Rockumentary: Style, Performance & Sound in a Documentary Genre

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Abstract

Rockumentary: Style, Performance, and Sound in a Documentary Genre is the comprehensive study of an audio-visual genre concerned with the nonfictional representation of rock music and related idioms. Sparked by the explosive rise in popularity of rock music in the 1960s, rockumentary follows a trajectory tracing the broader history of documentary practice, at times serving to reshape that history and at others providing the clearest examples of documentary's limits and potentials. It both captures and contributes to histories of documentary film and popular music generally, and rock music and rock culture specifically. It is noteworthy for its visual style, innovation in the area of film sound technology, and the complex industrial interactions which in part foster its development. Moreover, rockumentary serves as an early and ongoing example of the negotiation of the presence of stars and staged spectacles in the context of nonfiction film and video. It is the site where the anxieties about sound and the documentary image—an unease which runs throughout the history of cinema and has specific implications within the context of nonfiction film—are particularly acute, and the various conceptual and sociological issues surrounding film as a mediation of live experience versus a wholly constructed entity are crystallized most concretely. This dissertation presents rockumentary as an audio-visual genre with both artistic relevance and commercial appeal, and poses questions about the role of pleasure as a means of differentiating the corpus from other nonfiction film and video genres. Through textual analysis, reception studies, and documentary research, this dissertation contributes to film, media, and popular music studies, and lays the foundation for the study of nonfiction representations of popular music in contemporary moving images and new media.

Résumé

Rockumentary: Style, Performance, and Sound in a Documentary Genre est une étude approfondie d'un genre audio-visuel dédié à la représentation non-fictive de la musique rock et de ses idiomes. Née de l'explosive croissance de popularité de la musique rock dans les années 60, le rockumentaire évolue en bordure de l'historique plus large de la pratique documentaire, se trouvant parfois à la remodeler et parfois à démontrer les limites et le potentiel du genre. Le rockumentaire contribue à l'histoire du documentaire et de la musique populaire en général, ainsi qu'à celle de la culture et de la musique rock. Il se démarque par son style visuel, son innovation dans le domaine de la technologie sonore cinématographique et par les relations industrielles complexes qui ont favorisé son développement. En outre, le rockumentaire met en évidence les tractations entre la présence de prestations misent en scène et de vedettes dans le cadre de films et de vidéos de non-fiction. Le rockumentaire est un lieu où les angoisses liées au son et à l'image documentaire — un malaise qui traverse l'histoire du cinéma et qui a des implications précises dans le contexte du cinéma de non-fiction —sont particulièrement vives. Également, les questions conceptuelles et sociologiques qui entourent le cinéma en tant que médiation de l'expérience en direct par rapport à une entité fabriquée y sont cristalisées de manière des plus concrètes. Cette dissertation présente le rockumentaire comme un genre audio-visuel ayant à la fois une pertinence artistique et un attrait commercial qui remet en question le rôle du plaisir comme manière de différencier le corpus des autres genres de films et de vidéos de non-fiction. Avec l'aide de l'analyse textuelle, d'études de réception et de recherche documentée, cette dissertation est un apport dans le domaine des études cinématographiques, médiatiques ainsi que des études de la musique populaire, puisqu'elle jette les bases sur l'étude des représentations non-fictives de la musique populaire dans les nouveaux médias et les images contemporaines.

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Do people dedicate dissertations? If so, I dedicate this work to my mother, my sister, my grandparents, and my incredibly supportive wife, Laurel—we need a vacation. Charlotte, you can come, too.

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Introduction

In 2008, the Rolling Stones made their nth appearance as the headlining stars in a documentary film in Martin Scorsese's concert extravaganza, *Shine A Light*. By conservative counts, this was the twelfth appearance of the Stones in a feature-length documentary and the third time Scorsese directed a major music documentary, but it was the first occasion these two film and music luminaries collaborated on a project. *Shine A Light*, released theatrically in standard and IMAX formats, was celebrated by fans and critics alike and prompted numerous articles on the popularity of "rock docs"—those film and television features we all know for their spectacular representations of live musical events, culturally important documents of historic musical gatherings, and occasionally trashy behind-the-scenes tell-alls of life on the road as a rock'n'roll star. It was a box-office success, grossing $15.8 million worldwide, ranking it among the highest-grossing documentary releases of 2008 and in the top ten highest-grossing concert documentaries of all-time.[1] By the end of the calendar year the film was available commercially for home video enthusiasts in standard DVD and high-definition Blu-Ray formats. But *Shine A Light* was significant for other reasons as well, not least of which its symbolic value as the capstone to fifty years of the most commercially viable and aesthetically rich category of nonfiction film—the rockumentary.

[1] To put these numbers in perspective, and to highlight a generational shift in the audiences for concert documentaries, the documentary box-office winner of 2008 was also the most successful concert film of all-time up to that point: *Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert Tour* (Bruce Hendricks, USA) earned $65.2 million worldwide, a figure larger than the combined total of the other top ten films in this box-office category. The Numbers, online [http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/series/Documentary.php], accessed 05 March 2009.

What is Rockumentary?

The term *rockumentary* is a portmanteau which combines the phrase 'rock n' roll' and the film classification 'documentary.' Rockumentaries are, generally speaking, documentary films about rock music and related idioms, and usually feature some combination of performance footage, interviews, and undirected material. While the term is most often attributed to the fictional character Marty DiBergi (Rob Reiner) from *This is Spinal Tap* (1984), the coining of the term appears to date back to 1969 in the promotional material for a radio documentary series on the subject of popular music; "The History of Rock and Roll" aired in February of that year on KHJ Los Angeles and it was announced with a front-page advertisement in the daily edition of *Variety* as "Modern music's first Rockumentary". (*Variety* 20 February 1969) The term was later used by *Rolling Stone* magazine writer Jerry Hopkins to describe the KHJ series (Hopkins 1969, 9) and its journalistic use re-appeared several years later in reference to a 1981 stage show presenting the history of the Beatles through photographic slides with musical accompaniment.[2] In 1985, Mary Gray Porter and Willis Russell included this latter instance in the term's history when the word was canonized in the "Among the New Words" section of the linguistic journal, *American Speech*. Defined as "[a] documentary movie, or one made in the style of a documentary, about rock music and musicians," the term was understood to describe both nonfiction and fiction films. (Porter & Russell 1985) That the

[2] George M. Plasketes incorrectly cites the work of David Ehrenstein in 1979 as the first use of the term in film criticism—this text was in fact published in 1982; see David Ehrenstein and Bill Reed, *Rock on Film* (New York: Delilah Books, 1982), George M. Plasketes, "Rock on Reel : The Rise and Fall of the Rock Culture in America Reflected in a Decade of 'Rockumentaries'," *Qualitative Sociology* 12.1 (1989).

genre's mainstream naming is widely understood to have taken place within a parody of the genre despite its existence for at least fifteen years prior is less a comment on the stability and coherence of the category than it is a reflection of the social and cultural dimensions of genre construction, a matter which requires some consideration and will be afforded such attention in a later section of this project.

This dissertation sets out to define a genre category and chart its history by examining a coherent grouping of audio-visual texts not simply reducible to their subject matter, but rather consisting of a complex system of stylistic conventions, representational strategies, sound-image relationships, and extra-filmic systems of meaning and exchange. This study of rockumentary will synthesize and expand upon existing film and popular music studies material in an effort to present

1. a detailed formulation of the rockumentary genre in terms of visual style, industrial profile, cultural presence, and the central role played by emerging sound and image technologies, while also attending to the complicated issue of performance in documentary;
2. an analytical model detailing two predominant visual strategies for the representation of musical performance in the rockumentary genre described as the *journalistic* and the *impressionistic*;
3. an expansion upon established theoretical models of sound in cinema in order to better incorporate documentary genres into existing scholarly discourse on the subject.

This dissertation will demonstrate the history of rockumentary is part of an unfolding story of popular music and its various mediated forms in contemporary popular cultures and speaks to the integration of film and music as industries and social practices.

The study of documentary film and video is an expanding scholarly field and has flourished as a major research area within cinema studies over the last two decades. An increasing number of introductory textbooks on the subject are appearing on bookshelves (Bruzzi 2000; Nichols 2001), specialized studies of documentary and national cinemas continue to emerge with regularity (Nornes 2003; Himpele 2007), and the pages of film and media studies journals are increasingly occupied by studies of documentary film and video subjects in numbers equal to those dealing with fiction film. Founding historical texts surveying the field of pre- and post-World War II nonfiction filmmaking institutions stand up to contemporary scrutiny in terms of their acknowledgement of key texts and practitioners (Barnouw 1974; Barsam 1992; Rotha 1952), but it is a wave of theoretical work dating back to the 1990s which serves as the basis for more sophisticated analyses of the socio-cultural and political content of nonfiction cinema (Nichols 1991; Renov 1993; Winston 1995). While this latter work is not necessarily at odds with the earlier scholarship, it adopts models of film theory which emerge in the 1970s to engage directly with key issues such as subjectivity and performance, issues largely neglected by the first wave of documentary film studies. Several critical issues and topics of interest, however, remain largely unexamined by contemporary scholars of nonfiction film including the status of nonfiction film as a genre. From my perspective, rockumentaries—ranging in type from biographies to concert films to politically-inflected video works—are a significant area of interest.

Rockumentary as a genre remains undefined and the films are all but unattended in both histories of documentary film and popular music—there is no extended scholarly engagement with the body of work, and thus no understanding of its broad industrial and cultural impact. Meanwhile, there has been an explosion in the number of rock-themed documentaries over the last decade, many of them enjoying some measure of commercial or cult success, all of them pointing to a corpus of founding films several decades old that demand our attention and thoughtful analysis.

I will argue rockumentary emerges in a post-WWII era marked by shifting trends and innovations in both cinema and popular music. Sparked by the explosive rise in popularity of rock music, rockumentary is a nonfiction audio-visual genre with a trajectory tracing the broader history of documentary practice since WWII, at times serving to reshape that history and providing the clearest examples of documentary's limits and potentials during this period. It both captures and contributes to histories of documentary film and popular music generally, and rock music and rock culture specifically. Noteworthy examples from the first waves of work include the revue film *T.A.M.I. Show* (Steve Binder, USA, 1964), the Bob Dylan road-movie *Dont Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, USA, 1967), the concert epic *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, USA, 1970), and the Beatles' behind-the-scenes making-of chronicle *Let It Be* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, UK, 1970). Throughout its history, the genre has served as a laboratory for experiments in film style and the innovative use of new sound technologies. Perhaps most interestingly, the genre raises a set of new questions sparked by

the ever-changing industrial and cultural contexts of 'the popular' as these have developed since World War II.

The focus of this dissertation is thus original and my assertion is clear: a comprehensive study of rockumentary under the rubric of genre not only reveals the adaptability of genre theory to a discussion of documentary cinema, but establishes the significance of rockumentary in the history of film and popular music and the central role these films play in shaping contemporary visual representations of popular music. Moreover, rockumentary serves as an early and ongoing example of the negotiation of the presence of stars and staged spectacles in the context of nonfiction. Filmmakers and rock musicians alike were faced with distinguishing 'rock on film' from the Tin Pan Alley and Broadway inspired music sequences of the Hollywood musical and other revue-style films. Rockumentary establishes many of the conventions of visual representation of rock musicians and live musical performance evidenced in contemporary media. This dissertation argues that rockumentary is a site where anxieties about sound and the documentary image—an unease which runs throughout the history of cinema (Eisenstein, et al. 1928; Bazin 1945; Vertov 1930) and has specific implications within the context of nonfiction film—are particularly acute, and where the various conceptual and sociological issues surrounding film as a mediation of live experience versus a wholly constructed entity are crystallized most concretely. It presents rockumentary as a nonfiction film genre with both artistic relevance and commercial appeal, and poses questions about the role pleasure plays in differentiating the corpus from other nonfiction film genres.

Formally, documentary cinema encompasses a range of organizational and representational strategies and many of these are reflected in rockumentary, including direct cinema-styled biography (i.e. *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart*, Sam Jones, USA, 2002), rigorously choreographed and composed performance films (*The Last Waltz*, Martin Scorsese, USA, 1978), classically oriented compilation films (*The Beatles Anthology*, Bob Smeaton, UK, 1996), ethnographic studies of individual rock music subcultures (*Decline of Western Civilization*, Penelope Spheeris, USA, 1981), tour films, and fan-made portraits of mainstream and marginal artists (*Friends Forever*, Ben Wolfinsohn, USA, 2001). Across these various formats, the rockumentary derives many of its distinctive features from a cultural engagement with rock music and rock performers. There is a less an emphasis on repeating previously established narrative frameworks from fictional genres than on an appeal to the thematic, structural and visual conventions which rock performers present as central to the distinctiveness of the music (and, in turn, form the basis of rock culture at large).

This dissertation charts the history of rockumentary from its earliest appearance in the late-1950s and 1960s through its explosion as a commercial theatrical property in the 1970s before a period of relative decline in the mid-1980s to its renaissance in the 2000s, and argues there is a discernible stylistic evolution that demonstrates the formal and aesthetic growth of the genre. While my project places a strong focus on a period of 'high' direct cinema[3] and emphasizes the work of American, British and Canadian filmmakers and

[3] The issue of the correct use and historical meaning of the terms *direct cinema* versus *cinéma verité* versus *cinéma direct* will be addressed (and hopefully resolved, if not sufficiently clarified) in Chapter 1; however, these terms will ultimately be discarded in favour of the less prescriptive and theoretically secure *observational* and *interactive* categories introduced in Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality : Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

musicians, it ultimately accommodates filmmakers and artists from a number of other countries. Central to the proper historicization of this corpus is an understanding of the roots of rockumentary in the history of sound in film generally (Chion 1994; Gomery 2005; Salt 1992; Wolfe 1990). Many decidedly un-rock'n'roll documentary films contribute greatly to the visual language of rockumentary during its earliest years, including the Soundies of the 1940s, the Scopitones and 'jukebox films' of the late-1950s and early-1960s, and the 'music promos' of the late-1960s and early-1970s (and all serve as predecessors to the music video, an audiovisual format profoundly influenced by rockumentary). Not all of the above examples are expressly concerned with rock music yet they foreshadow the representational strategies adapted by filmmakers to present rock musicians and rock culture. With analytical models and an historical framework for the study of rockumentary established, this dissertation lays the foundation for studies of the relationship between rockumentary and non-rock subjects including jazz, blues and urban music (i.e. *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, Bert Stern, USA, 1959; *Imagine the Sound*, Ron Mann, CAN, 1981; *Scratch*, Doug Pray, USA, 2001). In these cases and others, differences in musical style and subject matter are less significant than the contribution they make to our understanding of the genre and its development.

In the 1980s, with the expansion of music television programming prompting a boom in made-for-television music documentaries (a trend first established with the founding of music television in the early-1980s) and the dominance of the high concept blockbuster at the box-office further marginalizing the theatrical documentary, many critics

assumed the rockumentary genre was dead as a theatrical enterprise. New York Times movie critic Janet Maslin, in a 1991 review of a film program of rock films at the American Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, Queens asks (only half-jokingly) of both the film and music genres, "Is it time, already, to put rock in a museum?" (Maslin 1991) Much of the dynamism and bravado which defined rock music in its first two decades was viewed as missing in the commercial pop market of the nineties, and made-for-television rockumentaries had reached a nadir as evidenced by their poor production values and paint-by-numbers aesthetics (e.g. the rockumentary television tabloid series, *VH1's Behind the Music*). At the dawn of the 21st century, however, a rockumentary renaissance was beginning with a series of noteworthy theatrically released films (in some small way related to the absence of music and film on music television stations increasingly committed to reality programming) ranging in subject matter and approach from original and inventive biographies of new artists to compilation films about aging artists featuring newly discovered archival material.

Methodology & Outline

My research is strongly situated in film studies and draws upon work from related fields such as communication studies, cultural studies and popular music studies. It addressees the problematic integration of cultural forms and media (film and music) in a period of industrial and cultural change and is one of a series of projects I am developing which concern sound and film. This cross-disciplinary approach provides a rich perspective on film

as a historical, cultural and aesthetic artefact and in so doing contributes to the growing study of sound, music, and the moving image.

At its foundation, my project involves extensive formal analyses and the close reading of film texts in conjunction with histories of popular music and the film and music industries. I offer a typology of rockumentary film (e.g., biography, concert film, etc.) and a periodization of its evolution. This historical inquiry produces a story of film genre touching upon film style, film technology, performance and sound while simultaneously balancing a consideration of the industrial and cultural dimensions of film and music. At different points in this history I will demonstrate the significance of individual television programmes and made-for-TV features. Ultimately, however, the focus of the study is the feature-length theatrical rockumentary. For both strategic and analytic reasons, it is not feasible to extend the current project to non-feature television programming and home video releases. The selection of films is based on mode of organization (i.e. documentary)—a particular filmmaking practice encompassing a range of genres and film cycles, and not a thematic or stylistic category in and of itself—and subject matter (i.e. rock music, rock musicians) but the scope of the project remains flexible in order to accommodate films, filmmakers, musicians and musical genres (e.g., blues, folk, metal, soul) that both inform and grow out of the conventions established by rockumentary. Case studies of representative works follow, while accompanying production histories and reception studies (focusing primarily on articles and reviews of the films at the time of their release and any subsequent re-release) serve to further contextualize their place in broader industrial and cultural trajectories.

Chapters 1 and 2 consist of literature review and criticism. I introduce theories of genre within film studies and popular music studies and examine the dynamic nature of genre categories. I move on to separate discussions of documentary and rock music, and the particular problems they pose within film studies and popular music studies. I map and critique the distinction between genres, modes of organization in cinema, and modes of representation in documentary as a means of establishing a foundation for the discussion of rockumentary as an audiovisual genre, and develop a parallel critique of the often competing notions of authenticity as they relate to musical genres and performance. Genre is adopted within this dissertation as both a conceptual and critical tool with which the historical, stylistic, and cultural features of the corpus are brought into focus for reflection. Chapters 1 and 2 conclude with a re-introduction of the definition of rockumentary I propose in this introductory chapter; finally, I construct a typology of currents and trends within rockumentary which constitute the category and serve as the basis for my textual analysis.

Chapter 3 offers a pre-history of the rockumentary genre by briefly examining visual representations of musical performance in early cinema, classic Hollywood and international documentary practice. I focus on three key contributions to the eventual development of the rockumentary genre for three distinct reasons: the Warner Bros.' Vitaphone Varieties of the 1930s for their successful demonstration of synchronized sound technology and the central role they play in the innovation and commercialization of synchronized sound within the North American industry; the Soundies of the 1940s for their innovative strategies of visually representing popular musical performance in nonfictional shorts; and the feature-length film

Jazz on a Summer's Day (Bert Stern, USA, 1959) for its role in establishing a form for the organization of nonfiction footage of musical performances (specifically multi-artist events) in a feature-length format. *Jazz on a Summer's Day* is also significant for its illustration of two representational strategies I describe throughout my project as *journalistic* and *impressionistic*. These three contributions address the necessary pre-conditions for rockumentary, namely synchronized sound film and the re-organization of the popular music industry around recorded objects. These early examples illustrate the tendency for visual representations of musical performance to adapt existing formal conventions of narrative film style to nonfiction film.

