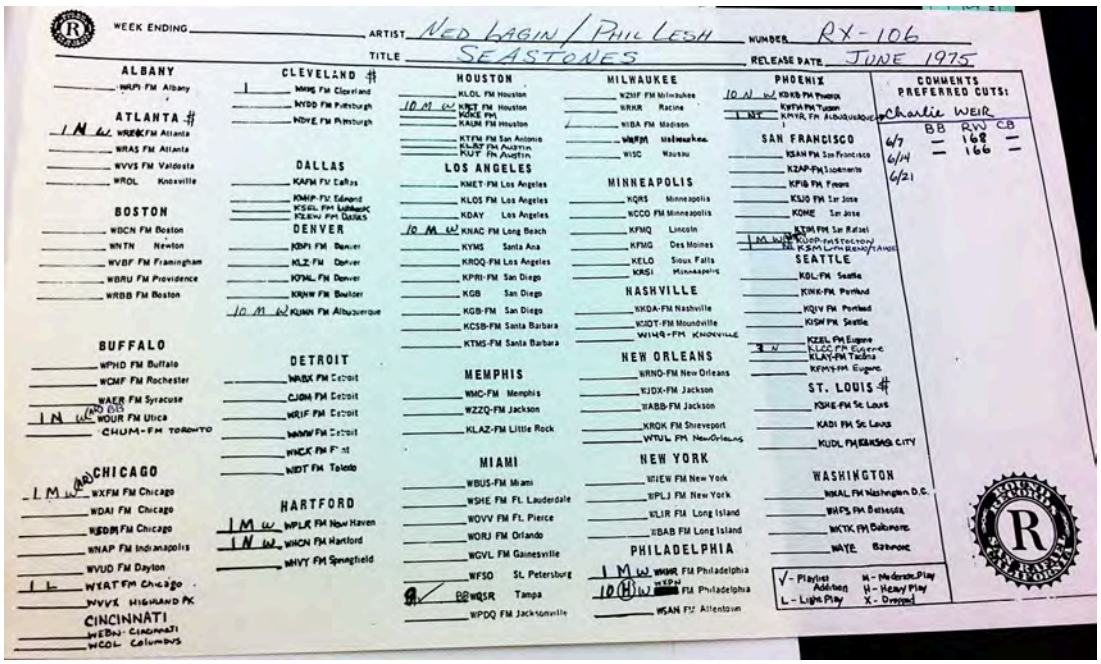


Figure 4.5

It was not only to radio stations that Round Records promoted the album, however. There is a hand-written document listing a number of postsecondary institutions that had electronic music clubs that were clearly targets for the promotion of *Seastones* (see figure 4.6). These include Oberlin, Mills, Stanford, Cal Arts, the Art Institute (presumably of California in San Francisco), and the College of Marin County.[146] Another Round Records document, dated May 30, 1975, lists how many concert mailings were sent out to each part of the greater Bay Area (presumably to individuals on the Grateful Dead's mailing list), as well as to four publicly accessible locations, various newspapers and radio stations (see figure 4.7).[147]Although it is nowhere stated on the document which concert the mailing was intended to promote, given the date it was almost certainly the upcoming June 6, 1975 performance in Angelico Hall, Dominican College, San Rafael, California by "Ned Lagin, Phil Lesh and Friends" (see figure 4.8 for

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

concert poster) that also featured Mickey Hart, David Crosby, and Jerry Garcia.[148] These documents reveal that there was a not insignificant amount of effort put into promoting *Seastones*.

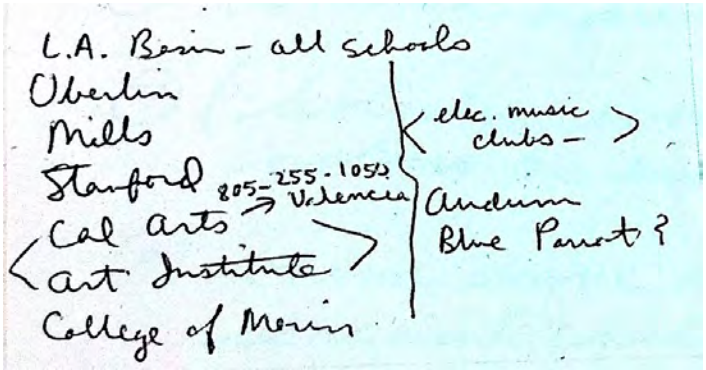


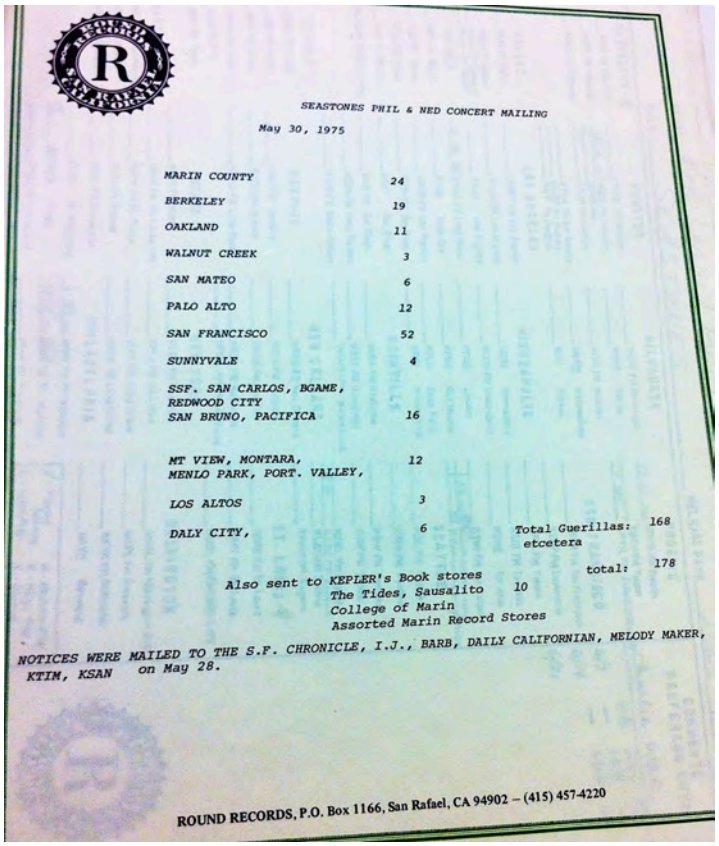
Figure 4.6

But the work ended up being mostly for naught. With Grateful Dead-Round Records verging on insolvency, the North American distribution rights of the two labels were sold to United Artists on June 1, 1975 causing all their recordings to be pulled from stores to be re-labeled. Although, according to Lagin, *Seastones* had been selling relatively well, even moving up the charts and into *Billboard* magazine's *Top 100* since its April 1 release, its subsequent unavailability for weeks killed its momentum and whatever chance it had at a greater degree of commercial success.[149] Lesh called it "a horrible bummer for Ned both aesthetically and financially—it was a rip-off." Despite the

[148] Ibid.

[149] I have been unable to find evidence of *Seastones* in *Billboard*'s Top 100 list from April through June of 1975. However, it does appear in *Billboard*'s "FM Action" listing, which shows "the albums that have been added to the nation's leading progressive stations." (See any of the following *Billboard* citations for this quotation.) The first appearance seems to have been in the May 31 edition, one of ten albums at number 22 with two stations: WOUR and KSML in Syracuse/Utica, NY, and King's Beach/Truckee, CA. *Billboard* (May 31, 1975), 28. The next week, another station adds it to its rotation, WPLR in New Haven, CT, although then at number 24 along with 10 other albums. *Billboard* (June 7, 1975), 16. The next week, another station, WQSR in Tampa, FL, adds it as well, making it one of five albums at number 20. *Billboard* (June 14, 1975), 26. Its last appearance is in the following week's edition, at number 19 along with five other albums, with the same four stations as the previous week. *Billboard* (June 21, 1975), 71.

work that had gone into its promotion, it was, says Lesh, "the lowest priority project for Round Records."[150]



SEASTONES PHIL & NED CONCERT MAILING

May 30, 1975

MARIN COUNTY	24
BERKELEY	19
OAKLAND	11
WALNUT CREEK	3
SAN MATEO	6
PALO ALTO	12
SAN FRANCISCO	52
SUNNYVALE	4
SSF. SAN CARLOS, BGAME, REDWOOD CITY SAN BRUNO, PACIFICA	16
MT VIEW, MONTARA, MENLO PARK, PORT. VALLEY,	12
LOS ALTOS	3
DALY CITY,	6
Total Guerillas:	168
etcetera	
total:	178

Also sent to KEPLER's Book stores
The Tides, Sausalito 10
College of Marin
Assorted Marin Record Stores

NOTICES WERE MAILED TO THE S.F. CHRONICLE, I.J., BARB, DAILY CALIFORNIAN, MELODY MAKER, KTIM, KSAN on May 28.

ROUND RECORDS, P.O. Box 1166, San Rafael, CA 94902 – (415) 457-4220

Figure 4.7

In addition, critics were divided on their estimations of the *Seastones* LP, as they had been with its earlier performances. One reviewer agreed with the electronic music experts at CBS Records that it lacked requisite musical qualities: "You can't call *Seastones* head music; maybe head sounds." Furthermore, apparently only the use of psychedelic drugs such as LSD could make it enjoyable: "it's a sure cinch you can't get off on … this computerized, synthesized mish-mash of sound … with its] periodic tweets, hisses, gulps and pings … unless you are into 'tripping.'"[151] One especially vociferous letter to the Dead complained, "If this is to be the future of music, I might as well stop

[150] Quoted in McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 486.
[151] Holly Spence, "Album Review: Head Sounds," *Lincoln, Nebraska Journal* (June 4, 1975), 12.

buying albums!" and also questioned its status as music: "I who have no musical ability, believe I could do better with feedback, distortion, and a push-button phone!"[152]

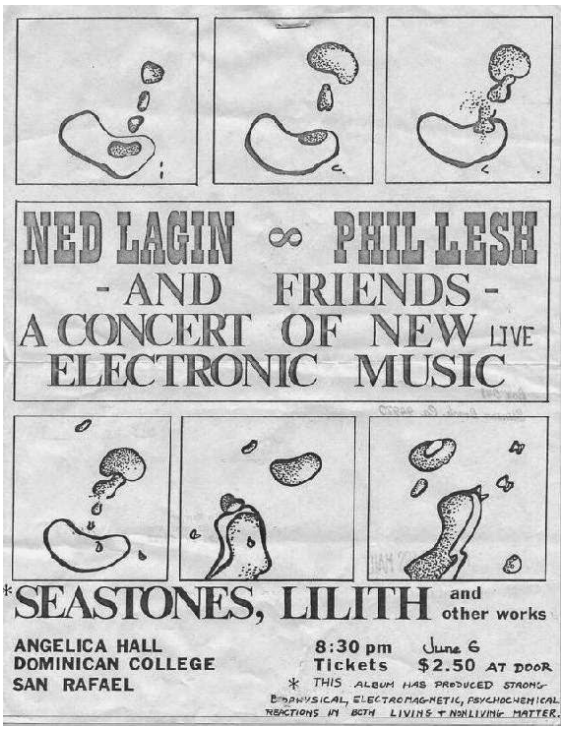


Figure 4.8

Other reviewers, in contrast, had more positive estimations of the album. One notes, "The LP is not for everyone. But if you're ready for an hour of futuristic insanity, give it a listen."[153] Another calls it "one of the most off-beat avant-garde albums ever," on which "synthesizers whisper as if they were ocean spray from softly breaking whitecaps, glistening on a backdrop of midnight sky." Particularly laudatory, given its publication in *Contemporary Keyboard* magazine, was the reviewer's description of Lagin's "highly unusual keyboard work."[154] Another cautions those who would "dismiss this effort as merely a psychedelic rehash of the Acid Tests" since to do so would "be

[152] Richard O'Sullivan letter, June 12, 1975, GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box. 18, Business: Seastones – Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin.
[153] "Review: *Seastones*," *Kite* (June 25, 1975), GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, May/June 1975.
[154] "Review: Ned Lagin/Phil Lesh, 'Seastones'," *Contemporary Keyboard* 1, no. 1 (Sept./Oct., 1975), GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, Sept. 1975.

missing the mark completely." Instead, it "is a serious exploration into computer sound that offers some interesting (and restful) collages." It is not, however, "the best thing you could play for background music"; instead, "the whole effort demands the listener's concentration, not to mention a collected and responsive mind." And though incorrectly referring to it as a Lagin-Lesh album rather than a Lagin album on which Lesh is one of various performers, they conclude that it is "high quality sound from two high quality musicians."[155]

Such a diversity of reviews is not at all surprising; *Seastones* is, after all, a challenging work on many levels. But though undoubtedly a reflection of the first half of the 1970s when it was created, as Lagin himself readily admits, it also prefigures a number of later musical developments suggesting perhaps that one of the difficulties it faced was that it was—to make use of one of the most common clichés of artistic modernism—ahead of its time, especially within popular music contexts. Key elements of *Seastones* have become major factors within the worlds of popular, art, and academic-research music such as generative music, musical pieces as accretions or layers of multiple performances, and the use of digital computers to process, synthesize, and alter sound in real time. In addition, its exploration of how sound can help produce, even cause, certain physiological and psychological states has become a major area of concern in music psychology, and music therapy, as well as for some musicologists and music theorists. Although Lagin discounts the idea of artistically being "ahead of one's time," there would seem to be sufficient evidence to suggest that that is indeed what *Seastones*

[155] B.P. "*Seastones*—Ned Lagin and Phil Lesh (Round)," *The Bugle American* (April 1975), GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, April 1975.

was.[156] Whether or not one agrees with such estimations, his historical significance—as one of the first people in history to interact live in performance with traditional instrumentalists via a digital computer, and as one of the inventors of generative music—is undeniable. He should certainly be more widely recognized as such.

Conclusion

As the previous plethora of details about Lagin, *Seastones*, and his relationship with the Grateful Dead reveal, he was a significant individual within the Bay Area rock musician community. As an outsider from the East Coast, with substantial education in biology, music technology, performance, and composition, his contributions to the evolution of the Dead's music in the first half of the 1970s was considerable. Although Phil Lesh had been the primary vehicle through which modern, experimental music had influenced the group during its first five years (aided by his friend Tom Constanten from 1968 to early 1970), in the early 1970s Lagin provided a much more immediate connection to its ongoing developments—and through his musicological studies to the broader history of music—as well as to the largely East Coast evolutions of modern jazz. All of these elements were highly influential on the development of the Dead's musical practice in the first half of the 1970s.

Furthermore, Lagin's compositional work on *Seastones* both reflected and developed ideas about music and its effects on individuals and groups that were current within the Bay Area rock musician community at the time. The conception of a musical

[156] "Maybe I have to rationalize it that way because *Seastones* may become popular in a sense now or have its audience that it didn't when I conceived it 45 years ago. But I've always resisted the idea of living ahead of your time. That was my time. It was Archie Shepp's time; it was Jimi Hendrix's time. It was everybody … everybody does stuff. But all that stuff, once done, exists outside of time. Unless you're concerned with the competitiveness of it, being the first." Lagin interview, Nov. 11, 2014.

work as a constantly evolving, additive creation, and of musical performance as a synergistic blending of musicians and audience members, not only defined the Dead's musical practice but are also core ideas for the genesis of *Seastones* though in more explicit, technologically mediated form. And these ideas echo those of the early 20th century historical avant-garde in their rejection of finished art works, and desire to erase the boundaries between artists and audiences, and, more broadly, between art and life. They also played crucial roles in the development of the Grateful Dead's music in the first half of the 1970s, as well as were prime motivators for the development of the Wall of Sound, and creation of the wholly independent Grateful Dead/Round Records. Although never an official member of the band, he had a profound influence on its musical, business, and technological evolution.

Along with these artistic influences, however, one can discern an economic motive for Lagin's involvement with the Dead through the application of Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production. In the crowded world of early 1970s' rock music, he gave the group an important advantage over its competitors. Even if the Dead were not generally considered part of the burgeoning progressive rock genre—the likes of King Crimson, Yes, or Emerson, Lake & Palmer—they had a reputation as a highly innovative, experimental rock band. But with their increasing emphasis in 1969-1970 on music influenced more by folk and country than, say, Edgard Varèse or John Coltrane, their reputation *as* innovators could conceivably be challenged. Meeting Lagin in May of 1970, therefore, must have seemed like a fortuitous event, providing them with an input of cultural capital that would set them apart from their rock musician peers.