Chapters 4 and 5 tell the story of rockumentary through the detailed textual analysis of key films, reception studies of those films, and documentary research. I apply the generic model developed in chapters one and two to offer a comprehensive history of the first two waves of the genre from its foundation in short subjects and television productions of the early-1960s to its feature-length theatrical form epitomized by a classical phase lasting from the late-1960s to mid-1970s. At the centre of this history are questions pertaining to formal style and aesthetics, the role of film and sound technologies in the evolution of the genre, and the intersection of film, music and popular culture manifest in rockumentary. I briefly consider the genre's 'turn' to television and home video in the 1980s and 1990s and the role played by independent productions and digital filmmaking in the genre's ongoing renaissance which was sparked by the release (and acclaim) of a number of rockumentaries in the 2000s. I explore the complexity of nonfictional representations of popular musical performance,

examine the synergistic relationship between the film and music industries, and review existing theories of performance in nonfiction film with the aim of re-fashioning these models for the purpose of examining films featuring musical performers as their subject.

Chapter 6 expands upon the discussion of sound-image relationships in nonfiction film and rockumentary developed throughout the dissertation by focusing specifically on the soundtrack of the rockumentary genre. The unique role played by sound recording and reproduction technology in the production and exhibition of concert films serves to challenge prevailing cultural beliefs—linked to both documentary's status as evidence and the authorizing role sight plays in the live performance of music—that "seeing is believing". Many of the issues in this section grow out of the questions of performance and representation developed in the preceding chapters. How do rockumentary films succeed or fail in visualizing musical practice and what are the "problems" of visual representations of rock? Conversely, how do rockumentary films—especially musical sequences and concert films—attend to the cultural status of recorded music? Do they reveal the true complexity of the sound-image relationships presented in the various currents of the genre and echo earlier debates concerning cinema's inherently realist or formalist nature? The central vein of inquiry I pursue is straightforward: what distinguishes nonfiction film in which the dynamic use of pro-filmic sound and multiple layers of performance are motivated and rationalized by the subject matter?

The conclusion examines the current state of the rockumentary genre and explores the complimentary, though occasionally competing, spaces of festival exhibition, theatrical

release, home video, and digital distribution. I summarize the key theoretical and analytical models adopted and developed within the dissertation and I identify avenues for further research which emphasize the place of new media (including interactive digital media) in contemporary rockumentary and its offspring. Appended to the text is a filmography of more than one hundred titles consulted during my research, including those examined in detail within the dissertation via case study.

The story of rockumentary is the story of film style, technology and popular music coalescing to produce an aesthetically rich, commercially successfully, and historically significant document of popular culture. It represents an understudied area of film and popular music history that provides an occasion to think through a range of material illustrating a history of the visualization of music and its relationship to various social and industrial contexts. It is precisely this opportunity for re-thinking the status of these films in documentary history (and the history of cinema at large) that I hope to motivate with this dissertation.

Chapter 1: Genre and Mode in Cinema

"Documentary is a clumsy description, but let it stand."—John Grierson[1]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines genre as "a particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose." Consolidation of a genre is the consequence of technological factors, industrial and cultural forces, and the discovery of new horizons of aesthetic possibility across a medium. Over time, genres allow producers and consumers with knowledge of these categorical distinctions to organize disparate artworks and media objects into seemingly coherent bodies of work, which in turn shapes audience expectations of these works. In an age of media that finds an inexhaustible supply of texts distributed and exchanged across vast networks that are both physical and virtual in nature, genre provides shorthand for organizing these works into manageable categories for expanding yet increasingly segmented audiences. In the world of cinema, these categories are used every day by filmmakers, fans, and critics alike, but we rarely stop to think about where genres come from, why we share so many common assumptions about generic categories (while entirely excluding some types of filmmaking from considerations of genre), and how genres provide critics and audiences a foundation for arguments concerning the artistic or cultural value of these works.

[1] John Grierson, "First Principles of Documentary (1946)," in *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1966), 145.

This chapter presents a review of genre theory and its place in film studies, highlighting the contributions of Rick Altman, Tzvetan Todorov, Steve Neale, and Tom Ryall (among others), before moving on to a discussion of documentary and the particular problems it poses to film genre theory. What follows is a mapping and critiquing of the distinctions between genres, modes of organization in cinema, and Bill Nichols' model of *modes of representation* in documentary in an effort to establish a foundation for the discussion of rockumentary as an audiovisual genre, one that adequately delimits the body of work and emphasizes the central role rock—as both a musical and cultural construct—plays in this formulation. Genre will be adopted within this dissertation as both a conceptual and critical tool with which the historical, stylistic, and cultural features of a specific corpus are brought into focus for reflection.

Genre Theory and Film

Rick Altman, in his study of genre in film, identifies Aristotle's opening remarks of *Poetics* as the basis of all genre theory and the quintessence of its manifestation in the classical era. Aristotle embarks upon his study of poetry "noting the essential quality of each" and

> […] inquir[ing] into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry. (*Poetics*)

With its emphasis on the structural and formal features of the text as the characteristics which dictate its generic qualities, Aristotle's categorization of poetry "set genre theory on to a virtually unbroken course of textual analysis," according to Altman. (Altman 1999, 2-3)

Horace would expand upon the Aristotelian tradition of textual structure and reinforce the authority of generic forms by arguing, in Altman's words, that "poets produce by imitating a predefined original sanctioned by the literary-critical oligarchy." (Ibid. 4) The perception that genres are somewhere "out there" and the circular logic that genres authorize those works categorized within them serves as the foundation for most models of genre and places at the forefront of all genre theory and criticism the power of these categories to both validate and inform the reproduction of a particular style or approach to artistic creation. It is a desire to remove any ambiguity from theories of genre and expand upon the narrow, textual focus of these classical accounts which prompts Altman to direct his energies toward the formulation of a theory of genre applicable specifically to cinema.

Film/Genre (1999) is organized as a series of responses to a set of questions about the nature of genre and is perhaps the most systematic study of genre in cinema available to film scholars. Charting the history of genre theory from its roots in Aristotle through literary genre theory (including Todorov, Ferdinand Brunetière, and Northrop Frye) to contemporary examples of film genre criticism in trade publications, Altman is discouraged by the persistence of myth-oriented approaches to genre like the one proposed by Frye, arguing that it "jeopardize[s] our ability to think of genres as anything other than the stable manifestations of more or less fundamental and permanent human concerns." (Altman 1999, 49)[2] Within film studies, Altman is equally dismayed by structuralist theories of genre (see Wright 1975; Schatz 1981; Cawelti 1986; Feuer 1993) which tend to overstate "the primacy of industry

[2]Altman is referring to Frye's comments on genre as "the study of convention" which is itself an instructive consideration of the categorization of literary texts. Altman, however, takes issue with Frye rooting these conventions in Greek poetry's symbolic use of physical nature (see Frye 1957, 95-9).

discourse, along with its broad effect on the mass audience." (Altman 1999, 15) Altman sets out to repair the damage caused by what he describes as "the unexpressed assumptions shared by genre theorists" when literary genre theory is uncritically adapted to studies of film genre, stressing that he "[does] not take for granted that film genre is the same thing as literary genre." (Ibid. 11) Among the ten assumptions he identifies as the most injurious to contemporary genre theory, the following three are particularly germane to the present study:

> Because genres are taken to be 'out there', existing independently of observers, genre theorists have generally sought to describe and define what they believe to be already existing genres rather than create their own interpretative categories, however applicable or useful.
>
> […] It is regularly assumed that producers, readers and critics all share the same interests in genre, and that genres serve those interests equally.
>
> […] Genre history holds a shifting and uncertain place in relation to genre theory. Most often simply disregarded by its synchronically oriented partner, genre history nevertheless cries out for increased attention by virtue of its ability to scramble generic codes, to blur established generic tableaux and to muddy accepted generic ideas. (Ibid. 12)

Across these three assumptions, Altman identifies those aspects of genre which demanded the most attention in his efforts to produce a theory of film genre: the phenomenon of genres coming into being and the problem of the circularity of genre theory and criticism; the relationship between industry and audience within the context of genres; and the disjunction between accounts of genre history and exercises in genre theory. Altman's work serves to focus the contributions of others in the field who collectively provide the moving parts for a working model of film genre which accents the textual, industrial, and cultural aspects of the

concept. We will consider each of these aspects of genre in an effort to establish a foundation for discussing a type of work often left out of such discussions: nonfiction.

The first dilemma in discussing genre in film (and nonfiction genres in particular) is locating the origins of genre categories and the circular way in which these categories are often identified and reproduced. Genres are, by their very definition, the "interpretive categories" described by Altman: constructions engineered and refined by producers and consumers within a reciprocal arrangement often unrecognizable to participants who are unwittingly beholden to existing generic categories in prior media as described by past commentators. Theme, setting, and character, among myriad other structural and stylistic qualities, are understood to determine the nature of the text and its relationship to other works of genre. But the question remains: what is the source of this criteria? Literary and cultural theorist Tzvetan Todorov, author of *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975) and *Genres in Discourse* (1990) and a key figure in Altman's theory, describes it best:

> Where do genres come from? Quite simply from other genres. A new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several; by inversion, by displacement, by combination. (Todorov 1990, 15)

Todorov argues pre-existing genres are re-combined and re-classified as specific structural features and stylistic traits are appropriated by, and adapted to, new mediums. The identification and re-codification of these textual features by producers and consumers within new contexts simultaneously result in new generic forms and reinforce existing genres. In this way, the circular nature of genre theory's reliance upon existing definitions and analytical

models mirrors the circular nature of genre categories themselves. Altman takes issue with the simplicity of this account and argues it "solves this problem all too cleverly: by locating the generic origin in some other medium, this approach indefinitely defers explanation of that origin. (Altman 1999, 30) However, Todorov's defence of this cyclical pattern and circular reasoning welds the discovery of genres and their cultural force to their very re-invention:

> […] we must understand that a text is not only the product of a pre-existing combinatorial system (constituted by all that is literature *in posse*); it is also a transformation of that system. (Todorov 1990, 7)

Altman's concerns regarding the identification of the origin of film genres in media preceding cinema overlooks the productive aspect of this system emphasized by Todorov—the creation of generic categories and genre texts is inherently transformational. Todorov's conception of genre accommodates the industrial and economic dimensions of these categories (identified by Altman as necessary to a proper theory of genre in film) and foregrounds the ways in which the explicitly textual features of genres are the productive work of creative individuals who consider the expectations of the audience.

The second aspect of film genre requiring our attention is thus the relationship between industry and audience, specifically, the complementary and competing interests held by creators, critics, audiences and industry in relation to genre and generic categories. One reason for the persistence and continued relevance of genre in contemporary media consumption and media criticism is the central role played by these categories in production processes and industrial strategy. This shifts genre from Altman's "out there" and gives it a

basis in the everyday, informing both creation and audience expectation. Genre categories extend to consider similarities identified in production practices, industrial strategies responsible for bringing these works to market, and audience expectations and responses to these works—codification across these domains is itself an attribute of genre. The relationship between these two levels of genre—as textual categories tied to marketing categories—is the basis for many studies of film genres.

Numerous histories of the Hollywood industry of the 1930s and 1940s (the era of dominant studios and the so-called 'classical' style of American cinema) position genre as the means by which the industrial and economic impulses of this elaborate studio system are organized and made successful (see Bordwell, Staiger, & Thompson 1988; Schatz 1981). Steve Neale describes this organization as analogous to the mass production of manufactured goods, explaining "genres provide a cost-effective equivalent to lines and ranges, producing a demand for similarities within the variety of product on offer and therefore minimizing the degrees of difference involved." (Neale 2000, 231) While the films from different genres might differ in the same way a full-sized pick-up truck is distinct from a compact sedan, films within a single genre vary little and require the same basic component parts not unlike the sub-classes of family sedan which generally differ only in their exterior form and styling. Altman invokes genre and the notion of *film cycles* as profit engines within film studios to illustrate the role industry plays in genre creation and categorization. While his comments in this instance refer to film cycles within Hollywood studios, the concept is adaptable to the industry as a whole. In this scenario, individual studios invest in productions which "imitate

the money-making qualities of their most lucrative films." (Altman 1999, 60) If this investment is justified by the audience response to these films (in dollars and cents, not merely populist acclaim), the production of additional films with those same "money-making qualities" occurs on an industry-wide scale and introduces the audience to a body of work preconceived as a genre and predisposed to generic categorization. (Consider the mainstreaming of slasher films during the 1980s as the quintessential contemporary example of the transformation of a focused film cycle into a full-fledged genre or sub-genre with significant industrial and cultural currency.) Profit is undeniably the primary motivation for the industry in the production and marketing of these cycles; the durability of film cycles is related to their economic performance. The long-term stability of genres, however, transcends these economic interests and is rooted in a deeper complex of textual, industrial, and cultural relationships. Film scholar Tom Ryall argues

> Genres were seen in social terms as institutions implying a bond, or contract, between producers (director, studio) and audience relating to the significance and meaning of what was on the screen. (Ryall 1998, 328)

Neale similarly contends "genre is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and its dimensions centrally include systems of expectation, categories, labels and names, discourses, texts and corpuses of texts, and the conventions that govern them all."(Neale 2000, 25-26) With an equal emphasis upon the textual and cultural systems informing film categorization and interpretation, such a definition of genre accommodates the role played by industries and audiences and is especially adaptable to nonfiction cinema. Neale continues his argument, stating this framework "requires thinking of genres as ubiquitous, multifaceted phenomena

rather than as one-dimensional entities to be found only within the realms of Hollywood cinema or of commercial popular culture." (Ibid. 28) Looking back to Altman's concerns regarding the circularity of genre theory, Neale offers a partial escape by first seeing genres as ways of organizing audience expectations (and therefore grounding their existence sociologically; i.e. the industry's recognition of a profitable film cycle and a potentially popular new, or newly revived, genre) and, second, by seeing a genre as a particular ordering of social discourses (so that genres are not defined by their unique character, but by their "work" on some pre-existing social content; i.e. the arrival of rock music sparks the desire of filmmakers to incorporate and capitalize upon this musical phenomenon and the result is an audiovisual genre entangled within the socio-cultural context of rock itself). In this way, Neale's formulation approaches the theory of mode I discuss and lobby for in the next section of this chapter. Moving away from theories of genre tied to institutionally-based fiction filmmaking (i.e. Hollywood), and instead accepting genre as ubiquitous and both textually and culturally determined, I contend documentary forms such as rockumentary become suitable objects for investigation through the lens of genre theory.

The third aspect of genre we must address in our consideration of genre in cinema is the difference at play in accounts of genre history and exercises in genre theory. Todorov proposes we distinguish between historical accounts of generic categories and theoretical ones. He identifies *historical genres*—"those genres resulting from observation of [textual] reality"—and *theoretical genres*—"those genres resulting from a deduction of a theoretical order." (Todorov 1975, 13-15) This distinction between the *historical* and the *theoretical* can

be understood as the difference between the two basic methodologies in genre studies, one concerned with the analysis of films whose generic character has already been established, and another with the theoretical analysis of a corpus that has not been previously identified as a genre within industrial, popular or scholarly discourse:

> Genres are thus entities that can be described from two different viewpoints, that of empirical observation and that of abstract analysis. In a given society, the recurrence of certain discursive properties is institutionalized, and individual texts are produced and perceived in relation to the norm constituted by that codification. A genre, whether literary or not, is nothing other than this codification of discursive properties. (Todorov 1990, 17)

Todorov argues "we will have a useful and operative notion that remains in keeping with the prevailing usage of the word if we agree to call genres only the classes of texts that have been historically perceived as such." (Ibid.) For Todorov, the central plank in this deductive venture is the observable reality of a category in history. In this way we recognize the possibility that the perception of a genre might first occur in the popular imagination before it is subsequently codified within a corpus of texts, returning us to a place where industries, audiences, and critics play a key role in genre categorization. However, Todorov argues that a complete knowledge of all the works that constitute a proposed genre is not a prerequisite for setting out on the task of organizing and discussing a generic category. (Ibid. 4) Deduction, not comprehensive study or immediate experience, is the first step in establishing the boundaries of generic categories, and in this way historical and theoretical genres are inextricably linked.

Theories of film genre arrived alongside a wave of film criticism from the mid-twentieth-century which appealed to the status of genre in film study's parent fields (primarily literary studies) as the discipline settled into its own beginning in the late-1960s. Specifically, by linking the themes and narratives of popular cinema to the heritage of literary canons, theatre and painting, authors such as Andre Bazin (1953), Robert Warshow (1964), and Leo Braudy (1976) argued that recognizing the ritual and ideological structures active in cinema established the artistic value and cultural significance of the medium. In subsequent waves of film criticism and scholarship, genre served as an important backdrop when the elevation of less venerated bodies of work or under-appreciated filmmakers was perceived as necessary for an understanding of conventions and constraints ungoverned by the sanctifying power of the discipline's most powerful current, auteurist criticism. Ryall explains

> [G]enre criticism confronted aspects of popular film—conventionality, formulas, stars, industrial production systems, publicity—which jarred with conventional approaches to artistic production and were often overlooked by auteur critics. (Ryall 1998, 328)

Ryall identifies *generic systems*, *individual genres*, and *individual films* as the three levels of analysis to which genre theory, and Todorov's aforementioned concept of historical genres in particular, addresses itself in cinema:

> The first, and most general, concerns the definition of *generic system*, which relates individual genres to each other in terms of broad shared principles; the second is the analysis of *individual genres*, defining their internal logics and conventions; and the third is the analysis of *individual films* in relation to a genre or genres in the case of many Hollywood pictures which draw from and relate to more than a single genre. […] Generic systems and genres do not exist in the way in which individual films exist,

> but rather are abstractions based partly, though not entirely, upon individual films and operating in a different logical universe. (Ibid. 329)

Generic systems should be understood as the industrial or cultural context of genre films and filmmaking, whereas individual genres and films are the products of those systems. Ryall's model expands upon Todorov's work in which genre exists not only in the text itself but as a tool in the production of an artwork and a means of understanding and contemplating that artwork; he describes genres as "modes of writing" for authors and "horizons of expectation" for readers. (Todorov 1990, 18) In both the Todrov and Ryall schemes, genre plays an elementary role in the cultural contract between creators and consumers. Altman argues "films with weak generic ties usually depend heavily on their own internal logic, whereas genre films make heavy use of *intertextual* references." (Altman 25, emphasis in original) Understood from this point-of-view, generic systems are the "conceptual environment" within which a filmmaker understands her work will be situated and in which the audience will place the film to give it sense. (Ryall 1998, 329) When we acknowledge the virtual life of genre in the form of the generic systems and intertextual networks across which generic works circulate and draw their meaning, the divide between research in genre history and exercises in genre theory narrows to an imperceptibly fine point.