Following up on this chapter's earlier comparison of Lagin to Tom Constanten, Lagin offered another advantage over Constanten: as a non-member of the Dead, Lagin's only occasional involvement on-stage from 1970 through 1972 would have required no sharing of the profits from their concerts nor extra costs as a salaried partner. As a MIT undergraduate, then Brandeis graduate student, his participation was almost certainly for him a welcome opportunity from which he would have derived a variety of non-financial benefits: musical satisfaction playing with a popular rock band, higher social status among his friends and colleagues, the attention of attractive women, and so on. From the perspective of the Grateful Dead organization—at least once it became clear that he would not be joining the band—he was likely a welcome resource. He gave Lesh and Garcia the intellectual, avant-garde influence they clearly wanted, as well as occasional musical contributions of a more experimental variety, while not requiring a full-time, paid position à la Constanten. The Dead benefited from Lagin's free labor and the cultural capital he provided, while Lagin gained significant social capital from his association, without any economic cost to the band. Even when Lagin was on tour with the Dead in 1974, his payment was merely a *per diem* of $50 or $75 a day.[157]

Lagin was scheduled to play with the other members of the Grateful Dead (though billed as "Jerry Garcia & Friends") during a concert on June 17, 1975.[158] At the last minute, however, he decided not to because of his frustration at the low priority given to *Seastones*, his deteriorating relations with various band members, and disappointment at

[157] Lagin was unsure which amount was correct. Telephone interview with Lagin, June 9, 2014. Such economic exploitation arguably continues. On February 1, 2016, Rhino Records released *Dave's Picks Volume 17*, a recording of a Grateful Dead performance at the Selland Arena in Fresno, California on July 19, 1974. Its tenth track is a recording of that concert's performance of *Seastones*, featuring Ned Lagin and Phil Lesh. Lagin, however, was not consulted, did not give permission, nor has he been given royalties for its limited edition sales of 16,500 copies. He is also not mentioned in the listed musical personnel.
[158] This was the "Bob Fried Memorial Boogie," a benefit concert for the family of Bob Fried, a well-known poster artist within the San Francisco rock music community who had recently died.

what he saw as an ever-decreasing sense of camaraderie within the Dead organization.[159] Although he would perform the three more stand-alone *Seastones* concerts in 1975 discussed above, they were not only his final association with the San Francisco rock musicians he had worked with so intensively in the previous five years, but also his last public performances. And because of a late 1970s' car theft and the Marin County Flood of 1982, he would lose almost all of his notated manuscripts, as well as many of the tapes and instruments that were so important to the development of *Seastones*, events that he took as signs of the death "of his public musical life."[160]

After leaving the Dead's orbit Lagin's professional focus shifted from music to developments in personal computing, an industry that had a major presence in the Bay Area with which he had developed numerous contacts through his work with the Dead and on *Seastones*.[161] But he kept silent about his former relations with the Grateful Dead until meeting radio producer and writer David Gans in 1990 while working on the CD release of *Seastones*. Since then the scope of his contributions to the music of the Grateful Dead, and to musical history more broadly, has become increasingly clear through the publication of interviews, references in musical histories, and web sites focused on his work.[162]

Lagin is presently working on a re-release of *Seastones*, which will be made up of two two-CD sets. The first will contain "most but not all of [the] composition as originally composed" along with "most of the original 1970-1974 studio (core) forms …

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[159] For further details of his aborted involvement with the concert, see Gans, "Ned Lagin," *Conversations With the Dead*, 372. See also Jarnow, *Heads*, 114-15.
[160] "[The] flood of '82 [in Marin County] destroyed my last instruments—the clavichords—and sealed the fate of my musical life. One of the clavichords, which is about the size of a child's coffin, I still have. It was and is still internally torn to bits. It's still filled [sic] with the flood mud. I look at it sometimes and see it as the coffin of my musical life." Ibid, 375.
[161] Jarnow, *Heads*, 123.
[162] http://nedbase.blogspot.ca/ and http://spiritcats.com/index.html.

as well as the parts of my concurrent composition *L* that are shared with *Seastones* (*L* remains unfinished), and some of the moment forms generated and accreted into the composition from live performances (1973 - early 1975)."[163] It will have 88 tracks reflecting the "88 moment forms on the original release, one for each key on the piano" if Lagin wanted to play them as samples.[164] The other two-CD set will "complete *Seastones*" by including "Make a Cat Laugh," which had been planned as the second *Seastones* album, first on Round Records and then with United Artists, along with material from other 1975 recording sessions, "more live accreted forms, [and] the few remaining original *Seastones* core forms not included in this present release." It will also make use of "digital audio technology and processing imagined in the original composition of the time but only available after I [Lagin] stopped live and studio performance."[165] Although release dates for the two sets has not yet been determined when they are made available we will finally be able to experience *Seastones* as Lagin initially conceived it in the early 1970s, as well as have a much clearer understanding of the composition, and of Lagin's place in musical history.

[163] http://spiritcats.com/music.html.
[164] Lagin interview, Nov. 11, 2014.
[165] http://spiritcats.com/music.html.

Chapter 6:
The Grateful Dead and the Blues for Allah

Let's see with our heart/These things our eyes have seen/And know the truth must still lie somewhere in between.[1]

This chapter brings this dissertation to a close by exploring the crucial period of the Grateful Dead's history from the beginning of their retirement from touring until the beginning of its end with the release of the album *Blues for Allah* and two promotional performances in August and September of 1975. Although for the most part out of the public eye, and, at least at the beginning of the 1975, unsure if they would ever perform live again as the Grateful Dead, the group's members remained occupied by pursuing new musical directions both together and apart. Certainly the most unconventional of these directions was what would become the eponymous track on *Blues for Allah*, a curious, and relatively sui generis amalgam of popular and contemporary art music influences.

By the middle of 1975, however, the serious financial trouble facing Grateful Dead-Round Records became too obvious to ignore, forcing a re-evaluation of their musical and professional directions that would have lasting effects on the group over its subsequent 20-year existence. Because it was during this 20-year period—1975-1995—that the Dead attained their greatest fame and cultural influence, it was not only the members of the Dead that were so affected, but through them and their audience the broader popular music industry. *Blues for Allah* and the circumstances surrounding its creation and commercial release thus offer significant insights into how in the mid-1970s notions of artistic experimentalism and the avant-garde were counterbalanced by commercial imperatives and a changing cultural and economic climate.

[1] Robert Hunter, "Blues for Allah," *Blues for Allah* (Grateful Dead Records/United Artists, 1975).

The Grateful Dead's "Retirement"

With the ending of the Grateful Dead's five-night run at Winterland arena in San Francisco, October 16-20, 1974, the band's "retirement" began. Because of the group's subsequent existence until its breakup in 1995 following the death of Jerry Garcia, it is common to think of this stop in touring as a planned temporary pause. But at the time of these concerts there was apparently a real possibility that they would mark the end of the Grateful Dead as had been known by its members and audiences until then.[2] And in a real way these concerts did mark such an end. Even though the Dead played four performances and released an album, *Blues for Allah* in 1975, and toured every year from 1976 through 1995, the band was never the same after these five "retirement" shows.

Band associate Ned Lagin confirmed that at that time there was no plan for the Dead as a band made up of the same musicians to necessarily continue to exist.[3] Band historian Dennis McNally concurs in explaining how it was that former (and future) second drummer Mickey Hart came to sit in with the band on the final concert on October 20, 1974: "As far as anyone could be certain, October 20 might be, as the ticket read, 'The Last One'," which was why Hart, at the urging of various band associates, decided he needed to be there.[4]

According to Lagin, one possibility that was envisioned was for the members of the Dead to continue to perform together and apart in a variety of ad hoc ensembles with other associated musicians from the Bay Area. The inspiration for such a situation was

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[2] "[T]hose of us in attendance at this Sunday show had every reason to believe that it might well be the Dead's last performance, so every note took on much greater significance than normal. A wake like atmosphere prevailed as the crowd bade farewell to one familiar tune after another." Michael Parrish, "10/20/74," in *The Deadhead's Taping Compendium, Vol. 1*, 553-54. Notably, tickets for the October 20 performance were uncharacteristically handed back as the audience left the arena stamped with "The Last One."

[3] Ned Lagin interview, September 30, 2013.

[4] McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 478.

the loose agglomeration of primarily Bay Area-based musicians that worked together at Wally Heider's recording studio complex in San Francisco in 1971, which Paul Kantner (guitarist and singer in the Jefferson Airplane/Starship) dubbed the Planet Earth Rock & Roll Orchestra. Such musical mixing would have allowed for more flexibility and experimentation than had the fixed membership of the Grateful Dead.[5]

Given this apparent possibility, that three of the four concerts that all the members of the Dead performed together in 1975 were not as the "Grateful Dead" but rather "Jerry Garcia & Friends" takes on added significance. Because of the subsequent history of the band these have *become* Grateful Dead concerts, but their designation at the time indicates that they were not necessarily intended as such. Although they featured the members of the Dead as it had existed before the band's retirement and would continue afterwards, plus second drummer Hart, the first performance on March 23 at Kezar Stadium also featured Merl Saunders on electric organ and Lagin on electric piano along with the Dead's usual keyboardist at the time, Keith Godchaux.[6] And their performance in the June 17 concert at the Winterland Arena, the "Bob Fried Memorial Boogie," was originally supposed to include Ned Lagin and not Mickey Hart but at the last moment Lagin decided not to play and Hart, though not expected, showed up at the arena with his drum kit.[7] The last 1975 performance, on September 28, and the last to be billed as Jerry

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[5] The best account I have been able to find concerning the Planet Earth Rock & Roll Orchestra (or PERRO for short) is here: http://www.philzone.com/philbase/perro.html. For an online sample of some of the music see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WELRag-wuwo#t=140. See Danny Goldberg, "California Rock Enters a New Phase," *Circus* (April 1971), 18, 31-32 for a contemporary discussion of this mixing of musicians from different groups.

[6] The one exception to the presence of all the usual members of the Grateful Dead at the four concerts in 1975 was vocalist Donna-Jean Godchaux who did not perform at the March 23, 1975 SNACK Benefit concert.

[7] Lagin's reasons for not playing the concert, and thereafter disassociating himself from the Dead, are detailed in the published interview "Ned Lagin: February and August 1991; Marin County, California," in *Conversations with the Dead: The Grateful Dead Interview Book* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Books, 2002),

Garcia & Friends, was as the same seven-piece ensemble as on June 17.[8] Thus, contrary to many claims that Hart rejoined the band with his performance during the last of the retirement shows, on October 20, 1974, Lagin's recollections point to the period between June 17 and the August 13 concert at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco (the one 1975 performance that was billed as the Grateful Dead although it was by invitation only) as the period in which Hart was brought back into full involvement with the band.

The proper dating of Hart's becoming again a full-time member is significant because it points to what seems to have been a crucial change for the Grateful Dead in the middle of 1975. As the perilous financial situation of Grateful Dead-Round Records became increasingly evident, many of the plans that its independence had allowed for, and that the band had hoped to accomplish, became untenable. On June 1, 1975 the distribution rights of the two record companies were sold to United Artists (UA) to generate much needed capital to keep them financially afloat. To reflect this new reality all copies of Grateful Dead-Round Records' records were pulled from record stores to be relabeled with the UA logo. Although a necessary measure, their subsequent weeks of unavailability for purchase did little to help, and much to hurt, the companies' bottom lines.

372-73. Lagin in interview on November 9, 2014 told me that Hart was not expected to play and only did so after showing up expectedly. "Oh, Mickey's here!" was how he described it. Given the similarity of his account to others of Hart's joining the band for part of the Dead's final pre-"retirement" concert on October 20,1974, it is possible Lagin is confusing these two concerts.

[8] Music journalist David Gans pointed out to me in conversation that in the case of the September 28th performance, the choice of using this name likely had something to do with getting the permission of the city to have a free concert in Golden Gate Park in 1975. Given the Dead's popularity at that time it is likely that it would not have been given if they had applied to play under their actual moniker. I thank him for this point.

Furthermore, given this new financial arrangement, United Artists now had significant leverage over the band, allowing them to demand new products from the group. The dream of freedom from the control of record companies (other than their own) was no more.[9] Although the Dead had been working on new music they now had deadlines to meet. Therefore, in less than ideal circumstances, "they slammed through the final recording process in two or three weeks" to complete their new album *Blues for Allah*.[10] Also a product of this new external pressure was the live album *Steal Your Face* made from recordings of the October 16-20, 1974 performances. Even though the tapes were "disastrously bad," Lesh, and band associate Owsley Stanley, were given only nine days to mix the album. Even though they apparently took twice that long, all the studio trickery they could muster could not save what was, in many people's opinion, "the worst Grateful Dead Album to date."[11] Band members must have lamented the sad irony of its release given that one of their motivations for starting a record company had been to ensure the high quality of their records. Instead, they found themselves forced to release an obviously inferior product. But along with these artistic compromises other ways of keeping Grateful Dead-Round Records afloat were tried as well.

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[9] "In order to finance continued operations, [Ron] Rakow [president of Grateful Dead-Round Records] signed a distribution deal with United Artists Records. This effectively undermined the Grateful Dead's independence. UA was not going to interfere with the music, exactly, but the Dead's freedom to do what they wanted, when they wanted to do it, had gone away." Correy Arnold, "August 13, 1975: Great American Music Hall, 859 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco, CA (FM IX)," *Lost Live Dead*, http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2014/08/august-13-1975-great-american-music.html.

[10] McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 484.

[11] Ibid, 490. "[*Steal Your* Face was] one of the most criticized Dead albums. Both song selection and sound quality of the original release failed to impress a large number of heads; by some it was given the alternative title 'Steal Your Money'." http://deaddisc.com/disc/Steal_Your_Face.htm. The high quality of the 2005 release *The Grateful Dead Movie Soundtrack*, made from the tapes of the same five concerts, reveals that the problems with *Steal Your Face* lay in the limited time available to properly mix the music, and possibly technological limitations of the time, rather than the performances themselves.

Music and Holograms

"The Grateful Dead's Revolutionary Plans for Recording," announces the headline of the February 24, 1975 edition of "Earth Starship," a publication of the San Francisco-based Earth News Service.[12] It goes on to explain that the band is "experimenting with a recording system which could ultimately replace the traditional phonograph vinyl record and the tape." Given the date one might at first imagine that this was evidence of the Dead's early involvement with the development of compact discs—the consumer digital music format developed by Phillips and Sony in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This would be incorrect. Although it would supposedly involve lasers "reading" information, in similar fashion to compact discs, and would also have "no surface noise, no pops, scratches, skips, or any of the baloney about present day records and tapes," a disc was not what was envisioned as the storage medium. Instead, the "scientists … doing research at the Dead's headquarters in Marin County, California [aim] to develop this entirely new system for reproducing music through the use of holography … music would be encoded with a laser on a one-inch plastic pyramid to be read by an optical fiber." Although the cost of the playing mechanism would seemingly be prohibitive if only Grateful Dead-Round Records made use of such a system, the announcement claims that "the major piece [of] hardware involved could cost as little as $13 … [and] could be on the market within a year or so." Finally, to finance the necessary research, "The Dead members are hoping to use proceeds from their album projects," after which are listed a number of

[12] Earth News Service was a daily news service for radio stations "that, unlike most news sources, does look at both sides of the news." *Billboard*, Feb. 22, 1975, 29. Its "Earth Starship" publication was a "five-day radio service covering the world of music … [intended to] dig into music and entertainment industries for stories not reported anywhere else." *Billboard*, Aug. 17, 1974, 42.

upcoming solo (i.e. non-Grateful Dead) albums by Garcia, the Godchauxs, lyricist Robert Hunter, and Lagin and Lesh.[13]

All of these albums were indeed eventually released on Round Records. But since nothing ever came of this "revolutionary plan" one might well wonder whether this was, a) a serious effort that unfortunately never came to fruition, or b) merely a pie-in-the-sky scheme to promote Grateful Dead-Round Records. Indeed, the information in this press release came from a February 1975 newsletter mailed to those who had contacted the Dead over the last four years asking to be put on the band's mailing list.[14] The newsletter also came with a number of samplers: 45-rpm records with one song per side, from each of the solo albums mentioned above. It asked recipients, "instead of writing us, please just play these sides for 15 people who haven't heard them; have a party!" The reason for the requested lack of response was because, it claimed, the last time they had sent out samplers the volume of replies had been so great that it had required a special mail truck to deliver them all. "Now, however, with the Dead off the road and the necessary personnel cutbacks, we can't handle the thank you notes."[15]

Thankfully we have the memories of one who was involved to settle the issue as to the intention of this apparent plan. In the words of Steve Brown, who worked for Grateful Dead-Round Records at the time, "The holographic music pyramid [was] one of the best hoaxes I've been proud to be associated with."[16] Although Ron Rakow, the president of the two companies, "had made a one-inch model of this wondrous little

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[13] GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, Jan.-Feb. 1975.
[14] The Grateful Dead''s 1971 live album *Grateful Dead* was the first to have printed on the record sleeve this request for contact from those interested in the group's music: "Dead Freak Unite (Who are you? Where are you? Send us your name and address and we'll keep you informed.)"
[15] "February 1975 Newsletter," *Grateful Dead Sources*, Dec. 25, 2012: http://deadsources.blogspot.ca/2012/12/february-1975-newsletter.html.
[16] Steve Brown, "If I Told You All That Went Down," *Golden Road* (Summer 1986).

pyramid, which he didn't hesitate to grandly produce at the slightest provocation," and "actual scientists in the holographic field became more than curious about our heretofore unheard-of efforts in this new medium," it was a promotional gimmick through and through.[17] As a "stereotypical hustler" Rakow was a consistent source of less-than-honest moneymaking schemes involving the Dead.[18] It was, in fact, Rakow whose ill-fated idea it had been for the band to start their own record company rather than again sign with an established major label such as Warner Brothers or Colombia.[19]

That such a hoax was conceived, disseminated, and taken seriously by many people reveals how the Dead was understood at the time as avant-garde musicians, at the "cutting-edge" of musical, business, and technological innovation. Having started a record company independent of existing major labels, designed and built the most advanced live-sound system ever developed, and explored highly adventurous, experimental music in almost all of their musical performances gave them such cachet. That the Dead would be exploring new technologies of recorded music distribution was, then, not as far-fetched as it may now seem.

Such a plan also followed logically from a number of published statements made by guitarist Jerry Garcia as to the negative environmental and human costs of vinyl records. In a September 1974 interview in England's *Melody Maker*, coinciding with the

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[17] Ibid.

[18] McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 135. "Rakow looked to [Bob] Weir like the Batman character the Joker, and Bobby was certain that he had introduced the word 'scam' in the Dead's vocabulary." Ibid, 247. And his scamming ways apparently continued after he left the Dead's orbit: in 2007 he was sentenced to five years in prison for tax evasion. See "Ex-Grateful Dead Manager Sentenced," April 11, 2007, Associated Press (http://www.foxnews.com/story/2007/04/11/ex-grateful-dead-manager-sentenced.html).

[19] Although Rakow's swindling ways were appreciated by some within the band, most notably Garcia, his dishonesty came back to dramatically hurt its members. Before the record company finally folded in 1976, Rakow, having been given notice of his firing as president of Grateful Dead Records, wrote himself checks from the assets of the company worth $225,000 effectively bankrupting the company. Although such an obvious act of embezzlement could have been grounds for criminal prosecution, Garcia decided not to pursue legal action and instead negotiated a settlement that allowed Rakow to keep the money in return for giving up all interest in Grateful Dead or Round Records. Ibid, 491.

Dead's brief European tour that fall, Garcia, in response to questions about the independence that the group's record company allowed, pointed out that for them to be completely independent would require them "to manufacture the records, and … actually creat[e] the vinyl." Not only did he think this was an "outrageous" idea but, he insisted, "records are such an ecological disaster … It's time somebody considered other ways of storing music that don't involve the use of polyvinyl chloride."[20]

The environmental impact of vinyl records was not his only concern, however; he also disliked the work that went into making them. "Socially speaking, the actual process of record pressing is as close to slave labor as you're ever likely to get. Totally mindless. People stand at these presses, with hot steaming vinyl squeezing out of tubes — it's really uncomfortable." Having visited a record making plant recently, he asked himself if he really wanted "to be putting these people through this?" to which he immediately answered, "I really don't. There must be another way. It's hard to believe that we haven't progressed beyond the old Edison cylinder. Needle in a groove. It's pretty crude, really."[21]

Garcia also disliked the dynamic limitations of vinyl records. He justified the lack of energy the Dead put "into developing as a recording unit" because of how records limit the expressiveness of their music. "Our dynamic range goes far beyond what can be accurately got down on vinyl," he notes. "We can play down to the level of a whisper, and we can play as loud as twenty jet planes."[22] Perhaps, then, holographic music pyramids were a plausible alternative possibility.

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[20] Steve Lake, "Rock'n'roll misfit," *Melody Maker*, September 14, 1974, 25.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid, 61.

Garcia's frustration with vinyl records extended to recorded music in general. Insofar as its then present existence did not allow for the release of the entirety of every one of the band's concerts he presciently hoped that this would be possible sometime in the near future: "As soon as they invent a means of putting out five hours of music at a time at some realistic kind of price, we'll release all of our shows." Although this hope would become possible with the advent of compact discs in the early 1980s, it would not be until 1991 that the Dead would begin to release entire performances from their vast collection of live recordings. And their first release was, interestingly, of the band's August 13, 1975 concert in which the entirety of the album *Blues for Allah* was performed live for the first and only time—a performance discussed later in this chapter.[23]

The SNACK Benefit: Kezar Stadium, San Francisco; March 23, 1975

Nearly six months before the Dead first performed publicly the *Blues for Allah* album in its entirety, however, they gave their fans, and the popular music industry more broadly, a taste of what they were working on during a benefit concert organized by popular music impresario Bill Graham. The Schools Need Athletics, Culture and Kicks (SNACK) Benefit concert was motivated by the San Francisco Board of Education's decision to balance its budget by cutting extra curricular and sports programs in junior and senior high schools.[24] "Drawing on his numerous contacts in the entertainment industry, Graham arranged a star-studded benefit concert that played to an audience of 60,000 and brough

[23] *One From the Vault* (Grateful Dead Records).
[24] "Legal adviser LeRoy Cannon told the board that the state constitution requires the district to balance its 1974-75 budget, which means trimming $4,000,000 this spring. 'The only recourse the board has is to cut out every program that is not mandated by law. Athletic programs are good but they are not mandatory,' he said." "San Francisco Halts Scholastic Sports," *Newsday* (Feb. 6, 1975), 13.

[sic] in $300,000."[25] The scheduled line-up of performers was largely a who's who of Bay Area-associated popular music groups: Graham Central Station, the Doobie Brothers, Mimi Farina, Jefferson Starship, The Miracles (the one obviously non-Bay Area group), Tower of Power, Santana, and Joan Baez along with a finale featuring members of the Band backing up Neil Young along with a surprise appearance by Bob Dylan.[26] There were also guest appearances by a number of non-musical celebrities including Marlon Brando, Willie Mays, and Bob Hope.

Due to noise complaints following the 1973 Graham-promoted Led Zeppelin concert at Kezar, the San Francisco city council had passed an ordinance effectively prohibiting further concerts at the stadium. But because of the exceptional nature of the SNACK Benefit, Graham was able to convince the council to allow him a one-time exemption.[27] Only a few days before the concert, however, its *raison d'être* was found to be spurious "when the San Francisco Board of Education discovered an 'extra' $2.1 million in one of its accounts."[28] But with all tickets sold the concert went ahead as

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[25] Martin Koughan, "More Than a Matter of Athletics," *Washington Post* (March 31, 1975), B2.

[26] Music historian Correy Arnold points out the importance of the concert's generic diversity given that it was a benefit meant to help the diverse San Francisco school district. "In the context of the benefit, it was important that acts with a largely African-American fan base, namely Graham Central Station, Tower Of Power and The Miracles, were a part of the SNACK show. If only white hippie rock acts had played the show, it would have struck a wrong note." And though Santana was popular with and had strong associations with the world of rock music, they "would have 'counted' for a Hispanic act…in the perception of the time." "March 23, 1975: Kezar Stadium, San Francisco, CA: The SNACK Concert with Jerry Garcia And Friends (FM VIII)," *Lost Live Dead* (October 4, 2012), http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2012/10/march-23-1975-kezar-stadium-san.html. The Miracles and Mimi Farina did not in the end perform at the concert.

[27] "When Graham proposed the SNACK concert … he needed a San Francisco site, so he persuaded the powers-that-be to make an exception to the rule and allow the concert to be held at Kezar. Graham was great at working the press, so the Mayor and the City Council had little choice, but the neighborhood would have been very much against the event, and it had to have been a tricky political situation. Once it turned out that the entire basis for SNACK was an accounting error, no political good will would be coming back to the City, so the chances of there ever being another major rock event at Kezar approached zero. SNACK was the last rock event at Kezar Stadium." Ibid.

[28] Robert Hilburn, "$200,000—Who Needs It?" *Los Angeles Times* (March 25, 1975), F8.

planned with Graham announcing that the money raised would go to other charity organizations.[29]

From all accounts the music performed was largely what one would expect from the various performers, and the concert as a whole was deemed an overwhelming success as two newspaper headlines make clear: "SNACK considered Kezar's finest hour," and "Galaxy of stars stuns crowd jam-packed into Kezar Stadium."[30] For most critics, the concert's wide array of musical groups sharing the same stage, along with the coming together of their differing audiences to sell out the stadium's capacity was a remarkable, perhaps unprecedented feat.

Undoubtedly the strangest performance of the day was by a group with obvious Bay Area connections though not under their usual name, the Grateful Dead. Using the previously unheard moniker of Jerry Garcia & Friends, the band's usual members, plus ex-second drummer Mickey Hart, were joined by Merl Saunders on Hammond B-3 organ

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[29] "'What if someone in your block has a serious accident and you decide to throw a party to help cover the tremendous medical costs, then on the night before the party the doctor rushes into the planning center and says the patient has suddenly recovered. You don't feel bad. You feel good for him. You have the party and use the money for something else.' In the same way, we knew there were still lots of causes needing money." Ibid.

[30] Philip Elwood, "SNACK considered Kezar's finest hour," *San Francisco Examiner* (March 24, 1975). Dan Roach, "Galaxy of stars stuns crowd jam-packed into Kezar Stadium," *Palo Alto Times* (March 24, 1975). (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, Clipping Files, March 1975). See also Ralph J. Gleason, "These Artists are a Part of S.F.," *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle* (April 13, 1975), 22. "In the wake of the extraordinary impact of the SNACK concert last month a number of rather amazing things have been said or wondered about aloud … The success of the Kezar concert brings up the question of popular art, too … None of the so-called high-arts (are they really high?) could have individually or collectively done such a job. Perhaps the school system might reciprocate by including serious discussion of popular music, rock and jazz in their curriculum as well as encouraging it in the classroom … The whole rock scene flowered in San Francisco because of the special nature of this city, its institutions and its people." Gleason died less than two months later on June 3, 1975 so this is undoubtedly one of if not the last pieces of music criticism he wrote. That it uses, and takes as self-evident, the success of the SNACK concert in order to argue for the significance of the San Francisco popular music scene to the city's cultural milieu is a fitting valediction from one whose career as music critic is largely defined by arguments for taking seriously the cultural importance of popular music.

and Ned Lagin on electric piano along with regular keyboardist Keith Godchaux.[31] Grateful Dead concerts at the time normally consisted of two sets making up around three hours of playing time. With no more than 40 minutes allotted them, however, a different approach was needed. Their usual practice of gradually moving from shorter, discrete songs to extended improvisational explorations would not be possible. Instead, they performed a 32-minute long, never-before-heard-publicly instrumental mixing extreme chromaticism, Varèse-textured structural improvisation, and funk-fusion in 7/8 meter, with an R&B, gospel-like ending. At its conclusion, and in response to a standing ovation from the audience, they encored with a high-powered cover of Chuck Berry's rock & roll standard "Johnny B. Goode."[32] There are few instances that can match this performance's incongruous, side-by-side presentation of musical styles so disparate in their genre associations.

Leading up to the concert there had been a great deal of speculation as to who would be performing with Garcia. Rumors that it would in fact be the Grateful Dead were rife and believed by some.[33] Others assumed that it would merely be Garcia with Merl Saunders (along with a bassist, drummer, and possibly horn player), whom Garcia had been regularly performing with since the Dead's "retirement" began six months before.[34] In a way, both speculations were partially correct given the ensemble's three-keyboard

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[31] Immediately before "Jerry Garcia & Friends" began their set, after announcing the ensemble's line-up (though forgetting to mention Lagin), Graham refers to them, much to the obvious delight of the audience, as "the Grateful Dead and their Friends." See "Intro By Bill Graham," *Grateful Dead Live at Kezar Stadium on 1975-03-23* (https://archive.org/details/gd1975-03-23.sbd.snack.18525.flac16).

[32] "You've got everybody on the entire football field standing up." Radio announcer, "Crowd & DJ Talk," https://archive.org/details/gd1975-03-23.126296.fm.kafer-boswell-smith.flac24.

[33] "We spent the night at the gates of Kezar, which were to open at 7 or 8 am. All I remember in the crowd with us was Deadheads, hoping the rumors of the entire band playing were true." Gary Reaves, email correspondence.

[34] "Up until SNACK, there had never been a show billed as Jerry Garcia And Friends, so everyone made the logical assumption that this was just another name for Garcia/Saunders, perhaps with an extra guest of some kind." Arnold, "March 23, 1975," http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2012/10/march-23-1975-kezar-stadium-san.html.

line-up along with the usual Dead members (except for vocalist Donna Jean Godchaux) plus second drummer Mickey Hart.[35] It was a unique synthesis of Garcia's electric guitar-playing genre proclivities. Saunders represented the R&B, gospel and funk side of Garcia's musical personality, Godchaux, the country and rock & roll, and Lagin the modern jazz, and electronic music.[36] Never again would Garcia, with or without the other members of the Grateful Dead, so overtly bring his various musical personalities together in this way.

Despite the uniqueness of the ensemble's personnel, and the vast majority of what they played, however, at least some of those who tuned in to the concert's FM radio broadcast after Graham's introduction could "hear the distinct sound of the Grateful Dead playing some very strange music though nothing I remotely recognized, nor anything that sounded like any previous Dead recording."[37] One reviewer referred to the music prior to the "Johnny B. Goode" encore as "spontaneous, space rock."[38] Another thought that they "seemed a bit out of focus when they began with experimental sounds more like Sun Ra than Chuck Berry," but "they gradually rounded the musical corner and ended in a blaze of glory."[39] One audience member recalls, "The fact they came out and played

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[35] The obvious predecessor of a band with three keyboard players is Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* ensemble featuring Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Joe Zawinul. Lagin, in response to my question whether he had ever discussed Davis' electric, jazz-fusion music with Garcia and Lesh, replied, "The idea that you'd have two Fender Rhodes players on stage; it's just like Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock or Keith Jarrett … [on] *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*." Lagin interview, November 11, 2014.

[36] Discussing Garcia's later descent into heroin addiction, Lagin explained, "Garcia wanted to play in three different groups, four different groups, including my group. He wanted to do other things. Quite honestly Garcia wanted to be Garcia not the Grateful Dead but Garcia. He had become an icon." Interview, September 27, 2013.

[37] Arnold, "March 23, 1975," http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2012/10/march-23-1975-kezar-stadium-san.html.

[38] Roach, "Galaxy of stars."

[39] Philip Elwood, "The meaning was music…" *San Fransisco Examiner* (March 26, 1975). (GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, Clipping Files, March 1975). Elwood also remarked on the ensemble's make-up that "would have been impossible a few years ago – two pianos (electric/acoustic) and Hammond organ, plus two full drum sets and electric bass. The stage amplification of the late 1960s couldn't have handled that sort of

unrecognizable music was shocking, and to some it may not have been recognizable as music at all." He and his friends, in contrast, "were instantly drawn in; looking away from the stage only occasionally to look at each other with looks that had to say 'Can you believe this?'" But such expressions of incredulity belied a deeper understanding of it in relation to the Dead's musical trajectory. "The fact is, we could believe it, because it was a continuation of the direction they had been heading already." He wondered if perhaps, "they were bored with old time rock and roll and [instead] inventing something new." But "as the performance morphed into something more recognizable as similar to 'The Eleven'—I think we nicknamed it 'The Seven'—I think the crowd got more into it, moving from total shock and awe to dancing and boogie." The "Johnnie B. Goode" encore was, he thought, possibly "just to reassure us they were still the same band," i.e. the Grateful Dead. Still, "had their next album been all space, like Ned Lagin's *Seastones*, I would not have been shocked."[40]

One audience member concurs in connecting this performance to earlier music by the Dead, specifically that during the band's five retirement shows in October of 1974. "The music was quite different from that Thursday night culled from the bowels of

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sound." There was, however, no acoustic piano used. Lagin and Godchaux both played electric piano as the audio recording and pictures clearly demonstrate.

[40] Gary Reaves, email correspondence. Music historian Corry Arnold argues, "The Dead's appearance couldn't have happened if the Dead had not been independent of any record company. It would be incomprehensible to a record company like Warners or Columbia that one of their bands would appear on an FM broadcast at a major regional concert without using their own name—RCA, for example, would have flipped out if Jefferson Starship had been billed as 'Paul Kantner And Friends.' What would be the point of playing a largely unpaid gig otherwise? As for the music itself, well, no record company would have really wanted the Dead to be working on 'Blues For Allah' when they were hoping for the next 'Uncle John's Band.'" In addition, "record companies were frantically concerned with artist's new material being made available outside of official channels. Of course, the actual dollars and cents involved were miniscule, but the record companies were very alert to the threat of disintermediation, and managed to throttle the bootleg industry until the rise of Napster in the early 20th century. Rule #1, according to the record companies own agendas, was never to let anything new out before it could receive the full corporate marketing treatment, with accompanying profits." Corry Arnold, "March 23, 1975: Kezar Stadium, San Francisco, CA: The SNACK Concert with Jerry Garcia And Friends (FM VIII)," *Love Live Dead* (Oct. 4, 2012), http://lostlivedead.blogspot.ca/2012/10/march-23-1975-kezar-stadium-san.html.

Winterland, but it was that same conversation and lives were changing all around us."[41] Another notes the importance of the unfamiliarity of the material and how that colored his reception of it. "We had never heard Blues for Allah before [so] when they launched into it, to me it sounded angry, discordant, like they're playing all their songs at the same time."[42]

These first-person accounts are valuable in understanding the context of this musical performance. For those not familiar with the Dead's more adventurous music, it would have likely been largely incomprehensible, at least at first. But for some of their fans, who had been weaned on years of experience with the band's more experimental repertoire, though the music was unfamiliar, it was not unexpected or unwelcome. In the words of one, "For me, space [i.e. the band's most free, experimental music] was what made me a Deadhead in the first place. I will always remember my first show, with a 'Dark Star>Morning Dew' and the moment that changed my musical life. So I was more primed."[43] The dual-nature of their audience, then, was surely something of which the performers were well aware. Because it was a benefit concert, i.e. one in which they were not being paid, they were also likely divided as to how they should approach the performance. One obvious choice, followed by most of the other day's performers, would have been to fill up their allotted 40 minutes with their most popular songs: e.g. "Casey Jones," "Sugar Magnolia," and "Truckin'." The other possibility, given that they were playing for free, would be to have used the freedom from any sense of commercial transaction to play something unexpected. Their performance was, in fact, a canny threading of these opposing aesthetic choices.

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[41] Steve Benavidez, email correspondence.
[42] Jim Wasserman, email correspondence.
[43] Gary Reaves, email correspondence.