In many ways, genres are categories produced by the point of contact between artists, industry, critics and audiences. The preceding section offers a review of genre theory and the specific problems we face in adapting a general theory of genre to cinema. Using the work of Altman, Todorov, Neale and others, we considered the origins of genres and the problem of the circularity of genre theory and criticism, the relationship between genre, industry, and

audience, and the disjunction between accounts of genre history and exercises in genre theory. Ryall, a significant contributor to this review of genre in cinema, offers the following commentary which summarizes many of the important points raised in the body of literature cited above:

> The central assumption of genre criticism [in film] is that a work of art and communication arises from and is inserted into a specific social context and that its meaning and significance is [are] constrained and limited by this context. Individual artists and filmmakers manipulate signs and meanings, but in contexts which are authorized by communal public consent, and these contexts, in the case of American cinema, we call genres. The 'rules' of a genre—the body of conventions—specify the ways in which the individual work is to be read and understood, forming the implicit context in which that work acquires significance and meaning. (Ibid. 328)

Modes of Organization in Cinema, Modes of Representation in Documentary

Over the last decade or so, the idea of genre in film has been contested by new approaches based on the notion of "modes". Christine Gledhill, in her recent work on melodrama, defines modality as an "aesthetic articulation adaptable across a range of genres, across decades, and across national cultures." (Gledhill in Gledhill & Williams 2000, 229) In this scheme, fiction, nonfiction and experimental filmmaking represent various modes of organization rather than generic divisions in and of themselves. Documentary would therefore represent a particular filmmaking practice encompassing a range of genres and film cycles, and not a thematic or stylistic category in and of itself. Understood more simply as

"recurrent structures within films and recurrent expectations that spectators bring to films," film scholar Alan Williams' definition of genre is perhaps most easily understood as the division between these modes of narrative film, documentary film, and experimental film. (Williams 1984, 121) We might understand the appeal of modes as a solution to the problems posed by those kinds of filmmaking, particularly documentary and experimental forms, which traditional genre theory could not easily accommodate with their emphasis upon narrative. Recent editions of film studies textbooks offer the clearest illustration of this taxonomy of organizational modes, particularly those from Bordwell and Thompson, and Pramaggiore and Wallis. The decision to identify modes of organization in advance of genres in these cases is a pedagogical one, but it speaks to a broader understanding of the specificity of genre and its relationship to society.

The premise is this: whereas narrative fiction films are organized around the cause and effect logic of storytelling, and audience expectations differ based on individual genres and stars (among other things), documentary and experimental films are organized around their own sets of logics and expectations (Pramaggiore & Wallis 2007, 11-13) In the case of documentary, Pramaggiore and Wallis argue, the audience expects the on-screen stories to have a basis in real-world events and formal characteristics which differ from those of narrative fiction film (e.g. interviews, re-enactment, and commentary). Individual documentary genres would, therefore, have their own sets of more specific thematic, structural, and stylistic cues. Generic divisions within the documentary mode are based almost entirely on these thematic cues (e.g. nature; news and politics) with structural and

stylistic elements exerting control in cases where technique is an overwhelming preoccupation (e.g. direct cinema portraits of everyday subjects; consider *Warrendale,* Allan King, CAN, 1967). Where this particular version of the theory of modes of organization in cinema breaks down is Pramaggiore and Wallis' persistent claim that fiction film is analogous to commercial film, whereas documentary and experimental filmmakers reside outside the mainstream of commercial cinema no matter their intentions or the financial success achieved by their work. (Ibid. 280) In fact, the difference is far more nuanced and concerns a complex network of creative, economic and social decisions which are not reducible to the represented mode or genre. Nonetheless, the model is valuable as a foundation for differentiating genres within the documentary mode of organization.

By recognizing fiction, nonfiction and experimental forms of cinema as modes of organization as opposed to genres in and of themselves, we return to a position that precedes the notion of genres and are provided with a way of conceptualizing the difference between various forms of cinema in less prescriptive, more inclusive ways. No longer is the internal structure or formal design of a text the baseline for evaluating the appropriateness of a generic category. Instead, structural and stylistic features combine with audience and industrial expectations (in large part dictated by the viewing environment or distribution avenues) to give us ground rules about what we should expect from the text. The breadth of modes as opposed to the depth of genres is evinced in the manner in which modes are largely trans-cultural while genres may not be. For example, Westerns from Japan, Italy, and the United States may share genre-specific iconography but the socio-cultural meaning of this

iconography could be radically different from context to context. In contrast to this, modal categories such as fiction and documentary are relatively stable from one context to another. By distinguishing between modes and genres as higher and lower conceptual orders, one can treat documentary (and experimental film, and animated film) as a category of films with its own generic subdivisions.

Understood as a mode of organization which favours (but is not limited to) non-actors in unscripted scenarios, documentary's relationship to genre has been a problematic one. Grierson divided documentary form and practice between higher and lower orders: the former category is ascribed to films which "creatively shape" actuality footage to "achieve the ordinary virtues of an art," while the latter is assigned to the purely journalistic exercise of newsreel compilation or lecture films. (Grierson 1966, 146) Nonetheless, he argues all documentaries "represent different qualities of observation, different intentions in observation, and, of course, very different powers and ambitions at the stage of organizing material." (Ibid. 145) The main tendency in the categorization of documentary within film studies is one that organizes the films on the basis of practice rather than subject matter. Most histories of documentary cinema offer a typology of filmmakers (i.e. the evolution of *explorer*, *observer*, etc. outlined in Barnouw 1974) that roughly approximates a chronological breakdown of evolving practices predicated on technologies-in-use, formal conventions, subject position and ethical considerations (Corner 1996; Guynn 1990; Nichols 1991; Renov 2004; Winston 1995). There is no breakdown of difference in practice within a given

historical moment as it might relate to a generic category, and documentary audiences are too often absent from these histories.

The most systematic categorization of documentaries in contemporary film studies (and by far the most cited) is Bill Nichols' "documentary modes of representation" first presented in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (1991) and subsequently distilled and refined in his introductory textbook, *Introduction to Documentary* (2001). Nichols describes these modes of representation as

> basic ways of organizing texts in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions. […] These categories are partly the work of the analyst or critic and partly the product of documentary filmmaking itself. (Nichols 2001, 32)

Nichols views documentary, not as a genre but as a mode of organization which itself has various subdivisions which favour particular ways of inscribing both the filmmaker and audience through its presentation of knowledge. He proposes four modes of representation in his original formulation of the model: expository, observational, interactive and reflexive. Based in part on the nature of their production and the demands of the subject matter, documentary films illustrate these modes through a combination of formal conventions and directorial intent, "[providing] specific expectations viewers anticipate having fulfilled." (Ibid. 99) Despite occasionally using language which works against a distinction between 'documentary as mode' versus 'documentary as genre', Nichols' offers the modes of representation as the foundation for a general theory of genre in nonfiction film. The emphasis Nichols places on "modes of address" has some echoes in the attempt by Neale and

others to develop a theory for fiction feature films that is similarly attentive to audience positioning and the "horizons of expectation" suggested by Todorov.

The expository mode of address is typified by a clearly established rhetorical position and its direct address to the viewer, most often in the form of titles, graphics and voice-over narration. (Ibid. 34) In this mode the image-track is often subservient to the soundtrack and serves largely to illustrate or counter the argument made by text itself. WWII-era productions from Britain's General Post Office Film Unit (GPO) including *Night Mail* (Harry Watt and Basil Wright, UK, 1936) and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) including *Churchill's Island* (Stuart Legg, CAN, 1941) nicely illustrate Nichols' expository mode with their booming narration (often described as the "voice of God") and the skilful compilation of archival images.[3] The organization of the text typically requires that a solution is presented for any questions or problems posed within the script. (Ibid. 38) For this reason, the mode is criticized for its didacticism and conservative formal design. Contemporary forms of the expository mode of address might include television news features and the Academy Award-winning environmental documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, USA, 2006).

The observational mode of address "stresses non-intervention of the filmmaker" and, as a result, forces viewers to engage in the text and consider the ethical dimension of nonfictional representation in ways which contrast directly with the expository mode. (Ibid.

[3]For an historical account of "voice of God" narration in this era of documentary, see Charles Wolfe, "Historicising the 'Voice of God': The Place of Vocal Narration in Classical Documentary," *Film History* 9.2 (1997).

38-39) Abetted by the rapid development of light-weight and mobile film and sound recording devices beginning in the 1950s, the observational mode is perhaps the pre-eminent form of documentary throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In this mode "films cede 'control' over the events that occur in front of the camera more than any other mode" while the filmmaker relies heavily on editing, as opposed to forms of direct address, to establish a rhetorical frame for the text. (Ibid. 38) Nichols explains:

> The sense of exhaustive (and telling) observation frequently comes not only from the ability of the filmmaker to record particularly revealing moments but also from the ability to include moments representative of lived time itself rather than what we might call "story time" (time propelled by the cause/effect logic of classical narrative where an economy of carefully justified and well-motivated actions prevails). (Ibid. 40)

The experiential nature of lived time as it is emphasized within the observational mode, in combination with the absence of the filmmaker within the frame of the world under examination, communicates a "sense of unmediated and unfettered access to the world." (Ibid. 43) Nichols offers Frederick Wiseman's various studies of institutional organizations as exemplary of the observational mode, and to this we might add Allan King's portrait of emotionally disturbed children in a Toronto-area group home, *Warrendale*, and the more recent *Être et avoir* (Nicolas Phillibert, FRA, 2002) as equally potent illustrations.

Direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* are terms often incorrectly used interchangeably to describe observational documentary films from both sides of the Atlantic throughout the 1960s and early-1970s. Used correctly, the terms describe two distinct, highly influential, but ultimately short-lived movements within documentary history whose own purveyors have done much to confuse the issue. Nichols uses the two movements (and the accompanying

confusion over their ability to accurately describe the intent of the filmmakers and the on-screen content) to distinguish between films adopting the observational mode and those invested in exploring an interactive mode of address. Where practitioners of an observational mode seek to refrain from actively participating in the events portrayed on-screen, the interactive mode is distinguished by the interventions of the filmmaker. These documentaries "stress images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration (images that demonstrate the validity, or possibly, doubtfulness, of what witnesses state)" as opposed to the omniscient textual authority epitomized by the expository mode and detected in the observational mode. (Ibid. 44) The interview is emphasized as a means of acquiring knowledge and often foregrounds the filmmaker's role in the investigation. The format encourages viewers to make their own assessment of the interviewer's conduct, the ethical or political cost of the exchange for both the filmmaker and social actors, and with whom the voice of authority rests within the text. Nichols argues

> When interviews contribute to an expository mode of representation, they generally serve as evidence for the filmmaker's, or text's, argument. When interviews contribute to an interactive mode of representation, they generally serve as evidence for an argument presented as the product of the interaction of filmmaker and subject. (Ibid. 48)

Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's revolutionary *Chronicle of a Summer* (FRA, 1960) is recognized as a hallmark of the interactive mode of address for its innovative form and content. Michael Moore is perhaps the most famous contemporary documentary filmmaker whose work, most notably *Bowling for Columbine* (CAN/USA/GER, 2002) and *Sicko* (USA, 2007), relies primarily on the conventions described by Nichols' interactive mode.

Whereas the interactive mode emphasizes the encounter between the filmmaker and subject, the reflexive mode of representation emphasizes the encounter between filmmaker and viewer. (Ibid. 60) The reflexive mode adapts many of the tools and strategies of the interactive mode in the interest of examining the process of representation itself. The filmmaker might appear on-screen or on the soundtrack, not only to foreground the acquisition of knowledge, but to self-consciously "address the question of *how* we talk about the historical world." (Ibid. 57) Nichols argues the reflexivity of these texts is not solely rhetorical and often adapts formal devices (including deconstruction, interactivity, irony, parody, and satire) in service to the text's political goals. The reflexive mode is not a by-product of the interactive experimentation which exploded in the 1960s but rather a fixture of documentary practice since the early experiments of Dziga Vertov (*Man with a Movie Camera*, USSR, 1929) through contemporary projects with an emphasise on re-enactment (*The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris, USA, 1988) and ground-breaking animated documentaries which balance the political and the intensely personal (*Waltz with Bashir*, Ari Folman, ISR/GER/FRA, 2008).

The central critique of this paradigm concerns the perception that Nichols' presentation of these modes is based on a chronological development of the various practices (roughly proceeding from a classical era typified by WWII-era productions from the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States). The most sustained critique is presented by Stella Bruzzi who challenges the "Darwinian" nature of Nichols' genealogy of documentary modes and questions the implication that "documentary has pursued a developmental progression

towards greater introspection and subjectivity" and "has been determined by the endless quest of documentary filmmakers for better and more authentic ways to represent reality." (Bruzzi 2000, 2)[4] Additionally, there is some confusion within Nichols' text as to whether or not he understands these modes to operate independently of one another. In response to these critiques, in *Introduction to Documentary* Nichols amends his modes of representation, stressing that each overlaps and interacts with the other, and describes them as "something like sub-genres of the documentary film genre itself". (Nichols 2001, 99) The expository, observational and reflexive modes remain while the interactive mode is re-labelled "participatory." Fifth and sixth modes—the poetic and the performative—are also introduced. The poetic mode describes documentary films which "sacrifice the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a very specific location in time and place [in order] to explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions." (Ibid. 102) Links between this style of documentary and various modernist avant-garde movements are plentiful and will prove fruitful for the discussion of the rockumentary genre which follows. The performative mode of representation, like the poetic, emphasizes "the subjective qualities of experience and memory that depart from factual recounting." (Ibid. 131) Passages of fictional material would not be out of place in the performative documentary, nor would misinformation in the absence of a correction, in an effort to foster new forms of engagement on the part of the viewer. Unfortunately, in revising and updating his modes of representation with these two additional categories, Nichols fails to step away

[4] Bruzzi undermines her critique of Nichols to some degree by adopting his modes of representation throughout her text and employing many of the same film examples within her analysis; see Bruzzi 2000, Chapter 6, "The Performative Documentary: Barker, Dineen, Broomfield," 153-180.

entirely from the chronological order of each mode's appearance and popularity, once again presenting a linear narrative of invention, refinement and decline (Ibid. 138; see Table 6.1 for a graphic illustration of this chronology) which belies the dynamic nature of documentary practice. The result is a model of representational modes which falls back to a position which identifies successive schools or cycles of films rather than providing a stable basis for new studies of documentary genres.

However, both theoretically and in actuality, documentary genres would incorporate various modes of representation—there is no clear mapping of the various documentary modes onto singular film genres. A rigorously researched interview film on the subject of the Holocaust (*Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann, FRA, 1985) is not in the same documentary category as a poorly conceived and executed profile of an unknown musician (*Jandek on Corwood*, Chad Freidrichs, USA, 2003) merely because both filmmakers adopt an interactive or participatory mode of address. Nichols' paradigm provides a crucial link between theories of documentary film and studies of film genres, especially attempts by Neale and others to develop a genre theory for fiction film that is equally attentive to the position of the audience and Todorov's notion of "horizons of expectation". However, Nichols doesn't go so far as to account for the absence of those theories in existing histories of nonfiction film, and his paradigm occasionally contradicts intuitive understandings of what makes film categorically similar or distinct. Perhaps most significantly, the various modes of representation fail to explicitly delineate the ever-changing relationship of form and authorial intent to the evidentiary status of documentary film.

Documentary Cinema as Evidence

Alongside the representational modes offered by Nichols, a dominant strain in documentary film studies has been the categorization and analysis of texts in strictly ethical terms that recall the ways in which one talks about photographs or legal testimony more than the ways in which one talks about film. Questions concerning categories of documentary cinema and individual genres must acknowledge the status of nonfiction films as documents and engage with the issue of how this status serves the perceived authenticity of documentary representations. Debates concerning the truth status of documentary both moves away from traditional preoccupations with genre definition and then, in their suggestion that documentaries are particular ways of organizing evidence, moves us back towards the usefulness of a such a thing as modes of organization. The historical specificity of rockumentary—in terms of the music itself, film style, the use of technology, and cultural significance of the subject matter—demands the present study engage in discourses on the status of nonfiction film as evidentiary material.

The roots of the documentary form are found in both the arrival of the term 'documentary' in the early nineteenth century to denote "evidence or proof that is written" and its coining with reference to nonfiction film by John Grierson (within the context of a film review of *Moana* in the *New York Sun*, 18 February 1926), both codified in the 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Concerning documentary's unspoken relationship

to the 'real' and a dominant realist aesthetic within narrative cinema, documentary film theorist Michael Renov states "every documentary issues a 'truth claim' of a sort, positing a relationship to history which exceeds the analogical status of its fictional counterpart." (Renov 1986, 71) The key theoretical writings on the topic of this historical link between nonfiction film and evidentiary material are forwarded by Brian Winston (1993), Philip Rosen (1993) and the aforementioned work by Nichols (1991).

We might consider the basic premise behind various representational strategies of documentary cinema, no matter the subject matter, is the recording of an action unstaged for the camera (however banal), the resulting event, and its aftermath. That the audience understands documentary footage as analogous to evidence is the result of a historical process that has, from the outset, situated still- and motion picture photography of nonfictional subjects within the field of science. In "The Documentary Film as Scientific Inscription", Winston interrogates this founding myth of documentary cinema and examines the links between the photographic reproduction of artwork in the mid-nineteenth century and the act of filmic recording at the turn of the century. (Winston in Renov 1993, 38) Within a chronology that connects these two points in history, Winston establishes the introduction of the photographic apparatus to the scientific realm for the purposes of observation and preservation, suggesting "photography's scientific ability to produce an image mechanically is the earnest of its accuracy as a copy of the original." (Ibid. 39) For the public, photography as a practice within the sciences confirms

> that seeing is believing, and that the photographic camera never lies; or rather: the camera lies no more than does the thermometer, the microscope, the hygrometer, and

> so on. All these devices produce analogues of nature. That the camera can be manipulated more easily than, say, the thermometer is less significant than the fact that both instruments produce a representation of reality. (Ibid. 40)

In this way, the scientific and the evidential are bound up with one another, seemingly indistinguishable, "thus, documentarists cannot readily avoid the scientific and evidential because those contexts are 'built-in' to the cinematographic apparatus." (Ibid. 41) Synthesizing debates within film studies on the issue of the evidentiary status of documentary cinema with similar discourses from popular music studies examining the status of the recording and the nature of contemporary live performance will lay the foundation for the discussion of documentary soundtracks later in this dissertation.

In his essay "Document and Documentary", Philip Rosen further problematizes the notion of documentary as an empirical format and introduces historiography as a means by which the function and contribution of documentary cinema can be assessed critically. He discusses the differences between those media with the capacity for indexical signification, specifically the possibility of liveness within broadcasting technologies such as radio and television, and the "impossibility" of liveness in documentary cinema despite its production of a "representation […] with some degree of participation by the referential object". (Rosen in Renov 1993, 60) He argues

> [the] availability of the representations of a reality to spectators is subject to noticeable delay because of the time necessary to process, manufacture, and/or distribute the representations. As a result, this latter class of media [i.e. cinema] generally presupposes a temporal disjunction between the referential events producing

> them and audience apprehension of them, so that their representations become fixed as preservations from a past. (Ibid.)

Rosen's discussion builds towards the suggestion that "documentary cinema, whose reality is necessarily from the past, may embody different, more 'historical' expectations" than those possible in 'live' media such as broadcast news. (Ibid.) Specifically, Rosen argues for the recognition of documentary cinema as an exercise in historiography, "as a mode of understanding the nature, potential, and functions of cinema and indexical representations" that produces historical meaning. (Ibid. 65) While the status of documentary images captured on digital video, simultaneously subject to both post-production processes and instantaneous dissemination, complicates the evidentiary status of documentary cinema within the contemporary mediascape, it doesn't upset Rosen's claim that a sense of the 'live' pervades both film and video documentaries. Moreover, any distinction underscores the usefulness of 'mode' as a description of documentary practice which includes a wide range of genres based both on the indexical relationship of the image to reality and on the rhetoric of truthfulness differentially applied in different modes of representation.