"Blues for Allah" Version One

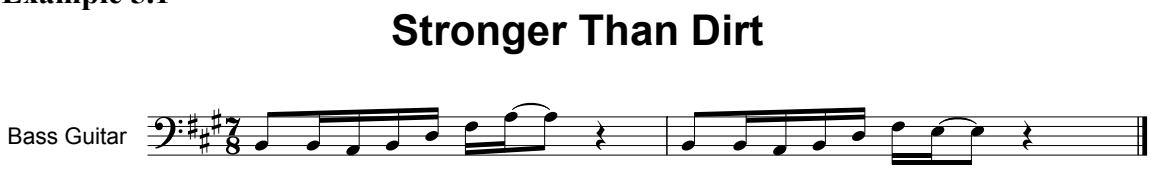
All of the various recordings available of the "Jerry Garcia & Friends" performance divide it into six tracks, and for good reason since they reflect clear musical divisions even within the continuous, segue-connected first five. These are:

1. Blues for Allah
2. Stronger Than Dirt
3. Drums
4. Stronger Than Dirt
5. Blues for Allah
6. Johnny B. Goode

The compositional specifics of the two parts of "Blues for Allah" will be explored later in this chapter when discussing its studio-recorded version. Notably this version lacks the intro of the later one; instead, all the pitched instruments begin on a low E (0:00-0:14) followed by the "Blues for Allah" main theme (see figure 6, p. 344). Beginning on F, the vague tonic of the piece, the theme then moves through all the notes of the chromatic scale before ending a half-step below on E. After some repetitions, a structured, atonal, improvisation (again, the details of which will be discussed later in this chapter) makes up the rest of the first "Blues for Allah" section. In this instance, the ensemble begins at a relatively low dynamic level, then builds up to a climax (7:30-7:35) featuring all the pitched instruments in high-pitched, rapid note frenzy. From 7:40 to around 8:50 the ensemble slowly coalesces around B minor afterwhich the bass begins to intimate the 7/8

ostinato that most prominently defines the next section, “Stronger Than Dirt” (see example 5.1).[44]

Example 5.1



Though “Stronger Than Dirt” is largely a collective improvisation in B Dorian and 7/8 meter, the ensemble shifts to A Mixolydian at its 6:12 mark for four measures, then to E Mixolydian for two measures (6:21) before moving back to B Dorian (6:25) for the transition into “Drums,” a percussion duet featuring drummers Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart. At its end, the entire ensemble returns with a nearly 10-minute reprise of “Stronger Than Dirt” that features the same modal shifts to A and E Mixolydian as the pre-“Drums” iteration before seguing into the closing, 3/4 section of “Blues for Allah.” Unlike its later studio-recorded version this version lacks lyrics but does feature wordless vocalese (“Do, do, do, do—, do do) in the penultimate minute before the ensemble’s *tutti* fortissimo harmonic resolution to F.

The subsequent “Johnny B. Goode” encore could hardly differ more from what had come before. Composed and recorded first by Chuck Berry, and released by Chess Records in 1958, it is a classic of early rock & roll and has been covered countless times in subsequent decades. Learning its distinctive opening guitar solo is practically de rigueur for young rock guitar players as a sign of their stylistic competence.[45] By 1975,

[44] The phrase “Stronger Than Dirt” comes from advertisements for the laundry detergent Ajax, which, in their radio and TV forms in the 1960s, used music that featured a four eighth note figure—C, C, Bb, C—also used, though in transposed form, in the studio-recorded “King Solomon’s Marbles-Stronger Than Dirt” piece on *Blues for Allah*. See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFZK5VkQes4.
[45] The introductory guitar solo of “Johnny B. Goode” is a largely note-for-note transcription of the introduction to the 1946 Louis Jordan song “Ain’t That a Woman (They’ll Do It Every Time).

however, it had clear conservative associations as an invocation of 1950s' rock & roll in marked contrast to the progressive, forward-looking aspirations of many contemporaneous rock musicians. The Grateful Dead had a long history with the song having performed it in their early years of 1965-66, bringing it back to their repertoire in 1971, and releasing it on the group's live album of that year, *Grateful Dead*. Fans of the group in the audience would have undoubtedly been well aware of the group's connection to the song and understood its performance as one of those quoted above did: a sign that despite the strange unknown music they had just performed, it was in fact still the Grateful Dead on stage. For those not familiar with the band's music, in contrast, hearing a song so loaded with associations to the 1950s after the previous 30 minutes of challenging unfamiliarity must have seemed a bizarre non-sequitur as well as possibly a welcome relief.

In press accounts of the SNACK concert the oddities of this performance largely faded in importance in light of Bill Graham's surprise concluding coup: the surprise appearance of Bob Dylan performing with Neil Young and members of The Band. Other than performing at another benefit concert in San Francisco on June 17, members of the Grateful Dead would remain largely out of the public eye until the publicity surrounding the release of their next album, *Blues for Allah* later that year.

Critical Reception of Blues for Allah

When Grateful Dead Records (with United Artists as distributor) released *Blues for Allah* on September 1, 1975 it received a significant amount of media attention at least partly because of the previous uncertainty whether the band would ever be heard from again

given their well-publicized "retirement" in the fall of 1974.[46] But opinion was sharply divided on the album's merits, largely because of the more challenging material on its second side. Some reacted positively to the conspicuous experimentalism, others, not so much. But rather than understanding its less than positive reviews as wholly negative, as some might assume, on account of the Dead's position within the music industry at the time uniformly positive reviews might well have *hurt* the group's reputation among its core audience. As a rock group closely associated with musical experimentalism, their reputation at the time depended upon keeping some distance from the world of overtly popular music. A diversity of critical viewpoints—good, bad, and somewhere in between—helped them achieve such a position in a way that overwhelmingly positive reviews, especially those from more mainstream publications, would have undoubtedly threatened. Such critical ambivalence was reflected in a number of the album's reviews.

Reviewing its complete live performance at the Great American Music Hall on August 13, 1975, for example, San Francisco-based rock critic Joel Selvin noted that the album's title track "may fulfill the promise of the Dead as a vehicle for truly experimental electronic music. Not melodic in any conventional sense, the piece meanders through associated tones and passages that weave and connect with a logic of its own. It is a demanding and complex, but satisfying work that will test the mettle of even the least boogie-minded Dead freak."[47] Another critic, Joe Edwards, also found the piece worthwhile, though calling it, understandably, "the strangest song on the album." Noting

[46] Such media attention was undoubtedly also motivated by Grateful Dead Records and United Artists in order to promote sales of the record. There are, however, some unusual presences and absences in record industry publications from the time related to *Blues for Allah*. In the August 16, 1975 edition of *Billboard*, the centerpiece of the album's front cover art—a sun glasses-wearing, longhaired skeleton playing a violin—appears without a title or explanation on p. 12. In the same issue (p. 69), there is an article discussing various upcoming record releases of United Artists; *Blues for Allah* is, however, not mentioned.
[47] "'Grateful Dead' And Live Crickets," *The San Francisco Chronicle & Examiner*, Sunday Datebook, August 24, 1975.

that the song's lyrics appeared on the jacket of the record in four languages—English, Hebrew, Arabic and Persian—he wrote that it is "Lyrically, melodically and musically awash in Eastern influences." But despite these overt characteristics, he thought, "the song vacillates between more abstract jazz and old-style Grateful Dead psychedlia [sic]."[48]

Reviewer Jim Linck concurred, believing the album "a marked departure from the country-rock-boogie that has prevailed since the band was born in San Francisco … Fans of the Dead may [therefore] find this latest album confusing, disturbing and ungrateful." But despite its differences from their earlier music he thought it "an excellent album … if there can be a detachment from pre-conditioned ideas of how the Grateful Dead should sound." Discussing the title track in particular, he connects it more to 20th century high art music than contemporary rock music: it "is more mindful of the compositions of Stockhausen or Bartok than the Dead's free wheeling style in old numbers like 'Truckin', 'Brown-Eyed Woman,' or 'Ramblin' Rose." "It is here," he believed, "where the nearly 180 degrees of style change is most evident. There is a laid-back feeling of slow moving, intricate interchanges of moody, ponderious [sic] vocals and space music instrumental interludes, a premise pioneered by such European bands as Amon Duul 11 and Tangerine Dream." But despite its seemingly "un American" character, "it is nevertheless exceptional in concept and execution."[49]

Another reviewer of the album wrote that its first side "is everything we have come to expect and enjoy from the Grateful Dead." Its songs "tell us a lot about the

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[48] "On The Starship, The Dead And What It Is To Be A Fan," *The Aquarian*, September 10-24, 1975 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box 9).
[49] "Grateful Dead give Allah the 'Blues,'" *Burbank Daily Review*, September 5, 1975 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box 9).

growing process of the Dead, about their continuing tendency to lay back and their willingness to borrow other folks' ideas and make them uniquely their own. A taste of funk here, a spot of country there, all held together and made to shine by the magic of guitarist Jerry Garcia." The second side, in contrast, "is STRANGE." The title track in particular "is completely different from anything of their music I have heard. For that reason it deserves a bit of examination." Obviously having some degree of formal musical knowledge, the reviewer argues, "It seems to be based on (Get this!) a drone-like Gregorian chant which dissolves into a space-blues. The harmonies move around, but are spaced over the interval of a fifth, creating an effect that sounds like two parallel melodies seeking a meeting point." Concluding, he again notes the album's balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar as "a healthy attitude on the part of the band: It offers a side their fans can relate to and enjoy and a side to force those same fans to expand their ideas of what the Dead are all about."[50]

Another reviewer, in contrast, was highly complimentary about most of the album but found little redeeming quality in the title track, which he thought "bogs down the final quarter of the album in a self-indulgent, pretentious mire which it barely escapes halfway through." Though finding its concept interesting and lyrics thought-provoking, he wrote that "the good idea is ruined by a totally contrived, very hoky-sounding … pseudo-Egyptian chant in which the song is sung." And although a "free-form instrumental break in the middle … saves the number from total disaster … it is soon replaced by a pseudo-Moody Blues falsetto chorus."[51]

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[50] "Grateful Dead' 'Allah' a Two-Faced Album," *Denver Post*, September 14, 1975 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box 9).
[51] "Records," *Hartford Valley Advocate*, September 17, 1975 (GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box 9).

In *Rolling Stone*, Billy Altman was similarly divided on the album's merits stating that it "contains quite a few surprises, some pleasant (Mickey Hart's reappearance; most of side one) and some embarrassing (most of side two)." But clearly preferring it to the band's albums of the previous few years he thought it at least reveals, "[that] the Grateful Dead have begun to awaken from the artistic coma they've been in since 1971." Taking account of the well publicized problems the band was having with their own record company that had forced them to sign over their distribution rights to United Artists, he connects their "record company fantasies biting the dust" to a change in their music, having "also abandoned their tired old philosophical stetsons and Old West daydreams in search of new frontiers." And though he could not be "totally convinced" of the success of such changes, he still thought it was "a good try."[52] He liked the album's first side, "with the exception of the … ill-placed and tedious 'The Music Never Stopped.'"[53] But though appreciating the shift of geographical focus in the title track "from the Western Plains to the Sahara," Altman was far less appreciative of the second side: in contrast to the first, it was, he thought, "a total washout" with little if any redeeming qualities.

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[52] Available at http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/blues-for-allah-19751009. Altman's dismissal of "stetsons and Old West daydreams" is arguably a reflection of the change in critical discourse from the early to the mid-1970s pertaining to the influence of country music on rock. Country-flavored rock was highly commercially and critically successful in the early 1970s with such albums as Neil Young's *Harvest*, the Dead's own *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, and such groups as The Band, The Flying Burrito Brothers, The Eagles, and Poco releasing commercially successful and influential work. By 1975, however, it had lost much of its critical gloss, and many musicians formerly associated with country-rock had significantly changed their musical direction. Perhaps the most notable example of such change in musical direction is the Eagles who, also in 1975, released their fourth studio album *One of These Nights*. It was the band's commercial breakthrough, hitting #1 on the Billboard charts and winning the Grammy Award for Album of the Year. It was also the last album by the band to feature founding member Bernie Leadon who left because of the band's movement away from his favored country influences.

[53] In a following parenthetical comment about "The Music Never Stopped," Altman calls it "yet another 'Playing in the Band' variation." But though both songs are self-referential—about musicians playing music—their musical settings are quite different.

In an extended, balanced essay on the Dead and *Blues for Allah*, a perceptive critic named Tim Korzun connects the album to the band's musical history and earlier critical reception. He argues that critics had tended to give the group's efforts either "an unqualified rave and lots of star worship, or furiously condemn it as sadistically as possibly, saying it doesn't 'measure up' or something like that." In either case, "nothing is said," and this is to be expected since "Lots of people settle for nothing." In contrast, if a group is deserving of significant attention then "one can take the most difficult but by far the most illuminating method — quietly and dispassionately looking at said recording as another installment in what might be called a cultural document," which was the intention behind his review.[54]

Before getting into the specifics of the album, Korzun discusses the band's history and idiosyncratic musical style. He notes, "one thing just about everyone agrees on is that the basic Dead sound is a well-mixed combination of rock, jazz and country." There is, however, a "fourth element": "their dabbling in electronics and tape effects," which the reviewer considers the most fascinating aspect of their music. Particularly notable about such a musical mixture is that it "is much more cohesive than most would be inclined to think," pointing to "the remarkable interplay between the group members." He quotes bassist Phil Lesh about such interplay: "We orbit around a common center that is impossible to define … Many groups strive for this ideal, and some in their own ways have reached it, but it was never so important as it has been to the Dead." There is more than a hint of hyperbole here, but the reviewer clearly thinks Lesh is right. "They have the various elements of their sound mixed together so well that they can let one or more

[54] Tim Korzun, "Grateful Dead, *Blues for Allah*, UA Records GD-LA494-G," *The Daily Targum* (September 1975; GDA, MS 332, ser. 4, box 9).

of the elements predominate **at will**."[55] But even when taken to their extremes in "even their most esoteric material," he thinks, "they still retain at least a remnant of their touch in the product."[56] The group's stylistic diversity is, then, constitutive of their musical practice.

Having sufficiently set up the background for his album review, the reviewer notes the significant amount of instrumentals on *Blues for Allah* and that "they even threw in some atonal work … which has been missing from their group efforts from [sic] some time now." But though he "was pleased to hear more of the jazzier side of the Dead" on the album, and admires the experimental ethos made evident in its title track ("the music of which is loosely based on North African chanting"), he thought "it's too repetitive and builds too slowly – in short, too simple." Though the Dead are "a very good and influential" band, they "are capable of mistakes, as well as experiments which don't always work," of which he thinks the title track is a "not-quite successful" example.[57]

Despite his criticism, however, he thought "one must credit them for being innovators, adapting and experimenting with both native and European forms and concocting a most likable product." In contrast to European musicians who "are building a new road," he thinks that the Dead are doing something different but equally necessary: "looking behind the ignored, discarded stones of the old one … finding ideas just as important and valid as those the Europeans uncover." Such processes of musical excavation explain, and help justify the Dead's musical diversity. They are also the

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[55] Boldface in original. From the same period, among American rock groups only the Allman Brothers Band is comparable to the Grateful Dead in terms of its members' dependence on improvisation, although they did not have the same degree of stylistic eclecticism.
[56] Korzun, "Grateful Dead, *Blues for Allah*."
[57] Ibid.

reason why the reviewer thinks they are "that rare class of artist which transcends labels." Though he thinks the album is "no turning point," and would be a "resounding failure … if viewed as such," it is more accurately "viewed as another installment in a cultural document by a unique group." Rather than dramatic shifts in sound and style, "The Dead are a gradual band; they develop gradually; they grow on you gradually, and sometimes it takes a while to see the pattern."[58]

Compared to the significant press attention *Blues for Allah* received upon its release, subsequent scholarly appraisals have been muted at best. About the title track, Eric Levy has argued that its "Under Eternity" refrain reveals the influence of minimalism on the band.[59] Michael Kaler briefly discusses the experimental form of structured improvisation that its second part, "Sand Castles and Glass Camels," features as a reflection of the group's desire after their October '74 "retirement" to explore "new improvisational possibilities."[60] But despite the relative uniqueness of "Blues for Allah" within the genre expectations of popular music, these two brief references are the entirety

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[58] Ibid. The reviewer's contrasting of the Dead with contemporaneous European musicians is illuminating in arguing for the legitimacy of an alternative to the modernist insistence on artistic originality. There is something here reminiscent of Theodor Adorno's comments on the music of Kurt Weill. Despite Adorno's usual dislike of music that makes use of popular elements he argues that Weill's work is something of an exception. Although it "avails itself partly of the style of expression of nineteenth-century bourgeois music culture and partly of present-day consumer music," it does so as "a montage-style … [that] juxtaposes and cements ruins and fragments up against one another through the addition of 'wrong notes'." Translated and quoted in Max Paddison, *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture: Essays on Critical Theory and Music* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1996), 108, 122. While Adorno would have likely found little to appreciate, and much to criticize, about the music of the Grateful Dead, there are, as Korzun suggests in his review, suggestive parallels between what Adorno finds admirable in Weill's music, and characteristics of the Dead's music, especially on *Blues for Allah*.[58] As I later show in discussing the finished form of the piece "Blues for Allah," the role that Adorno gives here to the use of "wrong notes," i.e. what is stylistically unexpected, in combining but simultaneously subverting the formal and stylistic expectations of a montage-like use of musical material, is quite applicable. Although the context is certainly different there are still interesting parallels between Adorno's interpretation of Weill and the music of the Grateful Dead in the mid-1970s.

[59] "'The Sound of Thick Air': The Grateful Dead as Experimental Composers," in *Studying the Dead: The Grateful Dead Scholars Caucus, An Informal History* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 41.

[60] "Ensemble Stuff," 3.

that I have been able to find by scholars about its music. The piece is therefore ripe for such attention.

Origins of the title "Blues for Allah"

Why would a group known mostly for its associations with 1960s' LSD culture, and then the country-rock genre of the early 1970s, turn, in 1975, to evocations of the Middle East—even going so far as to invoke the Islamic name for God in the song's title and lyrics? Uncharacteristically, given his noted reluctance to explain the meanings of his songs, its lyricist, Robert Hunter, has explained their origin: "This lyric is a requiem for King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, a progressive and democratically inclined ruler (and, incidentally, a fan of the Grateful Dead) whose assassination in 1975 shocked us personally."[61] Although I have been unable to find any supporting evidence that Faisal was a fan of the Dead, he was a relatively progressive king even if the extant of his democratic leanings are questionable.[62] But there is at least some contemporaneous documentary evidence for the connection of this music to Faisal. On account of the turmoil in the Middle East they had been considering naming it after Faisal because of their sense that he was perhaps "more of a humanist than any of his predecessors," even

[61] Hunter, *Box of Rain*. In a 1991 interview Garcia provides further details of how the connection of "Blues for Allah" to Faisal came to be, though none of the details support Hunter's claims about Faisal's supposed democratic credentials or Grateful Dead fandom. "We were talking about King Faisal … in the studio, 'cause an article came up about him in *Newsweek* or something. And I remember being blown away when it said that Faisal owned a third of the world's wealth or something like that. One guy?" Blair Jackson, "Hunter/Garcia; Words/Music: An Interview About Songwriting and Inspiration," *Goin' Down the Road: A Grateful Dead Travelling Companion* (New York: Harmony Books, 1992), 230.