Conclusion: Documentary Genres

Genres are categories used to organize and distinguish between types of art and describe a range of creative practices and social discourses. Genre studies take into account structural and formal features of texts, including stylistic conventions and cultural iconography, and extend beyond the text itself to consider aspects of the industrial and cultural context within which the text is produced and circulated. Genres are not simply categories describing "a

particular form, style, or purpose" but rather a matrix of textual, industrial, and socio-cultural systems of meaning and exchange we map onto objects. Most importantly, genre in cinema is not limited to the domain of narrative works but is completely adaptable to works of nonfiction.

Documentary is a category which can be theorized at different levels, and any exhaustive consideration of documentary must consider them all. As modes, documentaries are specific kinds of institutionalized film experiences distinct from those of fictional narratives and the realm of experimental film and video. As genres, different categories of documentary mobilize different, more restricted sets of expectations. These categories are overwhelmingly based on thematic interests and their mode of address, defined by Nichols as different representational strategies which favour particular ways of inscribing both the filmmaker and audience through their presentation of knowledge. Finally, as forms of empirical evidence, documentaries offer particular rhetorics of truthfulness which the audience must negotiate when considering the argument or narrative presented therein. This complexity is generally not served by generic models established for fiction film. Further complicating matters are those documentary genres which have as their primary component another generic form. The following chapter introduces such a documentary genre—the rockumentary—and examines theories of genre in popular music in an effort to establish a model of genre appropriate to this category of nonfictional audio-visual texts.

Chapter 2: Genre in Popular Music &

A Typology of the Rockumentary

> "Rock 'n' roll smells phony and false. It is sung, played and written for the most part by cretinous goons and by means of its almost imbecilic reiteration, and sly, lewd, in plain fact dirty lyrics... it manages to be the martial music of every side-burned delinquent on the face of the earth."
>
> - Frank Sinatra, quoted in "Why They Rock 'n' Roll—And Should They?" Gertrude Samuels, *New York Times*, 12 January 1958; reprinted in David Manning White, *Popular Culture* (1975), 360.

Rockumentary is a documentary genre (which is to say it is a *genre* within the documentary *mode of organization*) which came to prominence in the mid-to-late 1960s in harmony with the mainstream commercial and popular success of rock music. Comprised of films about rock music and related idioms, the rockumentary category describes films which usually consist of a combination of performance footage, interviews, and undirected material within a complex system of stylistic conventions, representational strategies, and sound-image relationships, all entrenched within extra-filmic systems of meaning and exchange. As a body of work it traces the broader history of documentary practice since WWII, at times serving to reshape that history. It provides one of the clearest examples of documentary's limits and potentials during this period and contributes to the development of documentary film and popular music generally, and rock music and rock culture specifically. This dissertation argues rockumentary is a complex, hybrid genre that brings into focus various elements of

documentary filmmaking practice and the widely understood thematic, performative, and industrial conventions of rock music. I will illustrate that the rigid structural and thematic dimensions of rockumentary, coupled with its continuing presence and popularity in our cultural imagination, invite the application of genre theory in distinguishing its features and setting the limits for a discussion of this corpus.

We must first distinguish between those films we discuss in terms of their genre affiliation and generic qualities and those films with no such affiliation or attributes. Genre as a conceptual tool is capable of organizing films into distinct categories and serves to distinguish rockumentary from other documentaries about music. Recalling Steve Neale's definition of genre (examined in the previous chapter) which understands these categories as ways of organizing audience expectations and a particular ordering of social discourses, films understood as belonging to a genre obtain their textual and extra-textual significance from the genre as a whole, whereas "components [of films unrecognized as belonging to any particular genre]—[such as] character, setting, plot, techniques, etc.—assume their significance as they are integrated into the individual film itself." (Neale 2000, 208) It is the repetition of these components within a genre that establishes conventions comprehensible to an audience. (Schatz 1981, 10) In the case of rockumentary (or documentary cinema generally) we might include subject matter, industrial synergies (i.e. record companies producing films featuring their artists), the context of distribution and reception, and prior knowledge of the subject on the part of the audience as components that accrue towards the identity of the genre.

While the rockumentary is a category of films I propose we discuss in terms of genre, it is a genre which has at its foundation a musical form that is itself considered a genre. The question thus becomes whether or not the music genre and its values and traditions shape the documentaries categorized here as rockumentary. The short answer is yes, the values and traditions of rock shape the rockumentary. But this chapter first addresses the notion of genre within popular music, and secondly, engages with the contested category of "rock" within popular music and popular culture at large. Arriving as they do at a moment of profound culture and industrial change, rock music and rockumentary engage in shifting conceptions of 'the popular' in mainstream society and challenge notions of authenticity as they relate to musical genres and performance in documentary. It is thus necessary to examine models of music genre which, like those of Altman, Neale, and Ryall in the context of cinema, acknowledge the complex textual, industrial, and cultural dimensions of popular music. Finally, I offer a review of existing literature on the subject of rockumentary, limited as it is, demonstrating the value of approaching this corpus from the perspective of genre theory and history and the futility of undertaking an analysis of these films in the absence of such a framework. I will conclude this chapter by re-introducing my proposed definition of rockumentary and outlining a typology of the currents and trends which constitute the category.

Genre in Popular Music Studies

Popular music studies is an interdisciplinary field drawing upon such areas as musicology, sociology, communication studies, and cultural studies. While the term "popular music" should be understood as referring to any music which is written, performed, and disseminated to a mass audience, it is a label generally used to describe twentieth and twenty-first century forms of commercially made recorded music. (Negus 1997, 5)[1] Many popular music scholars adapt or refer to theories of film genre in their discussion of genre within popular music (cf. Frith 1996; Brackett 2002; Anderson 2006). Genres in music "consist of ways of categorizing popular music so as to create a connection between musical styles, producers, musicians and consumers." (Brackett 2002, 66) As with cinema, models of genre in popular music struggle to balance theoretical tools with analytical integrity and the simple common-sense categories used by fans and the industry. Like the film industry, the mainstream music industry was first organized around categories with the objective of assisting producers and distributors in identifying markets in need of exploitation, creators in finding a commercial niche in need of filling, and audiences in finding products of interest in a rapidly expanding marketplace. As a result, categorical divisions in popular music are not unlike those in cinema. Theories of genre in both disciplines oscillate between broad definitions of what we now understand as *modes* (fiction as opposed to nonfiction; symphony

1 This definition is adequate given the present study's focus on a decidedly later-twentieth century collection of film, music, industries, and audiences but it fails to recognize the place of "the popular" through history. Indeed, the very complexity of defining the "popular" in culture and music is the focus of Simon Frith's extensive study, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996); readers are directed to that volume for a comprehensive discussion of how taste is constructed and expressed in relation to popular music.

as opposed to jazz) and those of *genres* based upon a loose mix of stylistic features, industrial prerogatives, and audience expectations. David Brackett argues

> Genres do not consist of essential, unvarying characteristics, but rather exist as a group of stylistic tendencies, codes, conventions, and expectations that become meaningful in relation to one another at a particular moment in time (cf. Fabbri, 1981: 53; Toynbee, 2000: 103; Neale, 1980: 19). (Brackett 2002, 67)

Franco Fabbri, whose work forms the basis of many contemporary accounts of genre in popular music studies, defines musical genre as "a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (Fabbri 1981, 52): formal and technical rules; semiotic rules; behavioural rules; social and ideological rules; commercial and juridical rules. The relative importance of these rules varies from genre to genre, and for those "musical events" which are situated at the intersection of two or more genres, we can understand them as belonging to each of these genres simultaneously. (Ibid. 52) An examination of these rules, and a review of work from Fabbri's contemporaries who are equally invested in the study of music genres, reveals the limits and potentials of definitions of popular music genres in general, and of that of rock music in particular.

Simon Frith, in his discussion of Fabbri's work, describes the formal and technical rules of genre as rules of musical form and structure which include playing conventions, rhythmic and melodic rules, the skill-set of the musicians, and the instruments in use (e.g. amplified or acoustic). (Frith 1996, 91) These rules might also extend to the production aesthetics of musical recordings (e.g. indie rock or other "lo-fi" genres) and the particular relationships of voice to instruments during live performance or on records. (Ibid.) Formal

and technical rules of music genres are analogous to the narrative and stylistic conventions identified in film genres but extend to textual characteristics such as film stocks and video formats not always associated with film categories. These rules are manifest in the textual features immediately available to listeners and generally serve as the first point of reference when popular music is categorized.

Semiotic rules are those rules of musical genre which dictate how meaning is conveyed be it "referential, emotional, imperative, phatic, metalinguistic, or poetic." (Fabbri 1981, 56) These rules are not necessarily musical, "nor do they necessarily refer to the musical text itself," which Fabbri argues by way of explaining, "often 'how you are seated' says more about the music that will be performed than a poster does." (Ibid. 57) Semiotic rules of musical genre include those non-textual aspects of the music which the listener herself is often responsible for inscribing, or the implied meaning of the actions of listeners in relation to the performer. Formal and technical rules of musical genre intersect with semiotic rules in subtle yet complex ways. The aggressive tonality and percussive features of some rhythmic electronic music, for example, might signify danceability in one generic category yet serve as a call for focused listening in another. Textual features of the music, formally and technically grounded, often require semiotic meaning for their generic affiliation to be fully recognizable.

Behavioural rules of musical genre, as they are understood by Frith, "cover performance rituals in a widely defined sense. These are gestural rules, [...] they determine the ways in which musical skill and technique, on the one hand, and musical personality, on the other, are displayed." (Frith 1996, 92) Using the examples of a Bruce Springsteen concert

and a live Kraftwerk performance, Frith argues the different behavioural rules which govern these musical events extend to offstage elements such as films, videos, and press material and the behaviour of the the audience as well. (Ibid.) Springsteen's rock credentials are reinforced by the working-class wardrobe he wears on-stage and off, and the raucous behaviour of the crowd at his shows and in his videos, whereas the virtuosity of Kraftwerk is communicated through their passive displays of programming prowess and the un-ironic lack of engagement of the robotic-looking (and in some cases, fully robotized) Man Machine characters presented by the group both on stage and in the press. Central to the discussion of performance in rock and rockumentary is the power of behavioural rules of musical genre to "reflect what performers (and listeners) are meant to be and thus how their "realness" as stars and communities is indicated." (Ibid. 93) Behavioural rules play a decisive role in interpreting codes of performance in rock and are central to the debates concerning authenticity in rock culture.

Fabbri next identifies social and ideological rules of musical genre and attaches them to a participant's awareness "of the social meaning and structure of that in which they are participating." (Fabbri 1981, 58) Issues concerning age, ethnicity, and gender within and across musical genres are manifest in these rules; Fabbri explains "the division of labour typical to a genre is also a rule, and again, the link between genre and certain age groups or social classes can become a rule [...]". (Ibid. 58) Frith argues these same rules extend to "[...] cover the social image of the musician regardless of reality" and in this way are bound up with the previously discussed semiotic rules:

> These are the rules concerning the ethic or gender divisions of labour, for example, and in general, reflect what the music is meant to stand for as a social force, its account of an ideal world as well as of the real one. (Frith 1996, 93)

Linking the formal, technical, and behaviour rules of music genres to the social and ideological, Brackett argues "[...] the elements of music which are important or pertinent to a detailed description and analysis are interwoven with the social context in which they occur." (Brackett 2002, 67) Indeed, even the social act of naming a musical category plays a role in genres coming into being. Like Altman before him, Fabian Holt emphasizes the power of industry and audience in labelling a category of works as a key step in the genre-fication of those works:

> Discourse plays a major role in genre making. A genre category can only be established if the music has a name. Naming a music is a way of recognizing its existence and distinguishing it from other musics. The name becomes a point of reference and enables certain forms of communication, control, and specialization into markets, canons, and discourses. (Holt 2007, 3)

A recent example of this naming is the "alternative" category popularized in the early 1990s —a term conceived by fans and critics to describe music that could easily be accommodated within existing genres is adopted by industry for the purposes of commercialization. For Frith, the social act of labelling popular music is an ideological one. He argues genre categories within the mainstream music industry are equally ideological constructions and economic ones:

> In deciding to label a music or a musician in a particular way, record companies are saying something about both what people like and why they like it; the musical label acts as a condensed sociological and ideological argument. (Frith 1996, 86)

The linkage between genre, society and ideology is central in popular music and it is mirrored in theories of film genre. Among those film scholars who engage with the the ideological aspects of genre (Braudy 1977; Wood 1979; Klinger 1984; Neale 2000), Jean-Loup Bourget's formulation is succinct and reflects the same interests as popular music genres—

> [...] the interplay of implicit meanings, either subtly different from or actually clashing with the conventional self-gratification, allows the Hollywood director to make valid comments about contemporary society in an indirect way, by 'bending' the explicit meaning. Genre conventions can be be used as an alibi (the implicit meaning is to be found elsewhere in the film) or turned upside down (irony undermines the conventionality of the convention). (Bourget in Grant 2003, 58)

The last set of Fabbri's rules which define musical genre are commercial and juridical. According to Frith, "these refer to the means of production of a music genre, to questions of ownership, copyright, financial reward, [and] determine how musical events come into being." (Frith1996, 93) These rules establish the relationship between the legal and business aspects of music (i.e. record companies; government commissions; promoters) and the music itself, be it a sound recording or live performance.

> The first thing asked [by record labels] about any demo tape or potential signing is what *sort* of music is it, and the importance of this question is that it integrates an inquiry about the music (what does it sound like) with an inquiry about the market (who will buy it). The underlying record company problem, in other words, how to turn music into a commodity, is solved in generic terms. (Ibid. 75-76; emphasis in original)

Altman's earlier study of genre's functional role within the film industry maps nicely onto these same concerns within popular music studies and Neale's discussion of genre in

Hollywood as a tool "to regulate demand and the nature of its output in such a way as to minimize the risks inherent in difference and to maximize the possibility of profit on its overall investment." (Neale 2000, 232)

With models of genre in popular music such as those provided by Frith and Fabbri, and the productive debate they inspired within the discipline, popular music scholars identify and balance textual, industrial, and culture features of musical genre with more abstract dimensions less often considered in the criticism and analysis of film categories. Genre is thus an invitation to consider a range of conventions beyond musical and behaviour categories. Holt summarizes it in this way:

> At a basic level, genre is a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation, and signification. That is to say, genre is not only "in the music," but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions. (Holt 2007, 2)

Like the theories of film genre examined in Chapter 1, the complexity and nuance available in models of popular music genres do little to diminish debates over the complexion of individual categories and their relative value within a larger constellation of musical genres; perhaps no popular music genre is subject to more scrutiny and continuing debate than rock.

Rock

The films identified as rockumentary are epitomized by their central fascination with rock music, rock musicians, and rock cultures. Rock is a form of music most often defined by its synthesis of existing musical and performance idioms found within Western popular music

traditions, specifically Black music, country music, and folk music (Ennis 1992; Frith 1983). Competing definitions of rock are a fixture of popular music studies discourse, especially in terms of the separation between broad trans-historical modes and specific stylistic complexes more commonly used to differentiate genres. Keith Negus argues "[...] rock needs to be understood as *one* genre and style that can be adopted and adapted in various ways and used to engage in multiple historical dialogues." (Negus 1997, 139; emphasis in original) Among those authors who present a definition of the rock music genre which is acceptably nuanced to accommodate its elasticity and inter-textual nature, Keir Keightley's work is invaluable to the current discussion.

Keightley argues rock is best understood as a "larger musical culture" since "rock culture both encompasses and transcends various musical styles and genres." (Keightley 2001, 110) Keightley identifies rock as a trans-historical, trans-generation, pan-musical hybrid that remains invested in many of the creative, cultural, and ideological dimensions of its forebears. Complexity and contradiction are at the very core of rock:

> Rock emerged out of the overlapping of several musical cultures, none of which on its own would be considered rock: a teen, Top 40 pop world, no longer rock'n'roll but not yet rock, that was invested in Brill Building professional songwriting, studio production, new sounds and dance rhythms; surf and garage bands in suburbias everywhere; a variety of African-American musical cultures, especially Chicago electric blues and gospel-influenced soul sounds; 'trad jazz', skiffle, folk and blues revivalists in the United Kingdom, and a complex US folk music culture, which included Anglo-Celtic folk, country and blues revivalists, bohemian protest singers and best-selling pop-folkies. (Ibid. 119)

Keightley's conception of rock as a generic category encompassing a range of media, technologies, industrial processes, performance venues, and social spaces—spanning innumerable cultural contexts—affords opportunities for audiences, listeners (and filmmakers, too) to think through rock iconography with a disparate assortment of artists in mind.[2]

A key ingredient in this mix is an emerging youth demographic with the power to shape and direct cultural currents within mainstream consumer culture to degrees previously unimagined. Youth, like rock itself, is a category which emerges between existing divisions and its meaning is actively negotiated by those with direct stakes in it:

> Like the term 'rock'n'roll', 'teen' wasn't a sufficiently serious label to carry the new weight of 'rock' culture's ambitions. 'Youth' signalled this new seriousness, a maturity that was nonetheless not adult. Like rock, 'youth' exists in tension with both the teen and the adult. Rock culture thus rejected adult easy listening [while still staking its claim to seriousness by way of the historically 'adult' musical institutions of the album and the extended career], along with music that was seen as too 'teenage' (such as that of the Monkees). (Ibid. 123)

It is this youth audience which reconciles the seemingly irreconcilable differences between rock's imagined roots in rebellion and the enormous industrial and commercial scope of the enterprise:

2 Keightley offers a non-rock musical example to illustrate rock culture's ability to speak to a diversity of styles and milieus: "[...] by the late 1960s doo wop could retrospectively been seen as having epitomized many of the key values of rock'n'roll: an innocence with respect to record industry machinations, the spontaneity of amateur performance, and a host of performers no older than their audiences." (Keightley 2001, 115)

> [The] combination of social marginalisation on the one hand, and newly magnified purchasing power (and thereby cultural presence) on the other, contributed to the development of rock's peculiar cultural politics. (Ibid. 125)

These "peculiar cultural politics"—namely the mainstream, mass market popularity (and profitability) of a musical genre identified and understood as counter-cultural and anti-corporate—are described by Michael Jarrett as the "foundational myth" of rock. (Jarrett 1992, 167) The paradoxical hybrid of the authentic folk and the explicitly commercial which serves as the root of rock culture remains an uncomfortable dichotomy within contemporary discourse on many popular musics. For Keightley, it is the very willingness of rock culture to engage in and regularly reignite these debates that asserts itself within our popular imagination:

> By insisting on a kind of ethical accounting of popular music's involvement in commercial, mass culture, rock culture distinguishes itself from other, supposedly unselfconscious segments of the mainstream. (Keightley 2001, 133)

It is a similar insistence on transparency and an ethical accounting of the relationship between producers and consumers wherever documentary representation is involved that indelibly links concerns with authenticity in rock music and nonfiction film; I will argue this point is illustrated most explicitly in documentaries about rock music.

The basis for many of the debates regarding rock's perceived authenticity and its difference from other popular music genres factors in arguments concerning rock's status as art (as opposed to "pop" and its degraded status as merely entertainment). Phillip Ennis emphasizes the influence of folk and jazz on the emergence and maturation of *rock* as a

musical genre distinct from *rock'n'roll*.[3] Describing the maturation of music as art as necessarily involving the ability to reproduce itself—"that is, its canon at a certain stage of development contains not only siblings but progeny; [...] somebody loves the stuff to the point of imitation" (Ennis 1992, 315)—Ennis identifies an art form's maturity in its "deepening expression of the human experience." (Ibid. 316) On both counts, rock is understood to have distinguished itself from rock'n'roll and attained its greater socio-cultural significance in the evolution of the music and lyrics toward complexity and political content (although the argument can be made that rock simply replaced the shallow declarations of teen love epitomized by early rock'n'roll with superficial expressions of sexual love) and an explosion in the sheer number of rock artists in the late 1960s. Ennis identifies folk and jazz as the primary influences responsible for this maturation:

> Folk delivered to rocknroll [sic] its music, its performance sites, and a set of beliefs about "the people." Rock was built over jazz's unique distribution network and used its presentational forms, as well as absorbing its ethos rather than its musical techniques and repertoire. (Ibid. 316)

This canonization and maturation of rock by way of its links to folk and jazz are demonstrated quite explicitly in the Monterey Pop Festival of June 1967. The event is significant on multiple levels and each carries direct implications with regards to the rockumentary genre.

3 Ennis prefers the term *stream* over *genre* in his study of American popular music. His formulation of stream —a combinatorial system of art, commerce and politics—differs very little from the textual and socio-cultural definition of genre outlined here. See "The Organization of Popular Musics" in *The Seventh Stream: The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music*, 17-41.

Frith is among a group of scholars who use a variation on this model to establish rock in opposition to pop music, arguing the folk and artistic sensibilities of rock demonstrate an ideological challenge to so-called 'inauthentic' popular forms designed solely for commercial exploitation. Frith historicizes rock music via musical and performance practices evolved from these pre-existing vernacular traditions and identifies those features deemed 'authentic' by the earliest historians of popular music in the western world: Black music places an emphasis on the immediacy of communication and foregrounds the body (Frith 1983, 21); country music emphasizes rural values in opposition to social change (Ibid. 26); folk music was first judged by its political orientation and bond between audience and performer, before a transformation of folk in the 1960s emphasized lyrical and emotional complexity and "truth to self, rather than truth to a movement or an audience" (Ibid. 30-32). Frith argues rock is uniquely capable of being both a folk form and an art form by way of these authentic roots, despite its role within a mass entertainment complex. The significance of rock as both a cultural and musical formation, Frith continues, hinges on the argument that "rock music is only good when it is not mass culture, when it is an art form or a folk sound." (Ibid. 41) Frith's project concerns rock as a form of resistance with clear ideological implications, so the genuine character of that force is a central concern. Lawrence Grossberg proclaims rock "has a history that cannot be reduced to the history of its sonic register":

> Any description of rock must recognize that it is more than just a conjunction of music and lyrics, commodity production and consumption. The popularity and power of rock depend upon the fact that particular musical and verbal practices—often taken from other traditions and cultural forms—are always received as already having been

> inserted into a specific formation (and within the formation, a specific alliance). (Grossberg 1992, 131-132)

No music is simply "reducible to its sonic register" (to suggest this feature is unique to rock unnecessarily elevates the form above other popular music genres), but rock was founded upon ideologies and established iconography which are particularly complex and regularly contested within the context of the commercial mainstream. Keightley's understanding of rock brings many of these issues into focus and it accommodates Frith and Fabbri's respective models of musical genre with its system of inter-related, socially comprehensible rules.

Review of Existing Literature on Rockumentary

The films identified in this project as rockumentary are only rarely addressed within histories of cinema and popular music and never in terms of a coherent, multimedia, trans-historical genre. These discussions generally appear within the context of two distinct historical narratives: as a brief extension of the history of the Hollywood musical wherein the response to a period of perceived decline is the so-called "teenpic" or "rock film"; or, as a small part of a larger history of post-WWII American documentary, specifically the Direct Cinema movement and its offspring. Neither of these contexts is conducive to analysis in relation to genre theory or genre history. What follows is a review of existing literature which addresses the rockumentary corpus. I will examine to what extent the authors engage with the concepts of genre and mode, and I will consider the difficulties they face when discussing a category which has at its core another generic form—rock music. Perhaps it is worth

considering whether it is the presence of the latter genre that "genre-fies" rockumentary if it is not, in fact, already an audio-visual genre of its own.

There are a small number of publications addressing the films identified in this project as rockumentaries from the perspective of genre. These studies identify a body of work variously called "rock film" or "rock n' roll film" (Caine 2004; Romanowski & Denisoff 1987), and documentary films concerned with musical subjects are occasionally included in these surveys (Beattie 2005), but the texts are limited in several ways.[4] Firstly, "rock film" as a generic category is concerned with a corpus of fiction films extending from the traditional Hollywood musical including *The Girl Can't Help It* (Frank Tashlin, USA, 1956), *Don't Knock the Rock* (Fred Sears, USA, 1956), and *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester, UK, 1964). (Grant 1986, 198) These studies too often pre-suppose a structural and thematic coherence among the films consistent with conventional theories of the musical genre. In doing so, they fail to interrogate the status of filmed music performances within the context of a fictional narrative—which serve as a nonfictional document of performance styles and the spotlighted musical idiom—and wholly ignore the unique status of documentary films within the corpus. Secondly, the "rock film" as a coherent body of work is generally designated within a historical period dating from the mid-1950s through the late-1960s, excluding much of the work I identify as rockumentary. Lastly, several of the most cited works on the "rock film" are not scholarly in nature and amount to little more than catalogue

4 A third term, "jukebox musical", also appears in this literature. Jukebox musicals might include films described as "rock film" but the label extends to any film which uses popular music as its soundtrack (and, to a lesser extent, its principle subject matter). Andrew Sarris described the Beatles film, *A Hard Day's Night,* as "the *Citizen Kane* of jukebox musicals". (Sarris 1964)

entries for films with rock-themed subject matter. (Ehrenstein & Reed 1982; Sandahl 1987) These texts rarely provide more than plot summaries and technical details for the selected filmography, thus offering the reader no conceptual framework for thinking about these films and their significance.

In contrast to this unfocused treatment of a "rock film" or "rock n' roll film" corpus, Jon Radwan's essay, "A Generic Approach to Rock Film" disentangles the discussion of fiction and nonfiction films, bringing us closer to an understanding of rockumentary by viewing documentary films about rock from the perspective of mode. Radwan identifies the shortcomings of the aforementioned efforts to define rock film as a category spanning several modes of organization in cinema, and he specifically challenges the tendency to use an undertheorized and incorrectly applied model of genre to categorize films with little in common apart from the appearance of popular music and musicians. (Radwan 1996, 155-157) He organizes his category along two primary vectors: narrativity and indexicality. The first vector establishes the degree to which conventions of classical narration are involved in the presentation of rock musicians, while the second vector links the authenticity of rock's portrayal by the degree to which representational strategies of documentary (versus the fantasy of fiction) are deployed. (Ibid. 158, 161) (A third vector identifies the role music plays within the film, ranging from non-diegetic soundtracks to all-musical performance concert films, and encompasses a diversity of modes and genres that defies categorization.) Radwan's recognition of the value of authentic portrayals of rock music within rock culture at-large is crucial to distinguishing it from the fictionalized accounts which appear in "rock

film" and for understanding rockumentary's complexity and popularity. However, the limits of Radwan's study are exposed in his selection of films ending in 1964, bringing his chronology of the rock film to an end at precisely the moment rockumentary truly arrives.

Julie Hubbert, in the brief analysis of innovative Direct Cinema documentaries of the 1960s which precedes her examination of 1970s Hollywood film music, considers the contribution of nonfiction filmmakers to the visual representation of popular music in American cinema. She does not, however, discuss these films within the context of a genre category like Radwan and others before her, instead choosing to rely upon Steven Mamber's pre-existing discussion of these works (see Mamber 1974) to identify key figures and important trends.[5] Hubbert spotlights the absence of two post-production techniques from these films, narration and non-diegetic music, which displace the emphasis from the image-track of these documentaries to the live sounds recorded during the event itself. (We will consider earlier experiments in synch-sound recording technology within the context of nonfiction film production in Chapter 3.) She perhaps overstates the significance of the so-called "source music only" aesthetic favoured by the filmmakers under consideration, suggesting it "resulted in a unique understanding of music in film, one that reduced music to the dimension of sound" (Hubbert 2003, 192) and subsequently produced a "new aesthetic of musical realism" (Ibid. 184) in Hollywood fiction films. Hubbert takes her analysis in an interesting direction in terms of the appearance of popular music and musicians in fiction

5 Strictly speaking, Hubbert does, in fact, discuss these films in terms of genre but fuzzily describes a genre of "vérité documentaries" before designating "the music documentary" as a sub-genre of that category. As this dissertation argues, music documentaries are not limited strictly to those demonstrating an observational or interactive mode of address, and an examination of the corpus reveals the category cannot be limited in such a way.

films, but her claim overlooks the complexity of nonfictional representations of musical performance in other genres and film cycles. We will return to all of these issues in our focused consideration of individual films elsewhere in this study.

A related approach to the "rock film" narrative is contained in studies which understand rockumentary as a sub-genre of a sovereign documentary genre. These narratives are organized around an often superficial identification of related exercises in visual style and new film technologies in the 1960s which fail to engage in larger issues of genre (including industry concerns) and the particular issue of rock culture. There are a few exceptional cases where rockumentary is discussed in terms of genre, but the application of theories and histories of genre to a developed model of rockumentary is lacking, and the failings of such an approach should be evident. Recent work from Keith Beattie is one illustration of the shortcomings of any analysis undertaken in the absence of a coherent generic model which recognizes the central role played by rock culture in documentaries about rock music. His definition of rockumentary claims the genre "privileges a scopic regime over patterns of exposition such as voice-over and interviews" (Beattie 2005, 22), ignoring both the richness and diversity of the corpus, and the sonic dimension of these audio-visual texts. Beattie's investment in what he fuzzily defines as documentary's "act[s] of display" overstates the visual dimension of the rockumentary genre and illustrates a larger disciplinary failure to properly attend to the soundtrack in nonfiction films. Most importantly, Beattie's explanation for the arrival and success of rockumentary—described as arising from "the combined circumstances [of the] decline of the studio system, and the impact of this situation on established film

genres, in particular the musical, [which] left a generic void which was filled by the rockumentary" (Ibid. 22)—perhaps underestimates the industrial and socio-cultural might of rock music and its appeal to audiences likely uninterested in the passing of the Hollywood musical or its progeny. Rockumentary arrived when it did because of the power of rock music as a force in youth culture and the music industry, and it was delivered to the screen with tools and technology newly available to filmmakers. By invoking a classical Hollywood genre within a critical endeavour concerned with rockumentary and uncritically adapting a model of the fiction musical to a nonfiction, scholars skirt the responsibility of negotiating the unique characteristics of documentary as a mode of organization (distinct from fiction), rockumentary as an audio-visual genre with its own codes and conventions, and rock as a contested form of popular music.

Adrian Wootton's critique of rockumentaries—"The Do's and Don'ts of Rock Documentaries," wherein he makes a list of all the things he dislikes about the corpus and then offers a second list detailing those features he feels will assure filmmakers and audiences of a higher quality film experience—is a rare example of a generic approach to nonfiction films about rock music. Wootton, then head of the BFI on South Bank and co-editor of the *Celluloid Jukebox* collection, recognizes that the nonfictional visual representation of popular music stands apart from depictions of rock in fiction films and offers a typology (albeit a limited and under-theorized one) of rockumentary films based on their different approaches to the subject matter ("the concert movie, the tour concert movie, and the documentary profile of living or dead stars." (Wootton 1995, 95)). Unfortunately, Wootton dismisses the

complexity of the genre arguing "rock documentaries are mostly made at great speed, with little money, often by people with no real film-making experience or understanding of the music they are trying to capture." (Ibid. 101). He brushes off the commercial profile of the genre, presumably comparing their box office performance to blockbusters since he underestimates the profitability of these productions across both their limited theatrical releases and widespread home video availability. Moreover, his analysis regularly privileges the original concert events and ignores the complexity and unique representational standing of the film texts. Wootton focuses almost exclusively on the structural elements of rockumentary and ignores the industrial and cultural aspects of these films which confirm their relationship to a coherent genre.

A more insightful and nuanced discussion of the conventions of rockumentary is "Access All Areas: The Real Space of Rock Documentary" by Jonathan Romney, Wootton's co-editor of the aforementioned collection of essays on the subject of popular music in cinema. It is perhaps the most insightful study of the corpus insofar as Romney seeks to identify those elements of the genre which continue to capture the audience's attention—he focuses specifically on films featuring 'Backstage'.[6] Romney emphasizes "access" as the primary appeal of rock documentaries, arguing the many glimpses of the off-stage areas afforded the audience contribute to "an element of demystification" of the myth of the rock star without directly challenging "the illusion of on-stage spontaneity" which serves as a

6 Romney explains "Backstage may be literally the space behind the stage, or it may more generally be the 'off-screen' of in-concert fantasy—the tour coach, the hotel room, the interview situation in which the stars 'play' themselves off duty. But it always remains a mythical area, uneasy of access but promising fabulous rewards—or horrific humiliations—for the intrepid punter who dares penetrate it." (Romney 1995, 83)

"glittering repository for [the] fantasies of fans [...]" (Romney 1995, 83). He suggests it is the strategies developed by filmmakers to move between the on-stage/off-stage divide that contributes to a collection of conventions—"a rich repertoire of backstage clichés-in-the-making" (Ibid. 88)—that I interpret as central to an understanding of the category as an audio-visual genre. The value of Romney's study is his appreciation of how particular conventions of rockumentary are recycled, re-imagined, and re-deployed across a selection of films which are recognized and appreciated by the audience.

Overall, these studies on generic categories which variously expand and contract from the amorphous catch-all of "rock film" to the exclusive domain of the "backstage film" do little to bring the rockumentary genre clearly into view. Complicating matters is the way in which repeated attention to a limited selection of texts has had the unintended consequence of obscuring a generic approach to studying the corpus. I hope the inclusive nature of my approach will serve as a corrective to the shortcomings I describe above and serve to reveal the complexity and cohesion of the rockumentary category.

Rockumentary: A Typology of Currents and Trends

In many ways, the term 'rockumentary' functions effectively as a label in the absence of the coherent formulation and defence of a generic model. At the very least, the label initiates the formulation of the genre—the perception of the existence of a genre is important for both filmmakers and audiences. Altman posits the creation and circulation of names and labels for film genres as preliminary evidence of their cultural significance—journalists and audiences

give names to coherent systems of narrative and style that they see at work. (Altman 1987, 13) It is fair to say most members of the movie-going public are familiar with the term by way of Reiner's use of "rockumentary" in the subtitle of his satirical work, *This is Spinal Tap*, and not its earlier appearance in the description of a 1969 radio documentary series. No matter its original source, once grasped by audiences and commercially grounded by the film industry, it is this labelling and naming that serves as a critical early step in the proper formulation of a genre. Rockumentary may well be the film genre that named itself, in so far as it evolved and developed its identity within rock culture in the absence of an organized industrial push on behalf of major studios, nor in terms of any coordinated critical response or concentrated scholarly attention—it arrives in the mainstream as a fully formed category worthy of parody in Reiner's film. Nonetheless, as the anecdote in the introductory chapter of this dissertation illustrates, the term 'rockumentary' has long been in use to describe these films, and since a tacit social contract rests at the centre of most theorizations of genre in film and popular music (Altman 1987; Frith 1990; Gledhill 2000; Holt 2007; Neale 2000; Schatz 1981), why not use it to identify and discuss a body of work understood largely through such a contract?

Rockumentary represents a response to the problematic nature of non-documentary responses to rock, epitomized by "rock film" (alongside the Hollywood musical and rock biopics) and other less focused efforts to incorporate rock music in cinema. Formally, rockumentary encompasses a range of the organizational and representational strategies central to documentary cinema which, in isolation or in combination with one another,

synthesize the mythic, ideological, and socio-cultural concerns of rock culture with cinema. It is a playground for experiments in the visual representation of popular music previously unseen in popular cinema.

Based on a review of nonfiction films on the subject of rock music and related popular music trends (see Chapters 4, 5 and Selected Filmography), the main currents, or types, of rockumentary can be identified as biography, concert performance, the 'making-of' documentary and tour film, ethnographic studies of rock culture, and the compilation or archival project. With this typology in mind, a single film might adopt various approaches resulting in hybrids and sub-genres, but is often best described by the approach which governs its structure and mode of address to the audience. Rockumentary chronicles the evolution of documentary filmmaking practice and the stylistic and technical innovations achieved by the filmmakers in conjunction with their subjects (i.e. the creative demands of the musicians in many cases impacted the cinematic product). The genre as a whole is a vast archive of rock's many styles and myriad tropes of live performance. In a very practical sense, rockumentary films exist as a reservoir of popular music history, documentary history, and film technology.

Rockumentary biographies are a hybrid form encompassing interviews, live performances, and undirected behind-the-scenes footage. These films derive their allure from the featured artist's status within rock culture and popular culture at-large. (An emerging sub-genre, the 'outsider doc', trades precisely on the absence of any mainstream popularity and instead values the obscurity of the artist and the commitment of their cult following.)

Examples of this current include the NFB short *Lonely Boy* (Wolf Koenig & Roman Kroitor, CAN, 1962), a progenitor of rockumentary, and *Benjamin Smoke* (Jem Cohen & Pete Sillen, USA, 2000), an independently produced feature-length film with material compiled over the course of a decade. The limits of rockumentary biography extend beyond stories of musicians to the careers of those in the music business and inventors of musical equipment (*Moog*, Hans Fjellestad, USA, 2004). Every effort is made to capture the life and art of the musician, no matter how limited a period of time the filmmaker might have access to the subject, and gestures toward the representative nature of this focused portrait. For example, the snapshot of the life and performances of Bob Dylan in *Dont Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, USA, 1967) are made to stand-in for his persona and music in their entirety—this differs from a concert film which is a document of single event and only occasionally tries to be more. Perhaps the power of superb concert films such as *Gimme Shelter* (Albert & David Maysles, Charlotte Mitchell-Zwerin, USA, 1970) and *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, USA, 1970) is their ability to present the concert events as symbolic of an entire generation.