[62] During Faisal's reign, "the top echelons of the government were tied very closely to the monarch. The scope for even senior ministers to take important political and economic decisions was nil and sometimes even trivial issues would end up in front of the king." Michael Field, ed, *Middle East Annual Review: 1978*, 327.

though he was "'trapped by history, by religion,' by fate."[63] But Faisal's assassination on March 25 "changed things, and the album title [and title track] became *Blues for Allah*."[64]

1. Arabian wind/The needle's eye is thin
   The ships of state sail on mirage/And drown in sand.
2. Out in no-man's land/Where Allah does command.
   What good is spilling blood?/It will not grow a thing
   Taste eternity the swords sing: Blues for Allah In 'sh'Allah.
3. They lie where they fall/There's nothing more to say,
   The desert stars are bright tonight lets meet as friends,
   The Flower of Islam/The Fruit of Abraham.
   The thousand stories have come round to one again,
4. Arabian night/Our Gods pursue their fight,
   What fatal flowers of darkness bloom from seeds of light.
   Bird of paradise fly in white sky/Blues for Allah In 'sh'Allah,
5. Let's see with our heart/These things our eyes have seen,
   And know the truth must still lie somewhere in between.
   Under eternity, under eternity, under eternity blue,
   Bird of paradise fly in white sky/Blues for Allah In 'sh'Allah.

As shown above, although written as a requiem for Faisal, the lyrics to "Blues for Allah" do not refer to him explicitly (although perhaps he is the invoked "bird of paradise" in the final two stanzas), instead addressing the then contemporaneous (and unfortunately still ongoing) conflict in the Middle East. A quick interpretative gloss: in the first stanza, the failures of government, and allusion to the Jesus' saying in the Gospel of Matthew 19:24, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God"; in the second, the sterility of violence; in the

[63] Band historian Dennis McNally provides further explanation for the relation to Faisal. See his *A Long Strange Trip*, 483. Also see Herb Caen, "Follow the Bouncing Dots," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 28, 1975), 17.
[64] Ibid.

third, hope for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews; in the fourth, the weight of history and recognition of the evil that can come from good intentions; in the fifth, a plea for understanding and empathy in the face of differences. For at least one reviewer the lyrics were an integral part of the album: its musical "high … has an extra added dimension: In addition to the form of the music, the content is important. At last comes an album where the lyrics have at least as much to say as the music." And discussing those of "Blues for Allah" specifically, he remarks that it is "aimed specifically at the warring countries of the Middle East." The plausibility of such an interpretation was undoubtedly aided by translations of its lyrics in Hebrew, Arabic and Persian on the record sleeve.[65]

The early 1970s were particularly violent years in the Middle East so it is not surprising that American rock musicians would be concerned with events in the region. Most notably, the killing of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, and the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt in the fall of 1973 received global attention. And because the United States backed Israel against Egypt in the war, the very same King Faisal that the Grateful Dead memorialized in "Blues for Allah" led the OPEC oil boycott in 1973-74 against the United States and Israel's other Western allies. Along with the so-called "Nixon Shock" of 1971, when President Nixon unilaterally abnegated the Bretton-Woods Accords that had been the basis of the postwar world economic order, OPEC's flexing of its muscle was unmistakable evidence of the increasing power and influence of the so-called Third World vis-à-vis the Western industrialized powers.[66]

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[65] Given these translations an interesting is whether United Artists made any unusual efforts to promote the record in Israel, Iran or any predominantly Arabic-speaking countries.
[66] Thomas W. Zeiler, "Requiem for the Common Man: Class, the Nixon Economic Shock, and the Perils of Globalization," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013), 2-3, 6-8.

Given their worldwide effects, it is not surprising that members of the Grateful Dead would create a musical response of sorts to events in, and pertaining to, the Middle East. But doing so also served to distinguish them from their commercial competition, as well as from their own musical history. The geo-political relevance of the lyrics of "Blues for Allah" stands in sharp relief both to the Dead's earlier work, as well as contemporaneous albums by such rock groups as Pink Floyd (*Wish You Were Here*), Jefferson Starship (*Red Octopus*) and the Allman Brothers Band (*Win, Lose Or Draw*).[67] But it is the musical setting of these lyrics that perhaps most differentiates this piece from other 1970s' rock music—to the details of which we now turn.

Analysis of "Blues for Allah"

The lyrics of "Blues for Allah" ("BFA") are poetic though hardly opaque in their meaning.[68] But their musical setting is considerably more difficult to understand. Though it makes reference to popular music genres, these connections are relatively brief moments in an otherwise highly experimental sound world that, in its final form at least, deliberately subverts a wholly satisfactory ending through its unexpected structural positions and progressive, non-circular, tonality. "Blues for Allah" is, therefore, an ideal example of the influence of experimentalism and the avant-garde on popular music in the Bay Area in the 1970s.

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[67] All three of these albums were released in 1975 and were reviewed together with *Blues for Allah*. *Wish You Were Here* and *Win, Lose Or Draw* in Bruce Malamut, "Post-Altamont Rock Monism," *Crawdaddy* (December 1975), 63-64; *Red Octopus* in Joe Edwards, "On The Starship, The Dead And What It Is To Be A Fan," *The Aquarian* (Sept. 10-24, 1975), GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, September 1975.

[68] In contrast, one reviewer notes, "Robert Hunter's lyrics are pretty thoroughly opaque but it's the atmosphere that counts." Marty, "Hot Platters & Tasty Treats," unknown publication (September 1975), GDA MS 332, ser. 4, box 9, July-August 1975.

Table 5.1 compares the forms of the various versions of "Blues for Allah," revealing that rather than a single piece by that name, there are really two. First, a proto "Blues for Allah" in its first two live appearances that lack the intro, main theme reprise and lyrics, but with the "Stronger Than Dirt" jam as its central section.[69] Second, a more complete "Blues for Allah" with the intro, lyrics, main theme reprise, but without "Stronger Than Dirt," which instead becomes the core of the instrumental "King Solomon's Marbles," released on the album *Blues for Allah* but as a separate track on its first side. It this latter version that is found on the album and was performed live only once on August 13, 1975.

Formal Breakdown of BFA Versions

	Intro	Main Theme	SCAGC (Improv.)	Stronger Than Dirt	Under Eternity Refrain	M. Theme Reprise	Lyrics
3/23/75		X	X	X	X		
6/17/75		X	X	X	X		
Studio	X	X	X		X	X	X
8/13/75	X	X	X		X	X	X
10/6/81		X* (Alluded)					

Part I — Part II — "King Solomon's Marbles" — Part III

SCAGC = Sand Castles and Glass Camels

Table 5.1

As one would expect from a piece of music by a rock band in the 1970s, the popular music associations of "Blues for Allah" are at some points obvious. But on the whole, it is highly unorthodox. There is little sense of a regular meter in either its main

[69] At the end of the recording of the June 17, 1975 version of "Blues for Allah" one can faintly hear keyboardist Keith Godchaux play the first four notes of what would become the reprise of the main theme on its studio-recorded version suggesting the band had already explored this possibility. See 2:37-2:40, track 13 "Blues for Allah, https://archive.org/details/gd75-06 17.bertrando.unknown.233.sbeok.shnf.

theme or middle section that is proportionally by far the longest. And though F major is clear as the piece's tonal center in its introduction and penultimate "Under Eternity" section, the rest is either highly chromatic—using all twelve pitch classes in its main theme—or, in its middle improvisatory section, fully atonal.

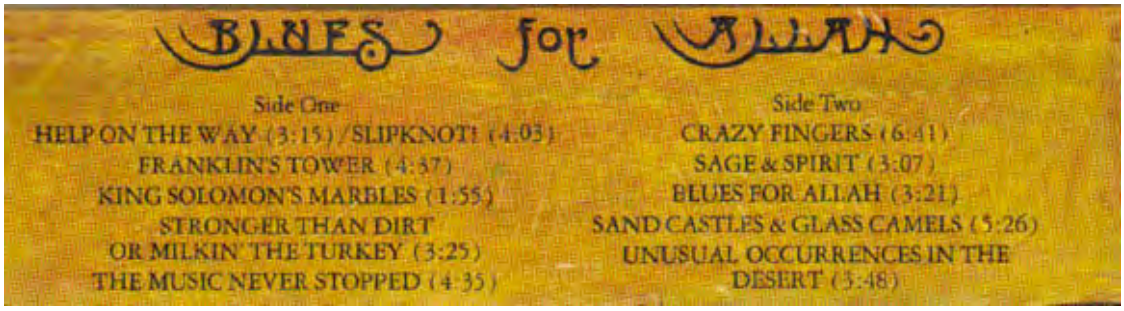


Figure 5.1

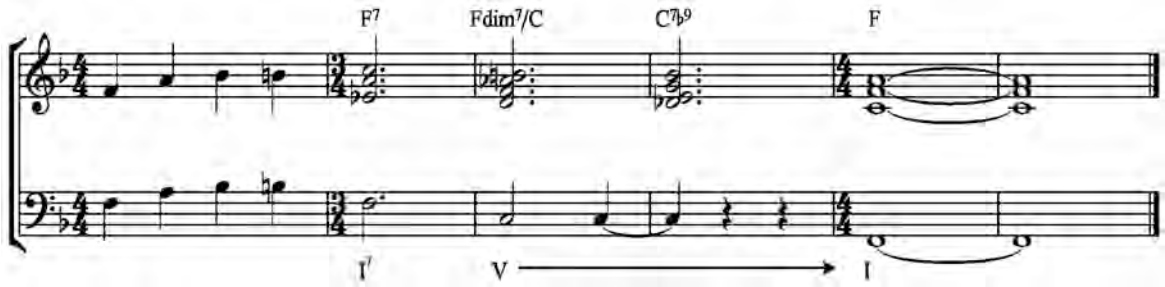
Part I: Blues for Allah

"Blues for Allah" opens with a brief introduction based around a blues-cliché ascent from F to C, harmonized by an F dominant seventh, and then descent through fully diminished sevenths, though over a dominant pedal played by the bass guitar, to resolve on F major (see example 5.2).[70] Though lasting less than 10 seconds, this beginning clearly sets up F major as the piece's tonal center though with a strongly "bluesy" modality.[71]

[70] It can be heard here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ss1_Xu7YBrM.

[71] My analysis of the introduction differs from two previously published transcriptions of "Blues for Allah," specifically the harmonic identity of the third and fourth bars. A 1976 published version has a dominant pedal tone in the bass with a G# diminished in bar three and a G diminished in bar four. Unknown transcriber, "Blues for Allah," *Grateful Dead, Vol. 2* (San Rafael, CA: Ice Nine Publishing, 1976), 86. A more recently published version labels the third as F diminished, and the fourth as Bb minor over F. Hemme Luttjeboer, transcriber, "Blues for Allah," *Garcia/Hunter Songbook: Songs of the Grateful Dead* (New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 2003), 23. Interestingly, and consistent with the group's improvisational approach, its members were not entirely consistent. In its only complete live performance, on August 13, 1975, Lesh played something slightly different. Rather than dropping from the root of the F dominant seventh chord on which he begins to the dominant, C, as on the studio recording, Lesh leaps *up* a fifth to C before sliding down to F for the fifth bar as shown in figure 6. It can be heard as track 18 here: https://archive.org/details/gd75-08-13.fm.vernon.23661.sbeok.shnf.

Example 5.2

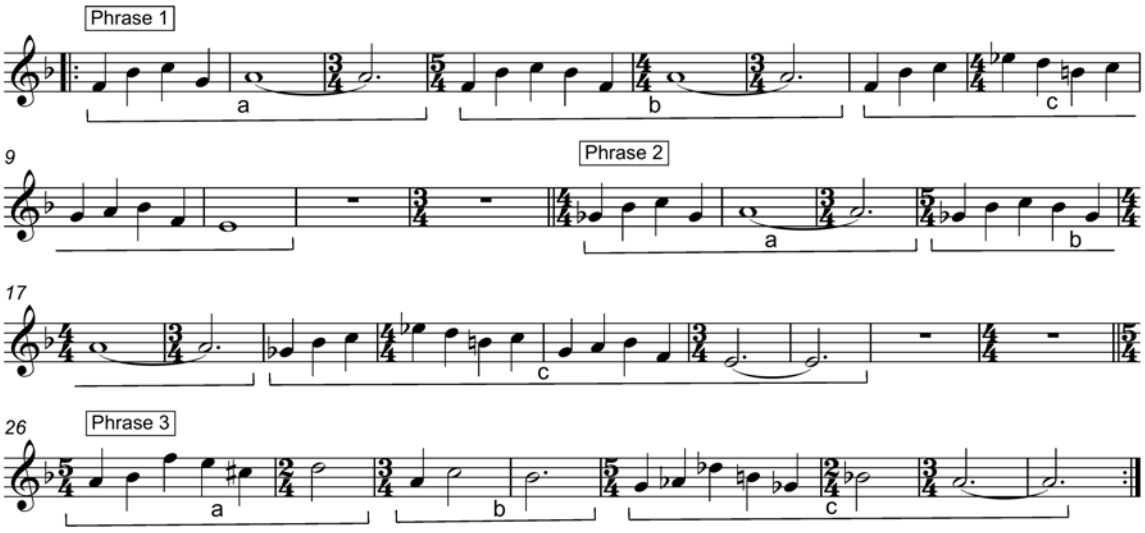


After the relative familiarity of the brief introduction a rolled cymbal leads into the entrance of the vocals with the "Blues for Allah" theme, shifting the piece into a very different sound world (see example 5.3). Immediately noticeable are the frequent changes in meter, significant number of melodic perfect 4ths, and relatively few thirds, and high degree of chromaticism. The shifts in meter suggest a deliberate attempt to frustrate metrical expectations.[72] The theme is made up of three phrases, each of which can be broken down further into three sub-phrases: a, b, and c. Although F is the overall tonic, in the second phrase, bars 13-23, this tonal hierarchy is challenged by the replacement of F by Gb in what is otherwise a repetition of the first phrase. And though there is a seeming return to F major in bars 26-27 at the beginning of the third and last phrase, as the melody outlines a 2nd inversion D minor triad with F as the section's overall highest pitch, this apparent tonal center is again subverted in bars 30-31 by angular, dissonant voice leading that again makes use of Gb, the oft-repeated B natural (though for the first time not as a secondary leading-tone of C), and the two notes of the chromatic pitch collection that have so far not been used: Ab and Db.[73]

[72] Such compositional attempts to frustrate metrical expectations evoke the possible influence of Igor Stravinsky, especially *Le Sacre de Printemps*. However, I have no information to hazard a guess as to what degree Garcia knew it prior to the composition of "Blues for Allah." His bandmate Lesh, in contrast, knew it well. See Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 26.

[73] Because of this section's high degree of chromaticism and lack of functional harmony, traditional forms of tonal harmonic analysis are of little use in understanding its construction. A pitch-class set analysis of the theme, in contrast, reveals a number of interesting characteristics. See appendix G for details.

Example 5.3[74]



Overall, this first section of "Blues for Allah" strikes a careful harmonic balance. Given the clear tonicization of F in the introduction, as well as its same status in part III of the piece (discussed later), and its use as the first note of the three sub-phrases of phrase 1, F may at first appear to also function as the tonic in this section. However, its priority is continually challenged by substitution, avoidance, and cadential resolutions on, instead, A and E. Phrase 1 and 2 share similar cadential motion: their (a) and (b) sub-phrases both end on A, whereas their (c) sub-phrases end on E.[75] And though F returns in phrase 3 as the highest note of the entire section, and the goal of its largest intervallic leap (Bb to F in bar 26), the phrase instead centers around A as both its initial note, and its conclusion following a chromatic descent, from F in bar 26 to A in bar 32.

[74] Transcribed by the author.
[75] The consequent (c) sub-phrases in Phrase 1 and 2 thus suggest a dominant function, as a quasi half-cadence, relative to the tonic function of their antecedent (a) and (b) sub-phrases.

Part II: Sand Castles and Glass Camels

The second part of "Blues for Allah," "Sand Castles and Glass Camels," is undoubtedly the most unusual part of the "Blues for Allah" suite. Made up of a not-wholly-free group improvisation, its structure, according to Jerry Garcia, was the product of a search for new approaches to group improvisation, a "way … to invent openness that would be developmental as well."[76] In one of his more explicitly music-theoretical statements, Garcia explained how it worked.

> We could either play a single note or an interval of a fifth … You could play them for as long as you wanted to, but any time you heard a four-note chord vertically—see, the bass would be playing one note, Weir would be playing one note, then me and Keith—you could move your note so you'd change the harmonic structure of that chord. Nobody could hold a note more than two bars, or less than a whole tone, so that would guarantee the harmonic shifting … It was almost a successful way to introduce the concept of almost no rules."[77]

Although apparently only "almost successful" such a process would virtually ensure atonality since the shifting of harmonies in this improvised fashion precludes the structural hierarchy of tones that tonality depends upon.[78]

Comparing the multiple versions of this section is valuable in order to hear the different ways the musicians collectively realized the structural limitations on which it is

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[76] Blair Jackson, "Garcia: Listen to the Music Play," *Goin' Down the Road: A Grateful Dead Travelling Companion* (New York: Harmony Books, 1992), 10.
[77] Ibid, 10-11.
[78] David Browne provides further details about the origins of this improvisational structure. After what was apparently almost a month of the band working in rhythm guitarist Bob Weir's recording studio trying to "invent a new sound," Garcia, on March 5, 1975, came up with the idea of beginning an improvisation by "playing in unison, either a chord or just a note … holding one note for two bars, then having two of the players shift to the third bar. The idea" according to Browne, "was to all play octaves simultaneously and musically hop around each other." David Browne, *So Many Roads*, 238.

based. We are, therefore, fortunate to have, in addition to the three live versions and one studio one, a fifth version from a studio rehearsal tape.[79] It is apparently from March 21, 1975—two days before the SNACK Benefit Concert during which "Blues for Allah" had its live debut. Although the beginning is cut off and the tape ends during the subsequent "Stronger Than Dirt" section, there is a full development of this structured improvisation.[80]

Not surprisingly, given their extemporaneous structures, these versions differ in a number of ways, particularly in terms of their overall dynamic shape: i.e. the different levels of volume and textural intensity that encompass the form. But there are also significant similarities between them. Along with the lack of any tonic is the, at best, very free sense of meter. And because of the consistent metrical ambiguity it is difficult to say how strictly they follow the injunction not to "hold a note more than two bars." But there is indeed a consistent intervallic use of octaves and fifths, perfect and diminished, between the various pitched instruments. This section of "Blues for Allah" seems to have been an opportunity for the band to explore atonal improvisation outside of the modes of the major scale that more typically provided them with their improvisational vocabulary.

Part III: Unusual Occurrences in the Desert

The third part of the "Blues for Allah" suite, "Unusual Occurrences in the Desert," is made up of the gospel-like "Under Eternity" refrain and a shortened return to the main theme that is split between vocals and Garcia's lead guitar. This reprise of the main

[79] See track 7, March 21, 1975: https://archive.org/details/gd75-03-21.sbd.backus.14288.sbeok.shnf.
[80] Notably, it does not seem to feature Merl Saunders on B-3 organ, as does the performance on March 23. The two electric pianos are almost certainly played by Ned Lagin and Keith Godchaux who were also part of the March 23 ensemble.

theme is in marked contrast to the two earlier live versions of "Blues for Allah," both of which end with a full-band crescendo at the end of the "Under Eternity" section.[81] The added coda, in contrast, is quite jarring and abrupt, leading to a considerably less expected conclusion suggesting the band (or perhaps Garcia, the piece's composer) wanted to avoid ending in a more conventional and expected way. This brief return to extreme chromaticism and subsequent abrupt ending seems intended to deny the listener the satisfaction of an expected tonal ending: rather than F, the implied key of the piece, the final melody ends a half step below on E. And on its studio-recorded version, this isn't even quite the end as following this last pitch some heavily processed voices can be heard just before the final fade-out.

The "Under Eternity" refrain marks not only the return of voices after the purely instrumental middle section, but also an altered return—a recapitulation of sorts—of the introductory materials (see example 5.2). The harmonic progression is identical, while the melody has been shifted down a major third without the upbeat but in parallel motion. This form is repeated eight times, for an odd number of nine times overall, with a dynamic build through increased instrumentation and then slight decrescendo to the end. A filter-sweeped tone then maintains the tonic F, accompanied by various percussion sounds, which then slowly morphs into the sound of wind.[82]

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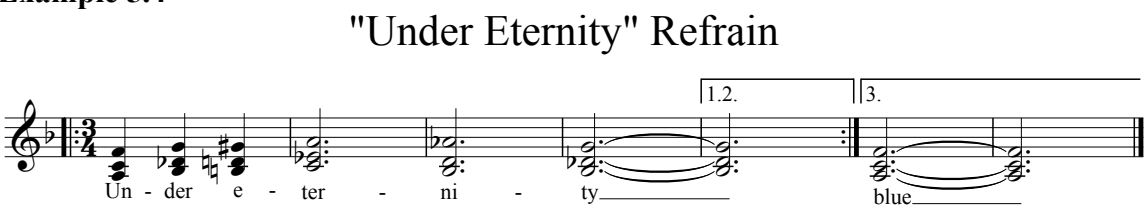
[81] See track 7, March 23, 1975: https://archive.org/details/gd1975-03-23.sbd.snack.18525.flac16; and track 12, June 17, 1975: https://archive.org/details/gd1975-06-17.aud.unknown.87560.flac16.

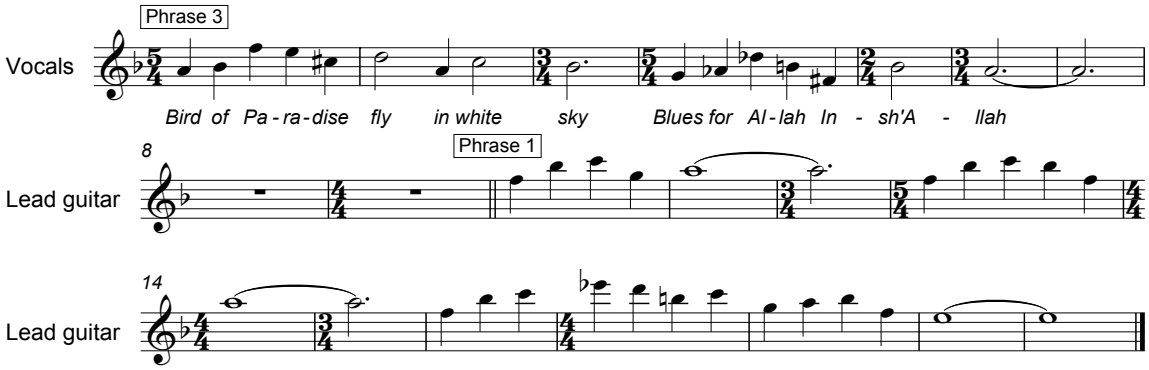
[82] This passage is a likely candidate for a section that drummer Mickey Hart called "The Desert" that, features, "all my little percussion things" gated with a vocal gate through which Garcia intoned the word "Allah." But instead of hearing his voice, one could "hear the desert saying the word in place of his voice." Blair Jackson and David Gans, *This Is All a Dream We Dreamed: An Oral History of the Grateful Dead* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2015), 242.

Example 5.4



The piece could easily have faded out from there—as it did on its two earlier live performances. But instead, after 11 seconds the vocals re-enter with the final lines of lyrics set to the third phrase of the main theme (see example 5.3). The lead guitar then takes over with the first phrase of the theme, though now transposed to the highest register of the guitar, ending, as before, on E, rather than the implied tonic of F, marking the end of the piece.

Example 5.5



Formal Structure

Overall, the second, final version of "Blues for Allah" has the unusual form of $ABCA^1B^1$ rather than the more expected palindromic ABCBA. Ending the piece with the "Under Eternity" section, as happens on the two earlier live versions, is a more obvious compositional choice given the formal symmetry and clear tonal resolution through the return to the piece's opening tonal schema. The subsequent reprise of two phrases from the main theme, in contrast, disrupts the piece's overall tonal coherence leaving the

listener with a curiously abrupt, and tonally ungrounded, dénouement. Such disruption would, then, seem to be precisely what Garcia intended: the deliberate cultivation of an anti-climactic end fading out on a note, E, a half step below the piece's tonic. It seems likely that the oddity of its ending influenced the piece's—and, as its final section, album's—critical reception for the worse.

The choice to end the piece, and album, in this manner is especially interesting given Ned Lagin's recollections of one of his conversations with Garcia. In 1974 he asked Garcia whether the Dead could "ever end a concert on a contemplative note" with a song such as "Wharf Rat." Garcia's answer was negative, insisting that the audience needed to "be jerked off," i.e., given an orgasmic-like satisfaction with an up-tempo rock song.[83] Yet in the case of the album *Blues for Allah*, and of its only complete live performance, it would be difficult to imagine a more non-"orgasmic" ending than the one provided by the final version of "Blues for Allah,"

Only the surviving members of the Dead would be able to say with any degree of certainty why Garcia made this choice. One possibility is biographical based on what is known about him in the middle of 1975. During this time Garcia's friendships with a number of musicians he had been close to over the space of numerous years broke down. Ned Lagin, Merl Saunders and David Grisman had all been close friends of Garcia but between June and August of '75 his relations with all three abruptly ended.[84] In a previous chapter I have discussed the reasons for Lagin's departure from the Grateful Dead's orbit. Garcia's relations with Grisman foundered because the money Grisman should have received from the success of the Round Records-released bluegrass album

[83] Lagin interview, September 27, 2013.
[84] Garcia also split up from Carolyn "Mountain Girl" Adams, his romantic partner since 1966, and with whom he had two children, sometime in the latter half of 1975.

Old & In the Way, which Grisman had played on and produced, instead seemingly went towards paying off the debts accumulated by the record company.[85] And for reasons still not entirely clear, Garcia ended his professional relationship with Saunders in July of 1975, much to the latter's disappointment.[86] Furthermore, as discussed previously, the summer of 1975 was also when the scale of the problems facing Grateful Dead-Round Records, and the potential consequences, seemed to have become unmistakably evident. The Dead's dreams of artistic and financial independence from the heady days of 1972-73 were crashing down around them.

It is certainly problematic to posit direct links between characteristics of an artwork and the biography of its creator since there is no necessary connection between them. Looking back to some notable examples in the Western classical music tradition, Max Rudolf convincingly refutes the theory that Haydn's so-called *Sturm und Drang* pieces from the late 1760s and early 1770s, with their predominance of minor keys and "agitated" rhythms, reflected a comparable emotional crisis in their composer's life during this period as has often been claimed.[87] And in a discussion of Beethoven's 1802 Heiligenstadt Testament (in which Beethoven confesses considerations of suicide because of his then increasing deafness), and its relation to his compositional work Lewis Lockwood notes that while "in the broad sense" there are "many; in the narrow, none that we can trace with certainty."[88]

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[85] ""Back in the Old & In The Way days, there had been a misunderstanding about work that David had performed for Round Records, and he was not fairly compensated." Richard Loren with Stephen Abney, *High Notes: A Rock Memoir* (Demariscotta, ME: East Pond Publishing), 232-33.
[86] For perhaps the most exhaustive look at the timing of the Garcia-Saunders break see "Dating the Legion's Demise: A Revisionist Account," *Jerry Garcia's Middle Finger* (August 7, 2016), http://jgmf.blogspot.ca/2016/08/dating-legions-demise-revisionist.html.
[87] "Storm and Stress in Music," *Bach* 25, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 1994), 13.
[88] "The deafness crisis to which the Testament was a primary response is certainly the major shaping event of Beethoven's early maturity, and it could not help having a broad, far-reaching effect on his work. But

But though such specifics are tentative and speculative, and thus necessarily uncertain, drawing such connections between an artist's biography and their artwork can yet be informative in filling in gaps in our understanding when no other evidence is available. Given the certainty of Garcia's troubled state in the summer of 1975 the bizarre, dissonant ending of "Blues for Allah" might reflect, or be a commentary of sorts on, his then troubled feelings over the loss of these various relationships, depression at the failure of the record companies for which he had been one of the primary instigators, and uncertainty as to what the future would bring for him and the Grateful Dead.[89] Again, I do not suggest this explanation with any degree of certainty; it is entirely speculative. But it is plausible and should not therefore be wholly discounted.

Appealing to Garcia's biography is certainly not the only possible explanation for the odd ending to "Blues for Allah," however. The addition of lyrics, which seem to have not existed prior to the song's studio recording even if the title had been coined months before, could also have been a reason.[90] Garcia may have felt that the meaning of the lyrics somehow called for such a dissonant, inconclusive ending. As a requiem of sorts for King Faisal of Saudi Arabia perhaps Garcia intended the ending to express the shock of his assassination, even the existential absurdity of death itself.[91] It could also have simply reflected Garcia's prankster-like character to continue the unusual, experimental

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particulars are harder to find." *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 121.

[89] Notably, 1975 was the year that Garcia started to use a smokable form of heroin known as Persian to which he would become rapidly addicted. See Richard Loren and Stephen Abney, *High Notes: A Rock Memoir* (Damariscotta, Maine: East Pond Publishing, 2014), 161.

[90] Blair Jackson, "Hunter/Garcia," in *Goin' Down the Road: A Grateful Dead Travelling Companion* (New York: Harmony Books, 1992), 229.

[91] A sentiment expressed perhaps never better than by William Shakespeare. "Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage/And then is heard no more. It is a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/Signifying nothing." *Macbeth*, act 5, scene 5, lines 23-28.

character that pervades the first and second parts of "Blues for Allah" up to its very end. Such dissonant, inconclusive endings were, after all, hardly unheard of within 20th century modernist musical composition. Given the piece's clear connections to many characteristics of this tradition Garcia's decision to break with popular music expectations might well reflect such influences.

"Blues for Allah" Epilogue

After its first complete performance on August 13th, 1975, the Grateful Dead would never again perform "Blues for Allah"—not even, as might have been expected, when they played at the base of the Great Pyramids in Egypt in September of 1978. But there was one partial exception.[92] On October 6, 1981, Anwar Sadat, the president of Egypt, was assassinated during a military parade honoring the Egyptian success crossing the Suez Canal eight years earlier on October 6, 1973, marking the beginning of the Yom Kippur War against Israel. That night, the Dead played the final night of a four-night stand at the Rainbow Theatre in London, England and Sadat's death was clearly on band member's minds.[93]

By the late 1970s, the Grateful Dead had developed a standard two-set performance structure; with the middle section of the second set always featuring a solo for the two drummers, called appropriately, "Drums." This percussion feature would then segue into a featuring the guitarists and keyboardists, with one or both of the drummers

[92] Some claim that there was also a "Blues for Allah" jam during the Dead's "Space" on March 31, 1984 (https://archive.org/details/gd84-03-31.sbd.lai.2576.sbefail.shnf), but this is incorrect. There are no melodic or rhythmic similarities of any significance to "Blues for Allah."
[93] It is available for online listening here: https://archive.org/details/gd1981-10-06.sbd.miller.103627.flac16.

sometimes sitting in, named "Space," the name of which describes fairly well its sonic characteristics: non-tonal, and largely a-metric with little rhythmic repetition.

Unsurprisingly, the performance on October 6, 1981 was no exception. In the second set, after the contrasting pair of the upbeat, harmonically simple "Men Smart, Women Smarter" and the slow, harmonically complex balladry of "High Time," the meat of the second set begins with "Estimated Prophet." At its end, the band continues in its F# minor Dorian inflected modality for a couple of minutes before slowly switching the tonal center to E major out of which arises "He's Gone." Its lyrics were originally written by lyricist Robert Hunter in response to the pilfering of the band's assets by their manager Lenny Hart, father of second drummer Mickey Hart, in 1969-1970 followed by his abrupt disappearance. But though this betrayal by a father of one of the band's members hurt the group immensely, the tone of the song is one of sadness and mourning rather than anger and recrimination. And its lack of any specific references to Lenny Hart has allowed its meaning to encompass the loss of anyone who could be the "he" of the title. Band associate Neil Cassady, band member Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, and, since his death, Jerry Garcia have all been interpreted as the "He" to which the song refers.[94]

There was nothing unusual about the Dead playing "He's Gone" on October 6 given that they had last played it almost a month before on September 11 at the Greek Theatre in Berkeley, California. It was, therefore, ripe for inclusion in the Dead's somewhat improvised, constantly changing sets. Its placement as the fourth song in the second set was also not unusual for this time: the two previous times it was played,

[94] "So the song started that way [about Lenny Hart's theft and disappearance], but later on it became an anthem for Pigpen, and it's changed through the years. These songs are amorphous that way. What I intend is not what a thing is in the end." Jackson, "Hunter/Garcia," 225.

September 11 and August 30, it also appeared at this same structural point in these concerts.

On this occasion, out of the coda of "He's Gone" comes a collective improvisation in which the group moves into an E Mixolydian modality during the vocal-chorus refrain (in this case implied in the vocals around 9:00 with noticeable D naturals). From there it transforms into what might be called E Lydian-Dominant when obvious A#s begin to appear around 10:10.[95] The guitars, bass and keyboards then slowly fade away leaving the two drummers alone for "Drums." They progress, as usual, with both at first on their drum kits before gradually moving to other assorted percussion instruments. Their dynamic level begins quite high but then gradually diminishes to a softer level from around 5:10 to 6:50 after which they then build to a *fortissimo* climax beginning around 9:20 with both drummers playing mainly 16th and 32nd rhythms on large resonant drums. This lasts around 40 seconds before diminishing again towards the track's ending at 10:18, at which point the other band members join in.

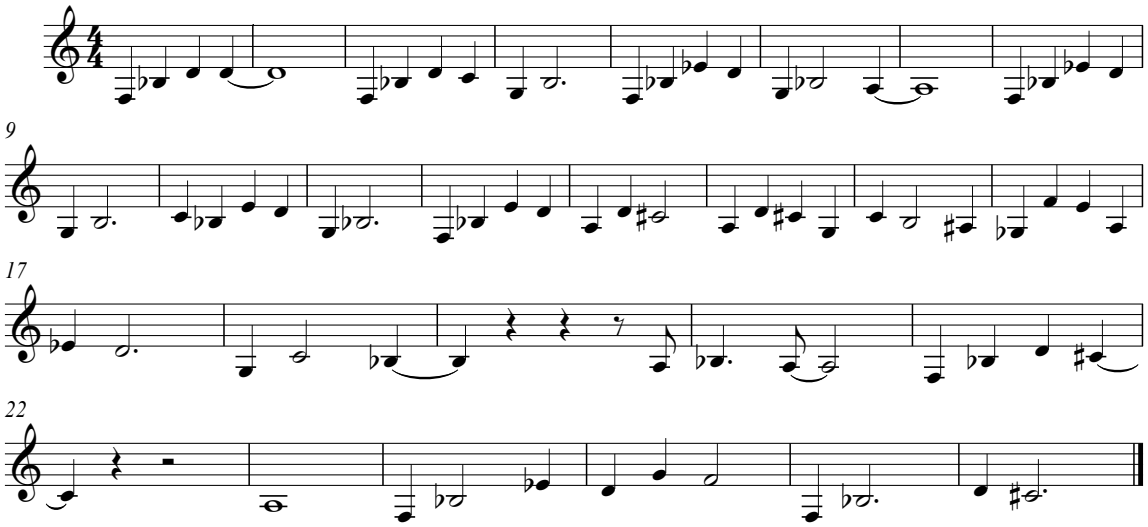
In this instance of "Space," at least one of the drummers, and possibly both, stay on stage and continue to play instead of taking a break. Other than the presence of the drummer(s), for the first few minutes it is much like most other examples of "Space" from this period. But then lead guitarist Garcia, having added distortion to his tone (3:45), begins to play a series of highly chromatic lines, mostly starting on F and leaping up a perfect fourth to Bb (see figure 5.4). The resemblance to "Blues for Allah" is never exact: notes are added, and resolutions are different. But the similarity in rhythm, intervallic relationships, and pitch content (although even more chromatic than the original) make it

[95] Lydian-Dominant is a name for the fourth mode of the ascending or jazz melodic minor scale because it has the augmented 4th of the standard Lydian mode as well as the major 3rd and minor 7th that defines dominant scales. Beginning on E its pitches are E, F#, G#, A#, B, C#, D, E.

clear that Garcia is invoking “Blues for Allah.” Or, given the piece’s origins as a requiem, this iteration is perhaps more appropriately named “Blues for Sadat.”