Concert and other performance-based rockumentaries span the gamut from rigorously choreographed and composed audiovisual spectacles to low-budget, sparsely edited, fan-made films and videos. In terms of their popular appeal, box-office performance, and home video presence, the concert film is perhaps the most successful type of rockumentary. A necessary pre-condition of the feature-length concert film is a feature-length concert performance. In the world of rock, variety show-style package tours dominated the industry—*T.A.M.I. Show* (Steve Binder, USA, 1964) is a perfect illustration of

this practice—until the emergence of superstar acts such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin changed the landscape, and the rules, for live concerts through the 1960s and early 1970s. (Gracyk 1996, 193) The early years of rockumentary focus on short sets from musical talent, occasionally even single songs, which bear more than a passing resemblance to cinema's earliest experiments with incorporating popular music performances. As a result, these films and promotional clips lack the structure and coherence required of a feature-length film with a focus on a single performer and stage show. Filmmakers most often chose to combine elements of biography, performance, and behind-the-scenes footage in an effort to balance their presentation and emphasize only the most successful songs from a chosen musical act in short films tailor-made for television broadcast (with running times typically limited to fit within a commercial broadcast half-hour). Within this particular rockumentary current, the multi-artist concert or festival film sub-genre is particularly noteworthy, not least because of its status among the first rockumentaries (see the discussion of *Jazz on a Summer's Day* in Chapter 3 for an introductory example to this approach) and the unique spectacular appeal of a multi-artist (often multi-genre) event for both the original audience and the film audience. The profile of the festival film rises exponentially when it acquires the status of the documentation of a political movement or cultural watershed as it did with *Monterey Pop* (D.A. Pennebaker, USA, 1967), *Gimme Shelter*, *Woodstock*, and *Wattstax* (Mel Stuart, USA, 1973) among others.

A companion to both the biography and concert currents is the 'tour film' or 'making-of' rockumentary. Unlike biography which spans an artist's entire career or the

concert film which generally represents a single event, these films are usually focused on the events surrounding a whole tour or the act of making a single album or planning a special event. The tour film or making-of doc is an especially fluid and hybridized type of rockumentary, obviously sharing significant attributes with the concert film (in part because the tour film necessarily includes footage of live musical performance), but it remains distinct because of the rigidity of its structure and its links to equivalent forms in fiction film (i.e. the road movie). *Let It Be* (Michael Lindsay Hogg, UK, 1970) is perhaps the ultimate making-of film: it is the chronicle of a failed album recording wherein the seeds of the band's dissolution are sown during the production of the film, a film which is itself pulled from release because of a band member's objections to their on-screen portrayal (see also *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart*, Sam Jones, USA, 2002; *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, Joe Berliner & Bruce Sinofsky, USA, 2003; *Shut Up and Sing*, Barbara Kopple & Cecilia Peck, USA, 2006.)

A fourth trend within the rockumentary genre is ethnographic studies of rock music and related genres. Ethnography is understood as the collection and exhibition of material from a culture or milieu other than that of the curator. While other types of rockumentary serve as documents of rock culture and its participants, the ethnographic rockumentary makes explicit claims about the value of the research object and the filmmaker's purpose for documenting the music, musicians, and audiences in question. In these cases, the documentary project positions itself as an anthropological endeavour. More often than not, the subject matter of these films rests on the margins of mainstream rock culture. Narrowing the scope of a study in this way makes practical sense as it focuses the film on a limited cast of

characters and a specific fan community. This approach is often favoured both by filmmakers examining musical cultures outside of their own milieu (i.e. *Punk in London*, Wolfgang Büld, GER, 1977; *Decline of Western Civilization*, Penelope Spheeris, USA, 1981; *Heavy Metal Baghdad*, Suroosh Alvi & Eddy Moretti, USA/CAN, 2007) and individuals documenting the musical culture to which they immediately belong (i.e. *The Punk Rock Movie*, Don Letts, UK, 1978; *Songs for Cassavetes*, Justin Mitchell, USA, 2001). For a number of reasons briefly considered at the conclusion of Chapter 5, the punk scene is a widely documented rock sub-genre within this rockumentary current.

The last type of rockumentary, the compilation or archival project, is the most common made-for-television music documentary but it is less often produced for theatrical release. More than any other type of rockumentary, the compilation or archival project relies on the structure and expository mode of address of classical documentaries. Generally speaking, the result is conservative filmmaking both in terms of its formal style and handling of the subject matter. There are exceptions, however, and archival projects spear-headed by fans and independent do-it-yourself'ers often produce results which challenge the perception of the compilation form as a stale, outmoded format (e.g *The Kids Are Alright*, Jeff Stein, UK, 1979). The compilation or archival project differs from the biography current in its treatment of 'big picture' concepts and career-spanning retrospectives, often conducted in the absence of the subject's direct participation. The most widely-seen rockumentary compilation projects are generally made-for-television series such as *The Beatles Anthology* (Bob Smeaton, UK, 1996) and *The History of Rock'n'Roll* (Time-Life, USA, 1995), and

recurring documentary programs such as the PBS *American Master* series often produce such films. There are presently a growing number of concert and tour films effectively executed as compilation or archival projects after the discovery of decades-old film footage prompts filmmakers to assemble the material into a finished film; *Festival Express* (Bob Smeaton, UK/NL, 2003) and *Soul Power* (Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, USA, 2008) are two recent examples of such a project which enjoyed some measure of theatrical success.

The only films from the corpus with any sustained consideration within the academy are D.A. Pennebaker's Bob Dylan portrait, *Dont Look Back*, and Scorsese's *The Last Waltz*; the Maysles brothers' *Gimme Shelter* is another fixture of documentary film studies but its profile has less to do with the film's generic affiliation than with the tragic set of circumstances captured by the filmmakers. The esteem afforded *The Last Waltz* is explained by both Scorsese's status as a leading American director and the status of The Band within rock culture. This not only highlights a tension existing between the academy's recognition of Scorsese's body of dramatic, fictional work at the expense of his nonfiction projects but underscores the systemic neglect of documentary within auteur studies at large. The significance of several films, including *Dont Look Back* and *The Last Waltz*, has been examined elsewhere and their place within general histories of documentary film is secure, but there is no proper consideration of the complex network of stylistic, industrial and cultural relationships between these films and the rockumentary category. Once again, the present study seeks to correct this limited treatment of rockumentary with an inclusive approach that doesn't overvalue the contributions from established filmmakers at the expense of amateurs,

and does not dismiss films focused on rock sub-genres and genres tangential to rock that are nonetheless instrumental in the innovation, evolution, and continuing relevance of rockumentary.

Chapter 3: The Pre-History of Rockumentary—
From Vitaphone Shorts to Jazz Giants

The relationship of sound to music in early cinema is the focus of an expanding field of film scholarship. Histories of industry, technology, and culture from this period demonstrate there was always sound and music in "silent cinema," a point made abundantly clear when DOMITOR, the international society for the study of early cinema, dedicated its 1998 conference to the subject. The publication based on the proceedings of the conference, *The Sounds of Early Cinema* (ed. Richard Abel and Rick Altman, 2001), established a precedent for the discussion of sound and music ("[…] whether instrumental, vocal or mechanical," xiii) in early cinema and for interdisciplinary studies of early sound technology. The volume brought together the work of historians and theorists from film studies, popular music studies, cultural studies and American studies, revealing primary research and crucial formal analysis of texts at a time when many of these examples of early cinema were newly discovered, unrestored, or otherwise unavailable to the public.

Without exception, research demonstrates early cinema was a multi-media experience which from the beginning emphasized sound, ranging in type from live musical and vocal accompaniment incorporated into early film programmes to the complex and frequently chaotic auditory environment of the Nickelodeon.[1] Music in early cinema was both a carry-over from earlier spectacular forms that used music, particularly vaudeville, and part of a

[1]For a comprehensive study of sound and the American Nickelodeon, see "Part IV: Nickelodeon Sound" in Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 118-229.

longer negotiation between emerging technologies and opposing aesthetic programs (e.g. the realism-versus-fantasy discourse central to most histories of early narrative cinema and embodied by the works of the Lumière brothers and Georges Méliès). While vaudeville entertainment continued to exist alongside early sound film and played a major role in bringing popular songs to the silver screen (by way of cinema's economic need to adopt popular acts to the new medium), popular music was central to industrial efforts to distinguish cinema from its predecessors and raise the aesthetic standards of motion pictures. Musical accompaniment, both live and pre-recorded, increased in direct relation to studio efforts to attract a larger middle-class audience to the palatial multi-screen movie houses being built in urban centres across North America in the 1920s.[2] In the context of cinema, inadequate musical accompaniment posed a significant hurdle to expanding the audience for film. Problems such as rabble-rousing stage musicians, skipping phonograph records, and poor loudspeaker quality and location were thought to debase the artfulness of the proceedings and compromise profit potentials. This motivated film studios and exhibitors alike to seek ways of standardizing (and sanitizing) film presentations in all venues. Central to these strategies of expanding the motion picture audience was the innovation of new technologies for film sound, culminating with the achievement of synchronized sound film projection in the 1930s, and related experiments in film style. A popular subject for this experimentation was popular music and the visual representation of its performers.

[2]There is a comparable investment in the material conditions of popular entertainment during other transformational periods. In Western classical music, changes in instrumentation and venue architecture were often linked to efforts to expand the demography of audiences; see Alan Durant, *Conditions of Music* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

Chapter 3 offers a pre-history of the rockumentary genre by briefly examining visual representations of musical performance in early cinema, classic Hollywood and international documentary practice. At the centre of this history is the innovation of new film and sound technologies in North America (and the partnerships established between industrial partners with vested interests in these technologies), synchronized sound film experiments with an emphasis on the visual representation of musical performance, and the unique intersection of film, music and popular culture manifest in these recordings. While there are numerous examples of popular music on film in the earliest decades of cinema, I propose we focus on three key contributions to the eventual development of the rockumentary genre for three distinct reasons: the Warner Bros.' Vitaphone Varieties of the 1930s for their successful demonstration of synchronized sound technology and central role in the innovation and commercialization of synchronized sound within the North American industry; the Soundies of the 1940s for their innovative strategies of visually representing popular musical performance in nonfictional shorts; and the feature-length film *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (Bert Stern, USA, 1959) for its role in establishing an explicitly documentary form for the organization of nonfiction footage of musical performance (specifically multi-artist events) in a feature-length format, and its illustration of two photographic tendencies I describe throughout this volume as *journalistic* and *impressionistic*. These three contributions address the necessary pre-conditions for rockumentary, namely synchronized sound film and the re-organization of the popular music industry around recorded objects, and the early examples

illustrate the tendency for visual representations of musical performance to adapt existing formal conventions of narrative film style to nonfiction film.

Warner Bros., Vitaphone Shorts, and the Arrival of Synchronized Sound to Cinema

What follows is a brief glimpse of the industry's re-organization around new sound technologies in the early 20th century, specifically the achievements of Western Electric and Warner Bros. during the 1920s and early 1930s, and the Vitaphone Varieties series of short films using the sound-on-disc technology of the same name. While not all of the Vitaphone shorts were musical in nature they "systematically stress musical uses" for the newly adopted synchronized sound system which would dominate the industry during this period of filmmaking in North America.[3] There is a large body of work on the subject of Warner Bros.' contribution to sound film which both precedes DOMITOR's crucial intervention in the field and builds upon the research presented in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, including important works on the subject of the Vitaphone technology (Gomery 1985; Wolfe 1990; Wurtzler 1993) and the larger industrial and economic issues of bringing sound to cinema during this Hollywood era. A later study by Ron Hutchinson (2002) elaborates upon this work with an overview of the films themselves. Hutchinson, a film buff and historian, is a founding member of the non-profit Vitaphone Project which assists in the discovery and restoration of sound and picture elements from Vitaphone shorts in conjunction with the

[3]Rick Altman, "The Sound of Sound: A Brief History of the Reproduction of Sound in Movie Theatres," *Cineaste* 21.1-2 (1995): 69.

efforts of the UCLA Film Archive, the BFI, and the Library of Congress.[4] This collection of lively shorts is slowly returning to the public's attention through their restoration by Warner Bros. (assisted through the efforts of The Vitaphone Project and renowned archivists at UCLA, the BFI, and Library of Congress) and their inclusion as special features on DVD releases of feature-length film musicals. Nonetheless, they remain a relatively un-viewed segment of film history, culturally important documents of popular music and performers, and precursors to contemporary forms of visual representations of popular music in cinema.

The history of early sound film is a story of brief successes and multiple failures in an attempt to bring the human voice to the silver screen. The delay in the arrival and adoption of synchronized sound and film wasn't due to a lack of trying. A flurry of activity in the 1900s and 1910s on the part of large corporations and independent inventors alike resulted in a collection of technologies that paved the way for sound film including Gaumont's Chronophone, De Forest's Audion tube, and Edison's Kinetophone.[5] Studios sought to increase profits through diversifying their business interests across media forms (i.e. film; music; radio) and talent pools, with an eye on licensing or outright purchasing new technologies only after first examining their feasibility in the market place (usually by allowing small inventors to risk their capital in the production and demonstration of early prototypes). American film technology historians Douglas Gomery and John Belton adopt Frederic M. Scherer's "Theory of Technological Innovation" (c. 1970) to examine and explain

[4]The group claims to have assisted in the location of all but eighty discs for Vitaphone shorts with recovered picture elements. The Vitaphone Project, http://www.picking.com/vitaphone.html [accessed 20 April 2007].

[5]For proper histories of these earliest moments in the transition to sound in cinema and an overview of the various technologies which went to market, see Harry M. Geduld, *The Birth of the Talkies: From Edison to Jolson* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975); Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

the industrial and economic transformation of this period. (Belton 1985; Gomery 2005) Scherer identifies invention (the necessary technology is developed), innovation (an invention is adopted for practical use), and diffusion (the widespread adoption of the technology by industry) as the three key steps in the development of technology. This theory argues for the recognition of inherent delays at each step of technological evolution (or the break-down of this evolution)—it will start, stop, and regularly sputter.

Warner Bros.' actions in the 1920s typify the role played by large corporations when new technology arrives on the scene. The studio didn't invent a new technology but instead established itself as an early adopter of the sound-on-disk system introduced by researchers at AT&T in an effort to leapfrog two rival studios, Paramount and Loews/MGM.[6] Warner Bros. licensed AT&T's system via Western Electric and formed the Vitaphone Company while at the same time expanding their business interests with the purchase of radio stations and the rental of additional theatres to which musicians were invited to perform for both motion picture cameras and radio audiences. The Vitaphone system involved a mechanical interlock with an attached turntable playing a sixteen-inch phonograph record. The speed of the turntable was the now-standard 33 1/3 RPM designed to match the duration of an eleven-minute film reel (as opposed to the 78 RPM used by phonograph records of the era). (Gomery 2005, 79) Any skipping of the record meant a loss of synchronization, a common weakness which is comically documented in a well known scene from *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, USA, 1952). Nonetheless, Warner Bros. invested a great deal

[6]The industrial manoeuvring required of the leading film studios of the 1920s in their efforts to secure licensing for Western Electric's sound technology is described in Chapter 6, "Paramount and Loew's Wait, and Then Make Their Deal" of Douglas Gomery, *The Coming of Sound : A History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 63-76.

of time and energy in developing the Vitaphone brand and understood its role in exploiting the growing popularity of popular music. The studio went on a spree signing new musical talent and negotiating contracts with established opera stars and orchestral groups to feature in musical shorts ultimately dubbed "Vitaphone Varieties".[7] Strong links between established film genres and specific music styles made narratives recognizable to audiences and helped refine viewers' tastes. On 6 August 1926, the first Vitaphone shorts premiered followed by the release of over 150 additional shorts before the end of 1927.

While Warner Bros. may have considered the shorts "a commercial library of recorded performances" and something less than motion pictures (Wolfe 1990, 62), the cinematic qualities of the Vitaphone Varieties are self-evident and links to the conventional feature-length musicals of the era, specifically the *revue film* (programs of musical numbers with little to no narrative linkage between) and the *integrated musical*, are numerous. According to Thomas Schatz, the integrated musical dispatches realism and plausibility in favour of an internal logic which allows music and dance to "determine the attitudes, values and demeanour of the principal characters." (Schatz 1981, 22) While some of the Vitaphone shorts successfully embedded the musical performances within the narrative in ways emblematic of the *backstage musical* (whose stories of performers and performances rarely require justification for sequences of song and dance), many of the films in question concern

[7]For a brief history of Warner Bros. development of the Vitaphone brand and the studio's relationship to vaudeville talent during this period, see C. Wolfe, "Vitaphone Shorts and *the Jazz Singer*," *Wide Angle* 12.3 (1990). Another vehicle for the exploitation of contracted musical talent in this era was animated shorts, typified by the Paramount Pictures series, Talkartoons (1929-1932). These animated shorts featured musical accompaniment and one particular film, *Minnie the Moocher* (Max Fleischer, USA, 1932)—inspired by the popular jazz hit of the same name—features a live-action introduction with Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. It is believed to be the earliest known footage of the jazz icon.

themselves with musical worlds uniquely there own. Most importantly, Vitaphone Varieties served as a fertile testing ground for both synchronized sound technology and the effective visual representation of popular music. Adapting conventions of musical performance on stage to the medium of cinema, musical performances are presented frontally with an emphasis on vocalists and soloists as the focus of the audience's attention. No longer needing to conceal poor synchronization with quick edits or cut-aways from the sound source, alternate views of the performance are generally limited to close-ups of the performer and reaction shots of back-up musicians or non-performing characters. Noteworthy is the efficiency with which the shorts received such a uniform and sophisticated look considering the speed of their production and the need to guarantee sound-image synchronicity. The key to this synch-sound workflow was the multi-camera shooting set-up innovated by cinematographer Edwin Du Par. Du Par's approach of using a static master shot of the performance augmented by supporting cameras fitted with variable lenses (all protected from the audio recording device within mobile soundproof booths) provided editors with a wealth of material covering the performance space while ensuring synch-sound editing. Perhaps more importantly, this approach and the structure it produced establish a relationship between filmed performance and audience adapted by nearly all subsequent representations of musical performance on film. Wolfe explains

> What tends to be emphasized through cutting and camera work in all cases is the *source* of the sound within a broader spatial field. The films presume—and structure—an interest in closely viewing the human figure as agent of sound, positioned frontally before a camera and centred within the frame. (Wolfe 1990, 62-63)

Du Par's technical strategy not only impacted the formal design of the shorts but also played a role in cementing "the human figure as agent of sound" as the principal feature of any visual representation of musical performance within the industry. The Vitaphone Varieties and other musical shorts tested both audience interest in sound film and the manner in which musical performance was displayed by accommodating a wide cross-section of acts and thematic conceits, but the performing musician remained the focal point of all of these presentations and their central position in the frame—combined with their direct address to the audience—is a formal convention from which few makers of musical shorts would deviate in the decades to follow.

When Warner Bros. finally suspended production of the shorts in 1929 nearly 2,000 Vitaphone Varieties had been produced. However, the studio continued to produce and distribute short films using the Vitaphone Corporation name through the 1930s, including the popular Broadway Brevities series. The scale of production associated with the Vitaphone Varieties required the reorganization of Warner Bros.' business with a focus on distribution and exhibition outlets equipped to handle sound film (to ensure the widespread adoption of the technology) and the construction of new studios and new sets to accommodate the necessary innovations in production practice (i.e. sound booths, blimped camera operation) required of sound recording. During this time, the release of *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, USA, 1927) and *The Singing Fool* (Lloyd Black, USA, 1928)—both of which featured synchronized sound sequences—confirmed the viability of feature-length sound film and initiated the widespread conversion to sound in cinema. The sound-on-disc system, however,

was living on borrowed time. Whereas Warner Bros. enjoyed initial success by licensing and producing films with Western Electric's disc-based system, industry leaders Paramount and MGM used their corporate power and economic clout as leverage in negotiations with AT&T for Western Electric's sound-on-film system. Their adoption of the sound-on-film system effectively tipped the North American industry as a whole in favour of the format and marked the beginning of the end of sound-on-disc systems. While exhibitors demanded the continued availability of disc-versions during a period of transition, the production of sound film eventually switched from sound-on-disc to sound-on-film systems and through this process the place of sound in cinema was secured.