Example 5.6[96]

Lead guitar excerpt, "Space," Grateful Dead, Oct. 6, 1981



[96] The 4/4 time signature used in this notated example is used merely to notate the approximate relationships of the pitches used given the lack of any clear meter in this section.

Conclusion

In numerous histories of the Grateful Dead, 1969 is the year that the band is said to have reached its experimental apex with the albums *Aoxomoxoa* and *Live/Dead.* But the conspicuous musical experimentalism of "Blues for Allah," along with the Dead's unique business and live sound ventures from 1973-75, point to the mid-1970s, and "Blues for Allah" in particular, as an equally important high point of the group's experimental ethos. Although a number of these elements would, for the most part, not continue once the band returned to touring in 1976—"Blues for Allah" and the Wall of Sound being two conspicuous such examples—their influence would linger and, as they demonstrated in response to Sadat's death, occasionally be returned to throughout the rest of the band's career.

"Blues for Allah" also points to the political awareness of the members of the Grateful Dead against those who would write them off either as drug-addled, political naïfs, or romanticize them as wholly above the realm of politics. Though the Dead had few other songs so directly touching on current affairs, this was not (I think) because they were unaware or unconcerned with the state of the world in which they lived. Instead, they, for the most part, chose to respond to them in the allusive, non-didactic fashion demonstrated on October 6, 1981 in response to Sadat's assassination, narrating dialogues of questions and answers, insights and observations, within the structures of their constantly changing performances, mirroring their own experience of music and reality as a never finished process in constant flux.

Returning to a point made at the beginning of the last chapter, the Grateful Dead were never the same after beginning their "retirement" in October of 1974. 1975 seemed

to have begun with a great deal of optimism as they used their freedom from touring or having to satisfy a record label to whom they owed saleable product, to explore new musical directions. The SNACK Benefit concert was, in many ways, an ideal instance to give their audience a taste of what they were then exploring since they only had a brief 40 minutes of playing time to fill. And not only were they playing for free to benefit charitable organizations (though not the originally intended San Francisco Board of Education), thereby obviating accusations of commercialism, but they were doing so in the environs of Golden Gate Park where they had performed numerous free concerts in the halcyon hippie days of 1966-67.

By the time of their next public performance, however, on June 17, their situation had clearly changed. With Ned Lagin deciding at the last minute not to play, "Jerry Garcia & Friends" had become simply another name for the Grateful Dead. And though they played "Blues for Allah" in a similar form to its March 23rd version, overall it was structured as a typical Grateful Dead performance with a preponderance of shorter, popular songs. Now owing United Artists product to pay the record company back for bailing out Grateful Dead-Round Records, they needed to focus on producing cohesive, structured songs for a new record they had to soon finish.

Their other two performances in 1975, August 13 at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, and September 28 at Lindley Meadows in Golden Gate Park, were different but complementary. August 13 was an invitation-only crowd made up primarily of those from the record and broadcast industries whose goodwill and help the Dead needed if they were going to extricate themselves from the financial hole they had dug themselves with the increasingly obvious failure of the dreams of independence that had

motivated Grateful Dead-Round Records. September 28, in contrast, was a free performance in their old stomping grounds of Golden Gate Park and, furthermore, in the idyllic pastoral setting of Lindley Meadows rather than, as on March 23, in the more regulated confines of Kezar Stadium. Clearly aimed at satisfying their fans it featured a number of the songs from *Blues for Allah* with the notable exception of the title track, which would instead disappear from their repertoire after only three performances.

For Ned Lagin, who collaborated extensively with the Dead from 1970-75, the ending of his association with its band members was partly because of his awareness of these changes in the band's musical direction. He explained that one of the reasons he walked away from his involvement with the Dead in 1975 was because of changes in the group's music.

> Those kinds of really exploratory, spaced "Dark Stars" don't exist. When they do get spacey it's much more constrained, much more clearly delineated when that's going to be and that shows something, some fundamental changes in their own musical practices and also reflecting the broader, I hate to use the term, but zeitgeist of North American culture.[1]

There was, then, for Lagin a clear connection between specific characteristics of the Dead's music, and the broader social realities in which they were realized. The avant-garde, boundary-pushing energy that had so defined the music and other discursive practices within the San Francisco Bay Area rock music community since coming to international prominence in 1967 grew increasingly attenuated in the mid-1970s, reflecting and helping to realize changes within the American experience.

[1] Lagin interview, September 27, 2013.

Another point made by Lagin was what he saw as a sense of moral superiority among many of those involved in this self-defined counter-cultural community in relation to mainstream culture. But with the ending of the Vietnam War and civil rights for African Americans largely a *fait d'accompli*, their moral superiority, and sense of opposition, receded. In Lagin's words, "they became their parents."[2] With the last American troops pulled out of Vietnam in 1973, the anti-war movement had lost its primary *raison d'être*. And though African Americans were still far from equal to Euro-Americans in economic wealth, their political, legal, and educational situation had changed dramatically for the better since the early 1960s, largely on account of the success of the postwar Civil Rights Movement. The generation defining struggle between progressive youth and conservative adults in terms of these issues, with avant-garde popular music as the soundtrack of the youthful revolutionaries, had lost some, perhaps even most, of its relevance. Lacking the oppositional struggles that had so defined their generation in contrast to previous ones, together with enormous popular and financial success, these musicians no longer needed to so overtly push the artistic and social boundaries that their identities had earlier depended upon. And their prior commercial success left them with significant responsibilities to their families and employees who depended upon them for their livelihood.[3]

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[2] "Prior to the Vietnam War and in the early days of the Vietnam War there was a huge amount of idealism. We're going to the moon, electricity will be too cheap to meter, we're all going to be fair and equal, everyone's going to be happy. These people were all used to being happy white kids for the most part. Or the possibility of being a happy white kid was in front of them. When they got to that place, on their own and not from their parents, they didn't know what to do with that and politics conveniently was there to keep the community together. We're all against the Vietnam War; we're all against Nixon, blah, blah, blah. And when that disappeared people were left with a big hole. And the big hole was filled in a lot of ways with all the self-actualization movements, and everything else and not just the movements, but all the philosophies behind it and the hedonism associated with it." Lagin interview, September 27, 2013.

[3] "Thoreau said that by middle age everyone's dragging a barn of stuff around with them of responsibilities. And that's what Garcia had and he had to cope with that the way he had to cope with it. But, it's also a trap.

Although the Grateful Dead, almost uniquely among rock groups that began in the 1960s, continued after 1975 to explore similar experimental, avant-garde musical avenues in their performances as they had in earlier years, they became increasingly regimented—for the most part in the middle of their second sets, as on October 6, 1981. And such experimentation was largely absent from their studio recordings as their popular success as a touring ensemble grew ever larger into the 1980s and 1990s.[4] Given these changes, the fact that "Blues for Allah" disappeared from the band's repertoire after its only complete performance on August 13, 1975 (except for its brief resurrection on October 6, 1981) suggests the likelihood that members of the Dead were conscious of their consequences. As the product of a time in which they had hoped to permanently liberate themselves from the commercial strictures of record company demands, allowing them the freedom to explore new musical directions in whatever way they desired, "Blues for Allah" marks the furthest extant of their musical experimentalism and boundary pushing avant-gardism.

But it also represents a limit from which they would retreat. Facing enormous debts from the demise of their record company (as well as from Garcia's production of *The Grateful Dead Movie*, which would be released in 1977 at a staggering cost to the band of over $600,000) they could no longer afford the dreams of artistic independence

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You're not only trapped by the houses that you own and your mortgage and your car, but you're trapped by a sense of community. So there's always in the Grateful Dead that juxtaposition between the family and the community, the vestige of the 1960s, sense of community and the reality of being an entertainment entity that had to make a lot of money to support a lot of people. Having watched a lot of people, and met some musicians in particular who I really liked and respected and were great, quite honestly there's a period of time when they do great stuff and there's another period of time after that when they do okay stuff and people are entertained and are happy and it's a particularly good function that they're performing, but it's not the same as in the beginning." Ibid.

[4] The Grateful Dead did not, however, release a studio album between 1981 (*Go To Heaven*) and 1987 (*In The Dark*).

for which they had previously hoped.[5] As well, the re-introduction of second drummer Mickey Hart to the band, having missed out on over three years of their musical development, suggested the value of greater musical simplicity given the alternative necessity of extensive rehearsals to familiarize him with the more challenging material they had developed during his time away.[6] And once again under contract to a record company, for whom profits were the top priority, the boundary-pushing experimentalism they had developed to such a high degree in the first half of the 1970s increasingly gave way to less expansive explorations that increasingly characterized their post-1975 performances.

On the one hand, such changes could be understood as a betrayal of the liberatory, boundary-pushing possibilities that rock music in the San Francisco Bay Area had earlier represented for many people. On the other, the world of the musicians (and their audiences) had changed in many ways since their late-1960s' heyday; to not reflect such changes in their music would have led to their own increasing irrelevance. Trying to realize a balance between experimentalism and traditionalism, using each to accentuate the aesthetic power of the other, was not only the path the Grateful Dead chose, but one that would be widely influential on later musicians looking for a middle way between the insular elitism of the academic art world, and the explicit search for fame and wealth that characterizes popular music.

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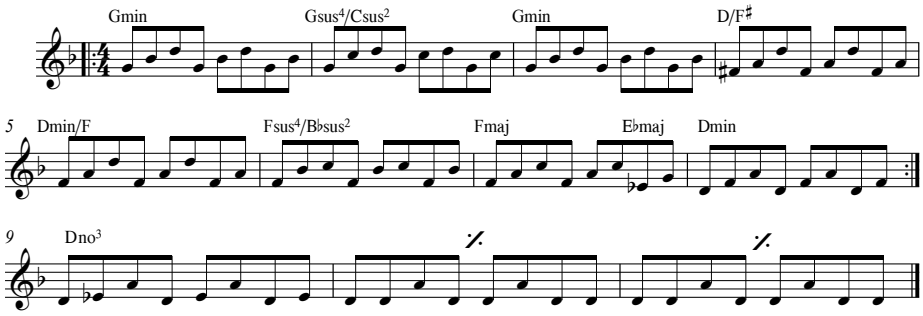
[5] McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, 499.

[6] "With two drummers again, they had actually given some conscious thought to what they should be up to musically, and it boiled down to simplicity. Though they would play 'Cosmic Charley' and 'St. Stephen' for some time, their general pattern was to play relatively simple material with authority rather than their most complex work, because their rehearsal time would be minimal." Ibid, 493.

Appendix A

Section 43



Above is a transcription of the guitar arpeggiated section of "Section 43" revealing its melodic basis: an eight-bar chromatic motion, descending in the bass a perfect 4th from G to D, followed, on its second time through, by a minor second and diminished fifth instead of the earlier chords' major seconds, thirds and fourths. It is, in fact, a chromatic variation on a quite ancient music gesture: the descending "lament" tetrachord.[1] But it is also a highly modal one. Although there is one V chord, in the fourth measure, D/F#, it is in its less stable first inversion form. And instead of resolving as a V-I cadence, its lowest note drops a semi-tone to change it to its parallel minor, Dmin/F in measure 5. The two upper notes then move in contrary motion (measure 6: the A moves up to a Bb while the D drops to a C) to form an ambiguous suspended triad whose identity depends on which note is decided to be its root: F or Bb. (The Gsus4/Csus 2 in measure 2 of this section is an exact transposition, up a whole step, of measure 6.) In the next bar, only one of the notes move with the Bb dropping back down to an A, creating a root position F major triad, which then drops through the root and third of an Eb major triad to D minor, which loses its third in favour of a minor 2nd (Eb), before being replaced by roots and fifths, D and A, to end the section.

[1] Alex Ross, "Chacona, Lamento, Walking Blues: Bass Lines of Music History," in *Listen to This* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 22-54.

Appendix B: "Okie from Muskogee" lyrics

We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee;
We don't take our trips on LSD
We don't burn our draft cards down on Main Street;
We like livin' right, and bein' free.

I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee,
A place where even squares can have a ball
We still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse,
And white lightnin's still the biggest thrill of all

We don't make a party out of lovin';
We like holdin' hands and pitchin' woo;
We don't let our hair grow long and shaggy,
Like the hippies out in San Francisco do.

And I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee,
A place where even squares can have a ball.
We still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse,
And white lightnin's still the biggest thrill of all.

Leather boots are still in style for manly footwear;
Beads and Roman sandals won't be seen.
Football's still the roughest thing on campus,
And the kids here still respect the college dean.

We still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse,
In Muskogee, Oklahoma, USA.

Appendix C: “Sing Me Back Home” lyrics

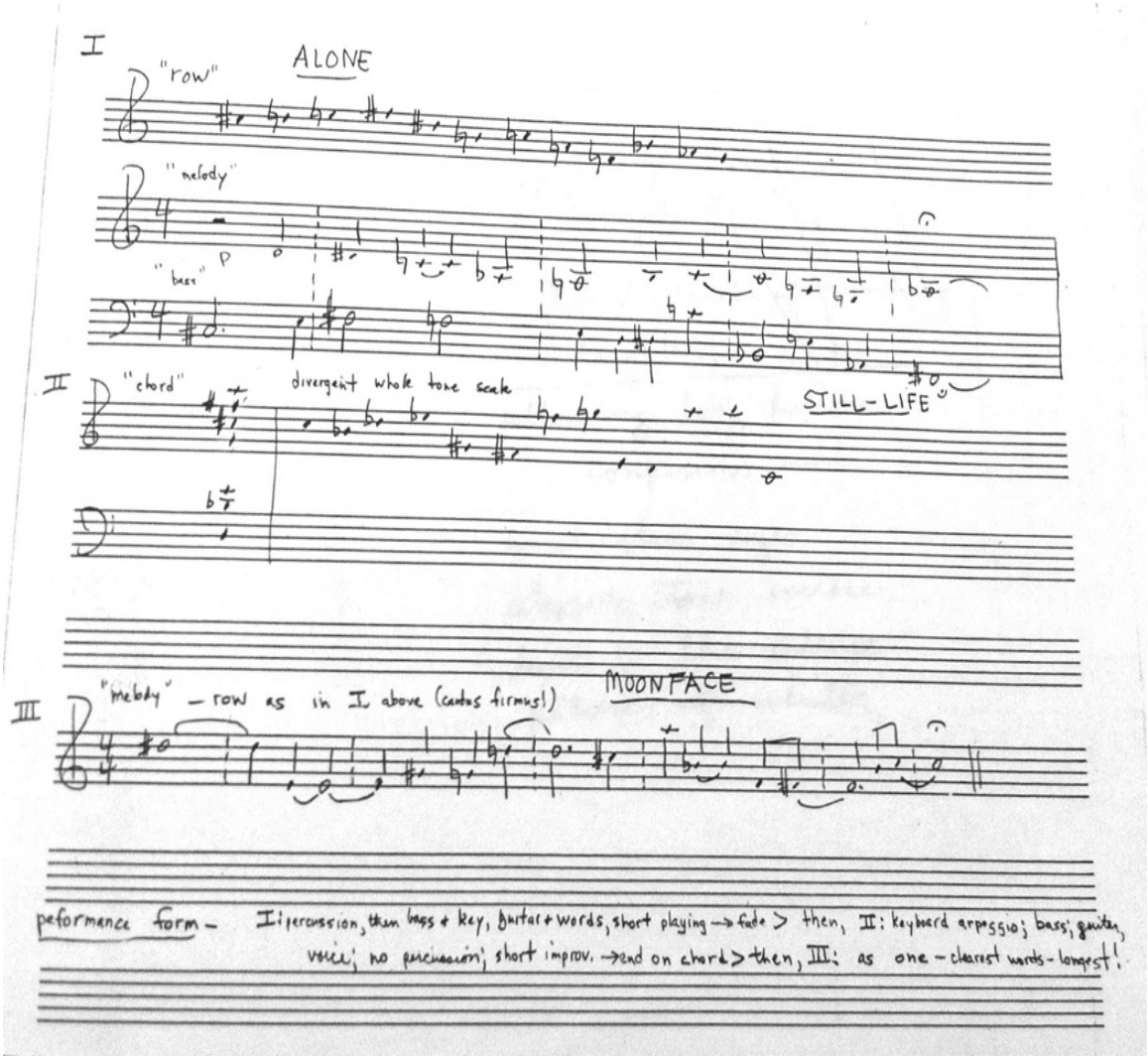
The warden led a prisoner down the hallway to his doom
And I stood up to say goodbye like all the rest
And I heard him tell the warden just before he reached my cell
"Let my guitar picking friend sing my request"

Let him sing me back home with a song I used to hear
And make my old memories come alive
And take me away and turn back the years
Sing me back home before I die