Soundies and Popular Music on Film in the 1940s

Soundies were filmed musical shorts distributed by the Mills Novelty Co. of Chicago between 1940 and 1947 for use in their Panoram visual jukebox, a refrigerator-sized 16mm screening booth featuring monaural sound and an 18-inch x 22-inch screen. (MacGillivray and Okuda 2007) Produced by Soundies Distributing Corporation of America (Soundies DCA) and RCM Soundies, the two primary producers of the Soundies shorts, these film loops featured a range of popular music artists spanning all musical genres including novelties, ballads, country, jazz, and rhythm-and-blues with an emphasis on swing and big band. Despite the unfortunate reality of racially segregated bands of the era and the preponderance of racial stereotyping considered wildly inappropriate by today's standards, Soundies are noteworthy for the spotlight they cast on African-American artists who enjoyed

significantly fewer opportunities to appear before a mass audience at the time. Today, many Soundies are recognized as rare filmed records of icons such as Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Big Joe Turner. The wide cross-section of artists and genres captured on these films suggests both the universal appeal of Soundies and the diversity of audience tastes during the period. Soundies document not only these musical trends but also the popular fashions and dances of the era.

Between 1940 and 1947, nearly two thousand Soundies were produced and exhibited in Panoram machines across North America.[8] The timing of their appearance and their wide success suggests the Panoram and Soundies arrive in response to the growing popularity of music as a commodity and to capitalize on the success of musical programming in cinemas established by series such as Warner Bros.' Vitaphone Varieties.[9] In terms of their generic affiliation, Soundies adapted many of the conventions of the Hollywood musical to their nonfictional portraits of musical performance and bear a striking resemblance to the musical sequences in Vitaphone shorts produced 10-15 years earlier. Panorams were placed in public places frequented by young adults and middle-aged men such as soda shops and bus stations (with an emphasis on taverns and army bases). (MacGillivray and Okuda regularly refer to an audience of single, middle-aged men whom they believe the marketers targeted based on their disposable income.) A reel of eight separate performances was released each week at a

[8]The figure of 1,865 Soundies is offered by jazz historian Mark Cantor during an interview featured in the documentary *Soundies: A Musical History* (Chris Lamson, USA, 2007).

[9]For comprehensive histories of the commodification and commercialization of a popular music in North America see Keir Keightley, "Long Play: Adult-Oriented Popular Music and the Temporal Logics of the Post-War Sound Recording Industry in the USA," *Media Culture Society* 26.3 (2004), and Russell Sanjek & David Sanjek, *Pennies from Heaven : The American Popular Music Business in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).

cost of ten cents per song. The sex appeal of many of the artists and myriad background dancers, not to mention the risqué nature of many of the narratives woven within a musical performance, helped ensure audiences would be loose with their dimes. Both the Soundies DCA and RCM Soundies established studios in New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles to ensure regular access to touring musicians and ample resources to produce and distribute the necessary eight-song reel per week.

Soundies were shot using both multi-camera setups like those introduced by du Par and, on rarer occasions, multiple takes. The songs were recorded in advance, often in one take, and artists would lip-synch to the performance on sets constructed at one of the Soundies studios. Precise lip-synching occasionally takes a backseat to emotionally charged performances, cartoonish facial contortions, and the physical demands of choreography. Instrumentalists were more likely to make rhythmic gestures near or across the surface of their instruments in a manner that reinforced the melody or rhythm of the song for the viewer than mime the proper technique necessary for the actual performance (which might be un-'readable' to cameras and, therefore, unintelligible to the Soundies audience). While the frequency of the editing in Soundies is advanced relative to the Vitaphone shorts before them, this should not be attributed solely to several key technological developments in the 1930s. Barry Salt and John Belton detail the development of the synch-sound Moviola device in 1930 and the immediate impact it (along with the emerging practice of "rubber numbering")[10] had upon the average shot length (ASL) of Hollywood films but remind us

[10]Rubber numbering involves the printing of sequential numbers on the picture and sound rolls of synchronized sound film footage. With the numbers in place, picture and sound can be edited freely with the knowledge that synchronization will remain provided the corresponding rubber numbers are lined up on the film and sound

this was itself a return to the faster pace of silent film editing established during the earliest years of the industry.[11] Analysis of a selection of Soundies suggests the increased rhythms of editing in these shorts illustrate efforts to conceal poor synching of the filmed performance rather than a conscious aesthetic project.

The theme of the sets featured in Soundies often echoes or explicitly reinforces the persona of the featured performer. Big bands performed on stage set-ups mimicking their live stage show and nightclubs, while youthful vocal groups such as Mel Tormé and the Mel-Tones appeared in more conservative, everyday locales common to a young popular music fan (like drab living rooms and cozy dormitory rooms). Standard practice presented the principle artist in a frontal display directly addressing the camera while supporting musicians, dancers, and secondary characters were revealed in cutaways during instrumental passages of the song. Soloists are generally isolated in close-ups. There are instances of dolly shots and aerial views taken from cranes but these types of dynamic camera movements are the exception in Soundies, not the rule. Most Soundies can be described in very simple formal terms but there are several noteworthy examples which speak directly to the complexity of representing musical performance on film during this era.

The dynamic nature of jazz composition and performance was ideally suited to cinematic display, particularly with the iconic flair of figures such as Calloway, Fats Waller, and Louis Jordan—central figures in the pre-history of rock'n'roll and the migration of African-American musical tradition to the commercial mainstream. These handsome,

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rolls and the individual rolls remain the same length.

[11]Barry Salt, "Film Style and Technology in the Thirties: Sound," in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 39-40.

personable figures combined musical virtuosity with unparalleled showmanship (and a healthy dose of sex appeal). Other artists such as guitarist Les Paul and his Les Paul Trio found their playful, acrobatic performances presented in such a way that Soundies not only served as musical promotion but also as demonstration vehicles for newly electrified instruments such as Paul's prototype electric guitar. The King Cole Trio's "Frim Fram Sauce" (1945) is particularly interesting. A young Nat King Cole watches (or discovers, perhaps) himself perform on the screen of a Panoram as he sits in a diner singing about his favourite dish and condiment; eventually, the two King Coles—the one singing in a diner for the benefit of the camera, and the one on the Panoram screen performing for the benefit of the diner audience—complete the song as a duet. This not-so-subtle comment on the reach of audio-visual media of the period, particularly the Panoram and Soundies, coincidentally foreshadows King Cole's similarly technologically-enabled virtual duet from beyond the grave with his daughter Natalie on 1992's recording of "Unforgettable". Despite this prescient exercise, the basic formal strategy of the Soundies (and the Vitaphone Varieties before them) remains largely unchanged but gradually refined from its inception through to their demise: the rudimentary navigation of the space of the performance while the musician directly addresses the real, or imagined, audience.

With the viability of the business strained by the domestic economic realities of WWII, under pressure from major movie exhibitors and labour unions involved with film projection, and the music industry's reconfiguration following the recording ban instituted by the American Federation of Musicians in August 1942 through the end of 1944, Soundies

faded from the public's view before the end of the 1940s. A small but successful home sales and rental market was established by independent companies such as Castle Films and Official Films, but it was not a going concern beyond the early 1950s with the rapid proliferation of broadcast television across the continent and the booming sales of popular music recordings. Nonetheless, Soundies remain a rich depository of both popular music iconography and visual documents of artists that often appear nowhere else on film. They are the direct predecessors of the musical variety show of 1950s television as well as the musical bumpers which littered the airwaves for the first several decades of television's existence, and they serve as the template for the music promos of the 1960s and early 1970s which are themselves the direct predecessors of contemporary music videos.

Jazz on a Summer's Day and the Arrival of the Feature-Length Popular Music Documentary

The final contribution to the development of a rockumentary genre I wish to examine here (and the corpus of films under review in the next section of this study) is the feature-length chronicle of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. I contend this film is, in essence, the first rockumentary. *Jazz on a Summer's Day* responds to the structural demands of a popular music performance (specifically a live, multi-artist concert event) and showcases new film technologies that prove necessary to the development of rockumentary. It offers an example of how the audience, a vital component of the live musical experience, can be incorporated into the visual representation of musical performance, and it illustrates two visual tendencies which represent the primary visual streams of these nonfiction films:

the *journalistic* and the *impressionistic*. *Jazz on a Summer's Day* is a decisive break from both the technologies and industrial practices of the previous generation of filmmakers in its examination of new forms and search for new audiences, and it serves as the culmination of a decade of documentary filmmaking exploring new subjects and horizons of possibility.

A harbinger of new approaches to form and subject in documentary emerges within the British Film Institute's Free Cinema programme, a series of six film screenings beginning in February 1956 through March 1959 which sought to introduce a new generation of filmmakers to the British public. Nonfiction films featured prominently in a collection of work which retained many of the features of traditional British documentary while nonetheless charting new ground in terms of cinematic realism. The participating filmmakers were praised for their intelligent handling of a diversity of subject matter using new techniques and technology for sound recording and cinematography. The Free Cinema programme was 'free' in the sense that the films were made outside the framework of the established film industry and many included social commentary. The primary figures to emerge from the first screening programme were Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson, who would all go onto major filmmaking careers. A spirit of free, uninhibited inquiry epitomizes their work as does their pioneering embrace of new methods of sound recording and the adoption of lightweight equipment to capture their lyrical nonfiction portraits of the commonplace, mining a similar vein as the celebrated work of Humphrey Jennings a decade earlier. Their belief in a personal cinema was strongly influenced by the writings in *Cahiers du cinema*, and later entries in the Free Cinema series were inspired by the

work of an emerging international wave of young filmmakers including Roman Polanski, Francois Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Norman McLaren. Views of a rapidly urbanizing Britain and an emerging youth culture were front and centre in the Free Cinema programming, and Reisz and Richardson's *Momma Don't Allow* (UK, 1956) is an exceptional display of both the new technologies which would be central to the New Documentary of the post-war era and of the fascination with popular culture that drive arts documentaries through the next two decades.

Originally proposed as "Jazz" to the British Film Institute Experimental Film Fund, *Momma Don't Allow* captures a night out at the Wood Green Jazz Club in North London with performances by The Chris Barber Jazz Band. The band features a young Lonnie Donegan, whose profound influence on a generation of British popular music groups is most easily identified in the work of John Lennon, who patterned his pre-Beatles Skiffle group, The Quarrymen, after Donegan's body of work. Addressing social change in post-war Britain, specifically the emerging youth culture and 'Teddy Boy' phenomenon, *Momma Don't Allow* follows working-class young adults both preparing for, and heading out to, a night of music and dancing. The film treatment, re-named after a traditional nursery rhyme (which itself lent its name to a bluegrass/folk standard), was awarded a Bolex camera and £425 for the purchase of 16mm ILFORD HPS 400 ASA motion picture film stock (released in 1954 as the "fastest film in the world") as part of the BFI Experimental Film Fund competition.[12]

[12]Detailed information concerning the chronology of ILFORD's film business originally accessed at their corporate website has since been reduced to a timeline of significant events; see "Why ILFORD? History," http://www.ilfordphoto.com/aboutilford/page.asp?n=139 [accessed 15 December 2008]; presently, the same information is available at a hobbyist website which preserves the detailed technical information once offered by ILFORD, see "ILFORD Chronology," http://www.photomemorabilia.co.uk/Ilford/Chronology.html [accessed 26 May 2009].

The newer, faster panchromatic emulsions developed by ILFORD for black and white photography allowed uninhibited daylight shooting and increased speeds in lowlight situations (in combination with tungsten light kits). These improvements were fundamental to Reisz and Richardson's ability to capture the subject in question: a dimly lit community hall filled with dancers, drinkers, and smokers. Shooting equally with available light and a single tungsten handheld light, the filmmakers capture the nightclub atmosphere so central to the experience of live music and club dancing. And while Lindsay Anderson's *O Dreamland* (UK, 1953) remains Free Cinema's pre-eminent example of new approaches to film sound in this era with its inventive (often ironic) use of audio field recordings as window to the world captured on film, the post-synchronized soundtrack of *Momma Don't Allow* is significant for the intensity of its anthropological focus and harmonious attachment to the image-track.

The film opens with the musicians arriving at the club, unpacking their gear, and warming up for the night's performance. The sequence features parallel action alternating between the musicians and the young people ending their day's work in advance of a night out at the club. A middle close-up of Donegan on banjo is followed by images of a young woman cleaning up a railway station lounge. A view of the clarinettist is replaced with images of a young butcher preparing cuts of meat and cleaning up his workspace. The drummer and bass player fraternize while a young female dental assistant peaks outside the office window and catches a glimpse of a young man waiting on the street. He taps his watch impatiently for the camera, confirming the scripted nature of this and the other workplace footage. The sequence concludes with a shot of the trumpet player in close-up, followed by

another young woman cleaning an office—she is called by a friend to finish her day and the characters leave work for home to prepare for their night out. Throughout the sequence the soundtrack features the sounds of the Chris Barber Jazz Band warming up and running through sketches of songs in advance of the festivities. While handheld film with synchronous sound recording was still several years in the future at the time Reisz and Richardson made their film, the asynchronous soundtrack of *Momma Don't Allow* is cleverly concealed by the cross-cutting structure detailed above.

Momma Don't Allow offers an early example of how nonfiction filmmakers balanced interest in the performers and the audience, and how best to present both of these aspects of a musical event. In this case, the emphasis is squarely on the audience and the culture of dance and socializing that exists within the club. Limitations both in terms of 16mm reel-length (a maximum of 120 metres or 10-12 minutes of film), film speed (the aforementioned ILFORD HPS 400 ASA), and lighting combine with limited options for sound recording and post-synchronization require filmmakers to isolate action (dancing under bright lights) and protect against distracting the audience with clearly unsynchronized sound-image relationships by exploring the space of the event through editing. Inclusion of brief narratives of work, romance on the dance floor, lovers reconciling outside the club, and the presence of middle-class punters structure the short film and ultimately diminish the role played by the musicians themselves. Smiling laughing faces, twirling girls in white skirts, and rambunctious young men swilling pints of stout are the main attraction for both the

filmmakers and the film audience. Popular music is the soundtrack to this document of youth culture in post-WWII Britain, but not yet the subject of the film itself.

Anderson, Reisz, Richardson and others from the Free Cinema programme ultimately abandon nonfiction filmmaking for the realm of fiction, in part because of the role corporate sponsorship grew to play in this particular filmmaking venue and largely because of the filmmakers' desire to appeal to a wider audience. Nonetheless, many of the new traditions established by their work in Free Cinema are resonant in contemporary documentary, especially those films focused on simple stories of people and community, and direct links exist (in terms of personnel, technology in use, formal style, etc.) between this British film programme and the schools of documentary which would emerge soon after in Canada, France, and the United States.

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The emphasis on youth culture and the central role played by sound in *Momma Don't Allow* prefigures a wave of documentaries on similar subjects in the early-1960s and establishes a precedent for the rockumentary genre. Returning to Bert Stern's study of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, *Jazz on a Summer's Day* is not only significant as a capstone to over two decades of filmed recordings of jazz performance but also represents the first feature-length music documentary and introduces the concert film sub-genre which truly emerges in the 1960s.[13] It documents the mainstreaming of jazz and blues in American popular music as evidenced in the multi-racial and multi-generational make-up of the festival performers, and it gestures

[13]There is also a rich tradition of Hollywood productions featuring the big band heroes of the era; see Charles Merrell Berg, "Cinema Sings the Blues," *Cinema Journal* 17.2 (1978).

toward the inclusive nature of future rock festivals with the appearance of Chuck Berry on the main stage.[14] It departs from the shadows-and-smoke clichés of capturing popular music performance in dark nightclubs (clichés nonetheless attaining stylistic perfection in the 1944 jazz performance short, *Jammin' the Blues*, directed by noted still-photographer Gjon Mili and shot by Hitchcock mainstay Robert Burks) and charts a path for the fully realized rock music documentaries on the horizon. Most importantly, its emphasis on the spontaneous energies of live music is a repudiation of the post-synchronization practices evinced in the earlier musical shorts, freeing the featured jazz musicians from the need to mime and re-interpret their own improvised sounds and actions. Louis Armstrong and Mahalia Jackson headline an all-star cast of jazz and rhythm-and-blues figures including Anita O'Day, Thelonius Monk, George Shearing, and Dinah Washington. Showcasing Stern's photographic flair and subtle use of conventional narrative technique, the film is edited by Aram Avakian in a *tour-de-force* of post-synchronized sound-and-picture (with the unfortunate exception of Big Maybelle's "I Ain't Mad At You", which appears to suffer from the effects of a stretched or shrunk audio tape source throughout the first portion of the performance) and features a monaural soundtrack recording of remarkable clarity furnished by Columbia Records. A highly successful professional commercial photographer who played an active role in revolutionizing advertising images in 1950s America and the man responsible for many iconic photographs of Hollywood stars (it is Stern who was responsible

[14]Sadly, the film fails to disguise the largely white middle-class demography of the festival audience and, perhaps, its intended theatrical audience. Throughout the film, white performers like Jimmy Guiffre and Anita O'Day are featured at length while performances from African-American jazz icons such as Thelonius Monk are truncated or made to serve as accompaniment to montage sequences depicting other events of the day.

for the infamous "The Last Sitting" photographs of Marilyn Monroe, captured six weeks before the starlet's untimely death), Bert Stern would venture only once into filmmaking and the result was a new and original approach to nonfiction that was highly regarded at the time of its release and has since been canonized within the Library of Congress' National Film Registry as culturally, historically, and aesthetically important. The film has not, however, been discussed in terms of its primary role in the development of a documentary genre organized around the sights and sounds of popular music and its innovation of formal strategies central to such a genre.

Debuting at the 1959 Venice Film Festival and bestowed a limited release in early 1960 on two screens in Manhattan, *Jazz on a Summer's Day* was acknowledged by the *New York Times* for its "candid views of players and listeners." (Crowther 1960) It features a balance of journalistic scenes of musical performance, highly stylized montage sequences, and scripted scenes with a degree of narrative. From the opening moments of the film, with its album-cover-come-to-life visual style and the absence of a conventional voice-over narration (classical documentary's primary structuring device), *Jazz on a Summer's Day* establishes a distinct tone for the proceedings. Noted American radio broadcaster Willis Conover provides the narration in the form of his stage announcements introducing each act. This device provides both commentary on the artists and distinguishes the on-stage performance sequences from the location photography and montage sequences focussed on in-town events.[15] The latter, non-performance sequences provide the film with a 'day at the festival'

[15] The only on-camera interview in the film is that of Conover's exchange with Armstrong, and there is no backstage footage despite the presence of several scenes from a roadhouse featuring rehearsing musicians. Both of these elements become central features of rockumentary when technology, filmmaker interest, artist

structure wherein the sights and sounds of the three-day event doubly serve as the soundtrack to summer life in the dreamy seaside town. Shots from a ferry arriving at the Newport, Rhode Island terminal are inter-cut with images of moored watercraft and travellers in automobiles descending upon the festival site (including a curious staged sequence with a high-speed convertible squealing past an antique roadster—"This ain't your father's jazz!") as organizers prepare seating and musicians rush through last minute rehearsals. As the ferry arrives at the terminal and we witness the parade of cars disembark, filmmaker Stern is heard in voice-over interviewing a young couple about their interest in jazz and their plans for the day, an exchange which inadvertently communicates youth culture's tenuous relationship with jazz as a popular form—by 1959, rock'n'roll is entrenched as the sound of a new generation of Western youth while jazz is becoming increasingly marginalized as a specialized interest. This exchange essentially concludes the opening segment of the film; from this point forward, *Jazz on a Summer's Day* is comprised primarily of performance footage, and this material is further distinguished by two visual strategies which come to define subsequent representations of musical performance in the rockumentary genre: the *journalistic* and the *impressionistic*.