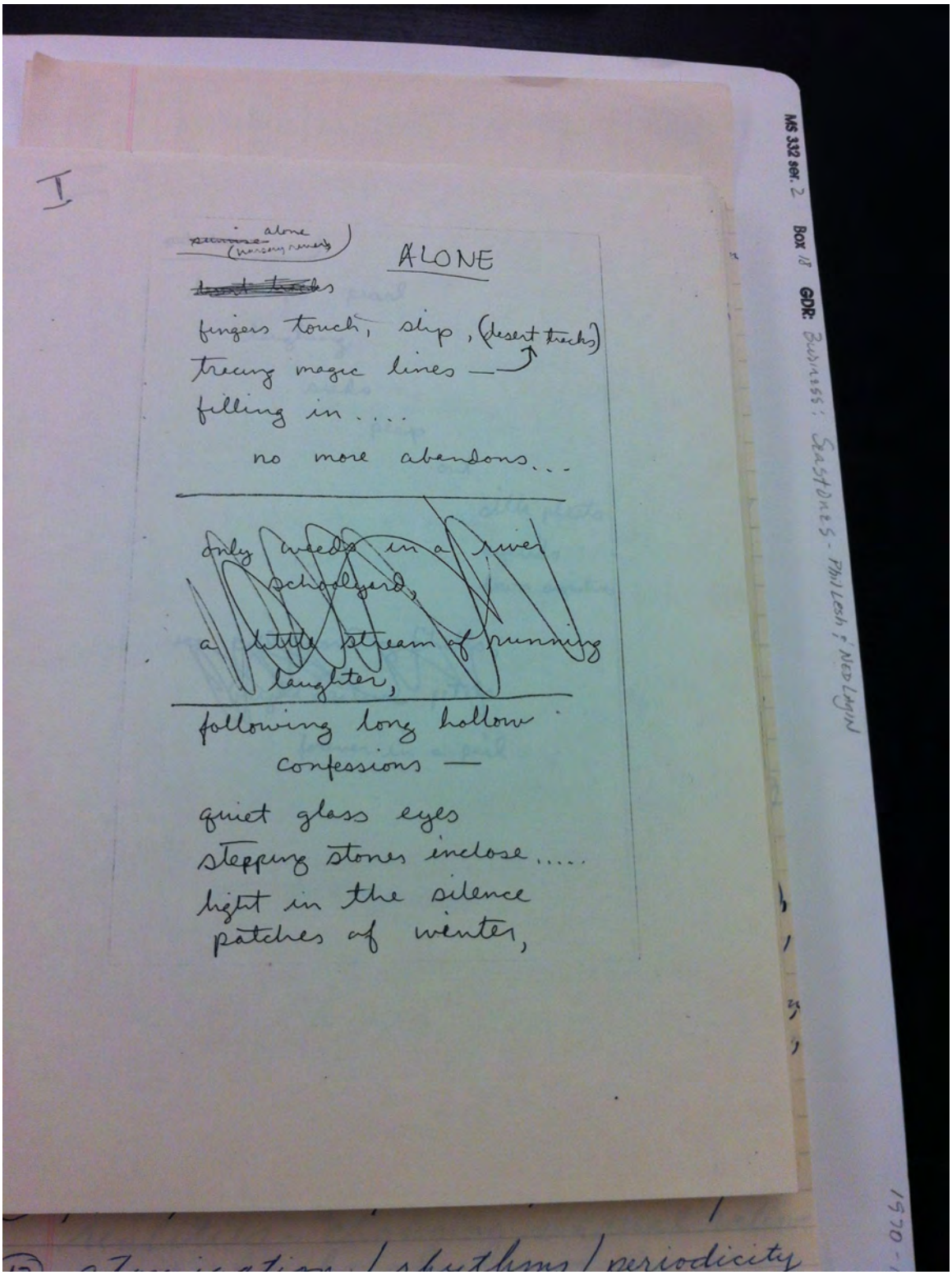
I recall last Sunday morning a choir from off the streets
Came in to sing a few old gospel songs
And I heard him tell the singers, "There's a song my mama sang
Could I hear it once before you move along?"

Won't you sing me back home, with the song I used to hear
Make my old memories come alive
Take me away and turn back the years
Sing me back home before I die
Sing me back home before I die

Appendix D


I
"row"
ALONE
"melody"
"bass"
p
II
"chord"
divergent whole tone scale
STILL-LIFE
III
"melody" – row as in I above (cantus firmus!)
MOONFACE
performance form – I: percussion, then bass + key, guitar + words, short playing → fade > then, II: keyboard arpeggio; bass, guitar, voice; no percussion; short improv. → end on chord > then, III: as one – clearest words – longest!

Appendix E[2]



I

~~[illegible]~~ alone (nursery rhyme)

~~[illegible]~~

ALONE

fingers touch, slip, (desert tracks)
tracing magic lines —
filling in ....
no more abandons...

---

only weeds in a river
schoolyard,
a little stream of running
laughter,

---

following long hollow
confessions —
quiet glass eyes
stepping stones inclose.....
light in the silence
patches of winter,

MS 332 ser. 2 Box 18 GDR: Business: Seastones - Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin

1970-

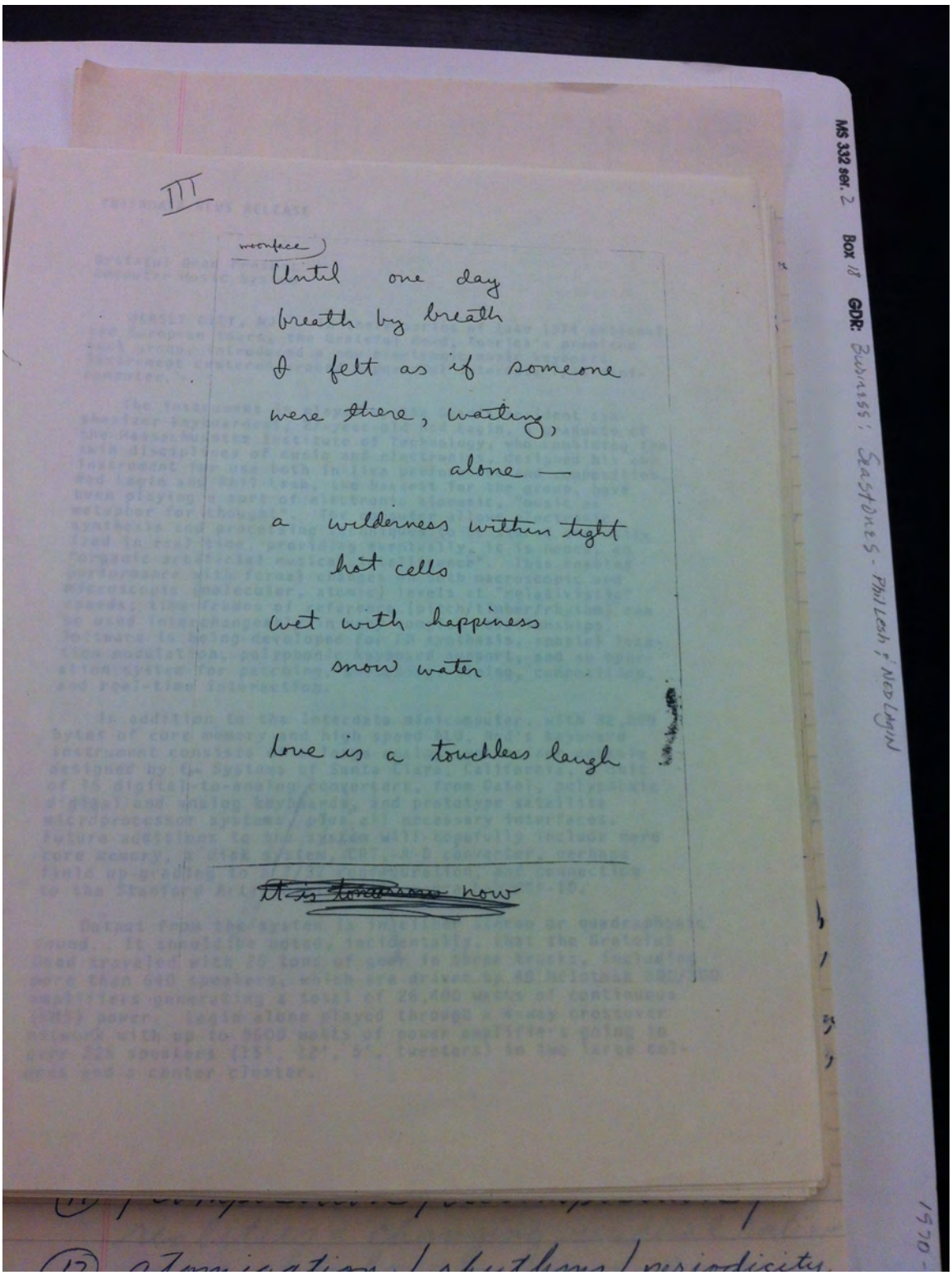
[2] GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin.

II

still-life

dewdrops pearl
laughing
seeds
peep
out
silk pleats
eyelids
down signatures

~~ice cold morning shells,~~
~~the bright silver petals~~
forever in a pail



III

moonface

Until one day
breath by breath
I felt as if someone
were there, waiting,
alone —
a wilderness within tight
hot cells
wet with happiness
snow water

love is a touchless laugh

~~it is tomorrow~~ now

Appendix F[3]

1/70 - 11/72
Ned Lagin

SEASTONES - SOURCES

I. General formal: open form: art and audience - (minimal art, reduced means) - formalized "play" and the "electronic mystique" (artificial organic musical intelligence).

II. Properties (Parameters) of Sound: wave shapes, their physic and matehmatical representation (Microstructure of sound), overtones; stationary sound, onset, transients, phase, and timber; macrostructure - envelopes, sound events; noise and random signals; deterministic and probabilistic representations; spectral analysis and synthesis - musical tones, speech analysis, analog and digital storage and recall of sound.

III. Psychoacoustics: hearing mechanism and the perception of acoustic signals tactile/kinetic theories; sonology, sound quants, sound/object perception - integration; perception and redundancy - structure and function as "meaning": "an anthropology of an art?". (see 5 below)

IV. General Theoretics: physics and metaphysics - modern art theories - minimalist, formalist, fractionalist (examples from modern, Renaissance Medieval, primitive art forms and musics), music as linguistic and logic systems - experimental art - play - core-time-space measure of experience (timesthesia, electronic mystique, relativity, shifts, extra-dimensibality, dislocations, expansions) - concepts of time - (time dimensions, music as an event in the phenomenal world) - myth and ritual - intuition of physical world - number and quantification - (limit, unlimit) - geometry and space intuition (circles - curves - elliptic time - individual and collective units) perspectives and densities - gestures and accentuation - gestalts archetypes - universals - association and differentiation (rhythm) - redundancy - codification and/or representation via information theory (statistical characteristics) cyberneticsand communication theories (channels, noise, probabilities, stochastic representation) chance, randomness (aleatorics, intuition and improvisation) - intent (score, instructions, notation, procedural controls or mental orientation? - improvisation and progressive art/composition and the music-making process - currents of prepared intuitive nature (way of life) - art of relations, extra-objective - synthetic and synaesthetic) - general systems theory - hierarchical structures - (holistic evolution - autonomous holons as environments) feedback and evolutionary systems - self-organizing systems and (music) consciousness (oceanic - sensual/ sexual perceptions-symbols-relations-processes) - the intutitive world construction - schema - symbolic consciousness, kinetics and memory - the gesture in time, simple superimpositions, feedbacks - a methodology (parapsychology, biofeedback, bionics, brain wave musics/logics - sensual integration sematic and contextual memory - organization of sound materials into psychoacoustic scalings and proportionings - formal composition with stored structures, representations, sound (symbols - signals).

V. Music Materials: origins of music, earliest musics and magic, ritual, dance, drama, poesis (multimedia) - being vs, becoming (proto-organic) - attention and resonance - corporal/tactile (cellular?) music as magic (therapy, medicine), revelation, reincarnation, celebration (tribal and community musics/art

[3] GDA MS 332, ser. 2, box 18: 27, GDR: Business: Seastones: Phil Lesh & Ned Lagin.

audiences) - symbolism, forms of sensibility (space-time relitivistic) - expression-phenomenology; Structures: horizontal and vertical organization - runnings, scales, rhythms, cross relationships; large dynamic range - foreground/ background techniques - juxtaposition, superimposition, interpenetration, illumination (enlargement of musical perspectives).

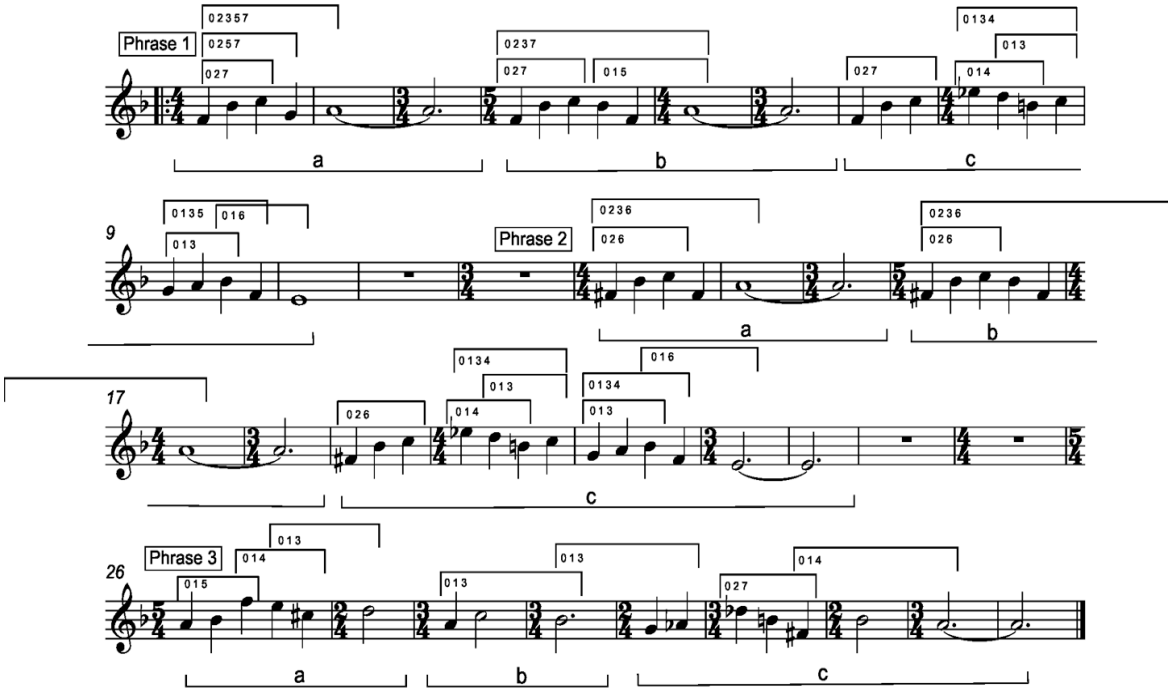
VI. Composition & Electronic Music Synthesis: constructive/destructive/ composition/ decomposition/synthesis, materials (source: generated, found-concrete, voice, instruments) - "camera/photographic" techniques - illusion, methaphor - new material from old - cinematographic": atomination/rhythms/periodicity.

a. vocal - "Seastones" (form scheme-poetic structure)
b. tape music and recording techniques, music-concrete, catalog of sounds and techniques, home instruments and materials, instruments and voices - performances of scores/ form schemes
c. processed sound techniques, filtering, equalization; AM-gating, FM synthesis, ring modulation; mixing, location modulation, reverb, delays - echo analog synthesis with voltage control; including synthesizers and electric instruments
d. digital synthesis, programs (scores) - interactive systems - filtering, convolution synthesis, cellular automata - evolution of primitive consciousness, space intuition (genitality) - group theory
e. hybrid systems, noise-stochastic systems, new instruments and vocal (linguistic) techniques and processing, pitch as rhythm and rhythm as pitch, microtones and microhytms, pitch/rhythm as spatial intuition (sensual/sexual reality) - event envelopes - timber composition (material part of creative act) - (melodies, rhythms, chords) - silences of timber)
f. biomusic, biofeedback (body - sensual - tactile - sexual - electronics) - cybernetic (biological) image transforms ("above" and "below" "consciousness") hypermedia and branching processes - sensual data - (parapsychology) - dream patterns - visions - memory structures - "becoming conscious" - mythical through (perceptive consciousness, articulation of intuition) - lineal/nonlineal relities - changing sensual ratios - inner landscapes (evolutionary technology).

VII. (Score and Performance Notes)

VIII. (Tapes Catalog)

Appendix G



Pitch-Class Set Analysis

The "Blues for Allah" theme is based around a conflict between two contrasting interval class vectors: <010020>, from the [027] trichord in the (a) and (b) sub-phrases of phrase 1; and <111000>, from the [013] trichords of its (c) sub-phrase. In the first and second phrases, <010020> and <010101> dominate in their (a) and (b) sub-phrases with their core [027] and [026] trichords, while <111000> dominates the (c) sub-phrases with its [013] trichord. In phrase three, in contrast, <111000> and the [013] trichord dominates its (a) and (b) sub-phrases, while (c) sees a return to <010020> and its [027] core set that opened the theme but now in transposed retrograde on F#, the note which replaced F in the second phrase, in bar 31. Despite Garcia's lack of formal compositional training, he manages to reconcile all of the contrasting ideas in the theme in this final group before

returning to diatonic material to end on A, as occurs in the (a) and (b) sub-phrases of phrases one and two.[4]

Key Set Classes

Trichords:	Tetrachords
[027]: <010020>	[0237]: <111120>
[013]: <111000>	[0257]: <021030>
[014]: <101100>	[0134]: <122100>
[026]: <010101>	[0135]: <121110>
[016]: <100011>	[0236]: <112101>

[4] I am indebted to Sundar Subraminian for assistance with the details of this analysis.

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