These two categories describing the visual style of performance footage in music documentaries are fluid, often hybridized, and the two photographic tendencies may both be present in a single sequence of a film—but one or the other often describes the representational strategy of an entire film. While these strategies are not limited to

availability, and the interests of popular music audiences coalesce and assert themselves within the context of filming rock performance and chronicling rock culture.

documentary films about rock music, there is a striking consistency to the visual representation of musical performance in rockumentaries, and *Jazz on a Summer's Day* represents a founding example for the organization of this material within a feature-length film. Not simply a sign of the wilful participation in an aesthetic movement or stylistic exercise, evidence of the journalistic and impressionistic visual strategies for representing musical performance in the work of a rockumentary filmmaker suggests an awareness of these schemas in earlier works of nonfiction film or photography. The *journalistic* is typified by its clear compositional qualities (e.g. stable camera position; sharp focus; balanced lighting) and commitment to a coherent representation of both the performer and performance space. Finding its parallel in photojournalistic practice, it strives to provide an unambiguous photographic record of the performance and is amenable to conventions of analytical editing. This photographic tendency and the related representational strategy appeals to the evidentiary status of the material (Winston 1993; see Chapter 1) and suggests an objective pictorial rending of the musical event. In this scheme, pictorial clarity stands in for sonic detail and the result is a formal style bordering on conventional portraiture. Perhaps the clearest example of the journalistic photographic tendency in popular music documentaries is the established convention of frontality, that is, the depiction of an on-stage musician addressing the audience from a camera position which approximates and clearly communicates the film audience's position relative to the imagined stage. Drawing upon a limited repertoire of camera positions including profiles of the musicians and close-ups of musical performances and performance technology (i.e. microphones, amps, etc.), the

journalistic visual strategy for representing musical performance represents a conservative formal style which nonetheless demonstrates technical skill and craftsmanship.

By contrast, the *impressionistic* offers a highly stylized, often abstract representation of the performance. There is less an interest in documenting the space of the performance than in communicating an emotional or psychological dimension of the music through formal techniques often evinced in experimental practice (e.g. instability of the frame; unusual compositions; unconventional focus and lighting; plastic cutting). Quite often, the impressionistic tendency is mis-read or mis-characterized as failed photographic or compositional technique and labelled 'DIY aesthetic' or 'amateur video'. This explicit formalism, however, has a history within the genre and produces a representational ambiguity reminiscent of the avant-garde genre identified by P. Adams Sitney as the lyrical film. The lyrical film, according to Sitney, "replaces the mediator with the increased presence of the camera." He continues "We see what the filmmaker sees; the reactions of the camera and the montage reveal his responses to his vision." (Sitney 2002, 348) The predominant aesthetic of the lyric film is that of stylization to such a degree that the figure as it is represented on screen maintains only traces or impressions of its actual form. As it concerns the visual representation of popular music performance, instead of attempting to capture an objective rendering of the event, the filmmaker uses the camera to capture and communicate the experience of witnessing a live musical performance. The visceral elements of the image supersede its documentary status and it serves instead as an archive of experience or emotion. My rationale for the delineation of the impressionistic tendency stems in part from the

contemporaneous film and art practices of several avant-garde filmmakers, including Andy Warhol and Peter Whitehead, who directly participate in the rockumentary genre in its first phase.

Art historian E.H. Gombrich might identify the development of formal conventions identified here as generic attributes as the relational link between artworks he describes in terms of *schema* and *revision*(this takes place within the context of his larger discussion of representation in the visual arts and architecture and the causes of historical change). The innovation of a schema, an identifiable pattern found in an artwork, can be both copied straightforwardly or adapted and elaborated upon through revision, thus allowing the original idea to solicit new responses and provoke further revision. (Gombrich 1969, 74) Central to this dynamic is the role problems play in the founding of *schema* and their subsequent revision. An example of such a Gombrichian problem in the visual arts might be the artist's ability to successfully communicate the impression of depth, which is 'solved' over time with the development of foreshortening. (Ibid. 360) Where Gombrich's interests lie with the psychology of artistry, I am interested in the collective working out of problems by filmmakers who are attentive to each other's responses. With this in mind, I would suggest visual strategies for visually representing popular music in nonfiction film are produced through a process described by David Bordwell (and recently historicized by Colin Burnett, 2008) as the 'problem-solution' model of film style. Bordwell, who invokes Gombrich's work within his formalist history of film style, argues such a model "invites us to reconstruct decisions made by active agents, and it treats persons as concrete forces for stability or change

(or both)." (Bordwell 1997, 150) He proposes, "the historian of style should be alert for shared problems and parallel or linked solutions," before arguing his own project "seeks to be more delicate, building from patterns of task-governed decision-making to schemas and thence to norms and their open-ended dynamic across time." (Ibid. 156-57) Bordwell asks the historian of film style to move beyond the simple identification of formal patterns and pose questions about what motivates particular strategies and their evolution over time:

> [...] one shot versus several; single versus multiple camera positions; fairly flat versus relatively deep compositions; distant views versus close ones; spatial and temporal continuity versus continuity. Can we pick out plausible patterns of change running from our earliest [example] to our most recent one? Are there overall principles governing these differences? (Ibid. 2)

The degree to which some of these compositional and editorial techniques are relevant within the context of nonfiction filmmaking is limited, but the way such structural and stylistic elements cohere as generic convention is particularly germane to the present discussion. In terms of the role played stylistic decisions in the lives of film genres, both Rick Altman and Steve Neale explain the type of evolutionary growth of stylistic convention identified here as the productive result of 'problem-solution' mechanics as central to the artistic and commercial sustainability of genres.

Jazz on a Summer's Day offers an accomplished example of the *journalistic* photographic tendency in its visual representation of musical performance during the Newport Jazz Festival. In part, these formal features reflect the emergence of new motion picture technologies available to independent filmmakers. Stern was daring in his choice of 35mm colour film for this independent production. Few documentaries from this period

invested in the increased expense and technical requirements of the larger format colour film stock at a time when the affordability and adaptability of new 16mm black-and-white stocks was reaching new heights. (Barsam 1992, 301-302) Equipped with Eyemo hand-held motion picture cameras by Bell & Howell and the stalwart Arriflex 35IIA, Stern—with assistance from a small team of cameramen—adapted his still-photography aesthetic to the rhythm and flow of moving images. Largely photojournalistic in his examination of the on-stage and off-stage spaces of the festival, Stern's lasting contribution to post-war documentary style is the compositional clarity and expressive quality of his images. Stern benefits from both the cloudless daylight setting for the majority of the weekend event (a stark contrast to the smoky nightclub iconography of earlier documentary jazz shorts such as *Momma Don't Allow*) and his ability to artificially light the performance space in keeping with the requirements of the 35mm Kodak Ektachrome negative stock used for the shoot. Stern explains he paid to light the night-time portions of the festival himself, recognizing that Newport's usual approach to staging the event would not allow him to adequately expose the colour film stock. (An exception to this was Mahalia Jackson's performance which was not on the shooting itinerary, and thus not lit, but photographed anyway and 'pushed' in development.) (Ramsland 1999) This consideration of lighting extended to the space of the audience, sections of which were lit by spotlights at different points in the evening so that the actions and responses of the night time crowd would be documented alongside those of daytime attendees. The quality of the stage lighting in the finished film, generally positioned as a footlight at the front of the stage (as opposed to a spotlight which isolates the lead

performer), often produces dramatic shadows across both the lead musicians and supporting players but never compromises the clarity of his images of performers.

All performance footage for *Jazz on a Summer's Day* was shot with accompanying magnetic audio tape recordings before permissions for the individual artists were pursued. Finished film sequences were developed and presented to agents and management for their consideration with fees negotiated on a case-by-case basis. (Ibid.) This approach to finalizing the soundtrack recording (and sometimes negative impact on the content of the finished film; see below) highlights an important issue which remains a concern to contemporary music documentarians: the need for high-quality live audio recordings in a format which both captures the original performance and remains adaptable to the requirements of theatrical reproduction. In the case of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, the sound recording equipment was provided by Columbia Records who retained ownership of the audio recordings for a series of LP releases. In this way, the film showcases the synergistic relationship between filmmaker, artist, studio, and record company so central to subsequent rockumentaries whose production is dependent upon these connections to ensure profitability.

Unfortunately, this arrangement gave record company executives indirect and unintended editorial control over the content of the film. It is suggested that George Avakian, brother of editor Aram and an executive at Columbia Records, was ultimately responsible for the song selection—and thus the content of the film—as part of his agreement with filmmaker Stern to provide a high fidelity audio recording of the event; George Avakian instructed Stern which artists to shoot based on the probability that the song

in question could be cleared for use in the motion picture. (Ibid.) Stern, only a casual jazz fan, deferred entirely to the record company and this had a direct impact on the content of the finished film. By deferring to others about which acts were worth capturing based on the probability of securing song licenses, Stern ignored luminaries such as Duke Ellington and Ray Charles, and—perhaps most unfortunately—the Miles Davis sextet featuring John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderly, and Bill Evans. (Kurtz 2008) The sextet, of which no motion picture footage is known to exist, would go on to record the acclaimed *Kind of Blue* LP. This type of disconnect between the history being made and the history being filmed isn't uncommon in the first wave of rockumentaries to follow *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, but Stern's mistake is the result of decisions that could have been avoided with proper research of the event. This raises an important issue, namely the failure of Stern as a documentarist to fully understand his subject and make informed decisions which benefit the lasting value of the film as a historical document. The situation is partially remedied by filmmakers who are either fans of the music examined in the film or in some way invested in the broader contours of rock culture, and we will see the positive results of proper research, respect for the music and artists, and great intuition demonstrated time after time in the history which follows in the next chapter. (A noteworthy exception to this would be the work of the Maysles brothers, and this will be examined, too.)

With the unfortunate influence of Columbia Records in mind, *Jazz on a Summer's Day* is not without its faults despite its status as the ur-rockumentary, and these shortcomings are most strongly evinced in structural dimensions of the film. While this is in part a

reflection of the immaturity of the form, Stern's decision to retain the 'day at the festival' pseudo-narrative beyond the opening sequence of the film undermines the true spectacle resting at the heart of the film—the performances. The most problematic interruption of a musical performance within the film is Stern's curious decision to ignore all but a few seconds of Thelonious Monk's stage performance of "Blue Monk" in favour of a montage of audience members and America's Cup racers (including CB radio bursts from the starting line), a strategy that extends into the following number by Sonny Stitt and Sal Salvador. Stern is clearly attempting to capture the atmosphere of the festival and the unique features of the locale by imbuing the otherwise *journalistic* sequence with material that he feels communicate an *impressionistic* dimension of the performance, but there are few (if any) moments during the film wherein the images of the regatta properly engage the viewer as thoughtful accompaniment or counterpoint to the soundtrack. Far more appropriate is the pairing of images from in and around Newport, ranging from children playing on the beach to young couples dancing at house parties, to the sound of a Dixieland band performing a hot jazz number reminiscent of "When the Saints Go Marching In." In these sequences, Stern's efforts to capture the community surrounding the event and their connection to the music don't come at the expense of witnessing the performers at work. He successfully balances a journalistic point-of-view with an impressionistic tendency that at once serves to chronicle the acts of music-making and music appreciation whilst conveying the spirit and abstract power of music itself. This balanced formula is a powerful weapon in the rockumentary

arsenal and its favour amongst rockumentarians remains largely unchallenged over the course of its development.

The chapter above lays the foundation for an extensive study of the rockumentary genre by examining visual representations of musical performance in early cinema and its evolution through classical Hollywood and international documentary practice. It considers the centrality of sound and music to the experience of cinema from its inception through its modernization. Crystallized by the emergence of rock music in the mid-1950s and the central place it occupies in the popular imaginary, the rockumentary form is the result of decades of experimentation and innovation in the visual representation of musical performance and popular music in film. Among the necessary technological and industrial pre-conditions for the genre are the adoption of synchronized sound by the North American film industry and the re-organization of the popular music industry in the wake of the American Federation of Musicians strike in the early-1940s which shifted emphasis away from live performance to recorded objects. To this last point Simon Frith explains, "Live music-making was still important but its organization and profits were increasingly dependent on the exigencies of record-making." (Frith 1996, 19-20) With this in mind, the interrelations between film studios and record companies which feature so prominently in the history that follows would appear inevitable. The Vitaphone Varieties produced by Warner Bros. in the 1930s presage this dynamic with their adoption of Western Electric's disk-based synchronization system in the production and exhibition of musical shorts. In these films, formal conventions of the Hollywood musical are adapted to loosely narrativized

performance films which derive their power as spectacle from the unified presentation of sound and image. The transition to explicitly nonfictional visual representations of musical performance presupposes the need to continue to appeal to the genre sensibilities of both film and music audiences. As Soundies from the late-1930s and 1940s demonstrate, the residue of Hollywood's reigning musical genre offers a framework for the representation of musical performance in the absence of any narrative framework, which the audience recognizes and appreciates, but the lack of any live soundtrack recordings limits the value of these shorts as a reservoir of popular music performance. Even 1944's *Jammin' the Blues*, courageous in its stylized, rigorously formal portrait of a jazz session, is severely limited by the need for performers to mime to a pre-recorded backing track. Experiments within the British Free Cinema movement push mobile sound-recording to the fore and demonstrate the range of new subjects available to documentarians who embrace new opportunities engendered in part by new film technologies and new funding sources, epitomized by the youth culture snapshot *Momma Don't Allow* and its fascinating look at the consumption of popular music. Yet it is only with *Jazz on a Summer's Day* that a feature-length formula emerges for the organization of this material. Bert Stern's balance of photojournalistic material with footage retaining a strong sense of the filmmaker's presence (and his personal response to the musical event) appeared to audiences as a new documentary form. Adapted to the specific spectacle and excitement of rock music, innovative formal techniques and structural tactics deliver representations of musical performance emptied of the fictionalization and choreography which epitomized the first generations of the form. Through the recurring visual strategies

for representing musical performance introduced above as the *journalistic* and the *impressionistic*, and new advances and conceptions of sound reproduction technology in cinema (see Chapter 6), filmmakers develop ways of documenting musical creation and capturing live musical performance that move beyond standard reportage. The evolution of this documentary film genre occurs over the course of a fifty year period that continues to this day and the result is a body of work that serves as an illustration of post-WWII nonfiction film practice, as a chronicle of the contemporary film and music industries, and a document of rock music's unique standing in popular culture.

Chapter 4: The History of Rockumentary I—

Style, Technology & Performance in a Documentary Genre

The rockumentary emerges in the 1960s as the popular music industry in North America expands to accommodate new genres, new technologies, and new audiences with increased spending power. Rockumentary is a response to fictional representations of musicians and musical performance in cinema (e.g. the Hollywood musical; Elvis films; teen movies) and is founded upon the evidentiary status of documentary images and discourses of authenticity which pervade rock culture. Over its history, the rockumentary genre constantly invokes the authenticity of rock music and the perceived objectivity of film technology despite the innovation of increasingly formalist sound and image recording techniques and an expansion of the performance repertoire of rock musicians. With the theories and models of film and music genres introduced and examined in earlier chapters in mind, I propose we address rockumentary as a documentary genre. Central to this generic categorization is a clearly identifiable set of evolving formal conventions at play within the body of work in question, the coherent relationship between the films, the status of these audio-visual texts as documents of popular music culture, and their reflection of both the creative and economic aspects of the film and popular music industries at the time of their production. I believe the recognition of rockumentary as a corpus that sustains genre theorization within documentary studies hinges on the same tacit understanding of a specific mobilization of "convention, iconography, recurrent patterns and audience expectations" that defines genre in fiction film.

(Ryall 1998, 327) I approach rockumentary as a sustained episode in the larger history of the visual representation of popular music (and rock, specifically) which includes photojournalism, album art, and promotional materials including music videos. The big picture questions motivating this stream of inquiry include those addressing what role formal conventions for visually representing popular music—specifically, rock iconography and filmed records of rock performance—play in the emergence, consolidation, and continuing popularity of the rockumentary genre. Is there such a thing as an ontology of rock music's visual form? What is the influence of rockumentary upon contemporary visual representations of popular music?

Inspired by a new wave of nonfiction film practices emerging in the late-1950s and early-1960s, documentary filmmakers jumped on rock music and its performers as subject matter to a degree unmatched by their fiction filmmaking counterparts. Within the first ten years of rockumentary's emergence, all of the major currents and trends which typify the genre (e.g. the concert film, the behind-the-scenes biography, the making-of and tour film, etc.) make their first appearances and establish the ways in which the genre would both depict and intersect with the musical genre. In addition to this, the various problems, solutions, and pleasures of rockumentary established in these earliest films provided a source of inspiration and reflection for subsequent generations of filmmakers working within the genre. However, the early burst of experimentation and innovation on display in various rockumentary currents led rather quickly to a conventionalism and conservatism that some might argue mimicked the music genre's abdication of its self-proclaimed anti-mainstream

platform before the arrival of punk, No Wave, and post-punk through the mid-1970s and early-1980s. This era of perceived creative decline coincides with the arrival of original programming on cable television in the United States and the shrinking theatrical audience for documentaries in the 1980s, two transformations which will be considered in relation to rockumentary at the conclusion of this chapter.

Chapters 4 and 5 synthesize the models of genre developed in chapters one and two and offer a comprehensive history of the first two waves of rockumentary in North America by expanding upon the pre-history outlined in chapter three and examining an 'golden age' for the genre beginning in the mid-to-late-1960s before culminating with a series of high-profile theatrical releases throughout the 1970s. I briefly turn my attention to the contemporary moment and take the opportunity to ask questions about the continuing industrial and cultural relevance of the genre and its impact on media language. At the centre of this history are questions pertaining to formal style and aesthetics, the role of film and sound technologies in the evolution of the genre, and the intersection of film, music and popular culture manifest in rockumentary. Barry Salt has suggested that many new developments in motion picture technology throughout the 1960s first appeared in documentary film (and television). (Salt 1992, 263) The history of rockumentary certainly supports such a claim, with a number of important image and sound technology innovations proving to be central to the development and identity of the genre while also anticipating their appearance in mainstream narrative fiction films. The Nagra III portable sound recorder (by the Swiss company, Kudelski)—weighing only 14 lbs.—and customized versions

of the Auricon Cine-Voice 16mm and Éclair NPR (Noiseless Portable Reflex) motion picture cameras represent three such technologies, and all serve as cornerstones to the 'direct cinema' style of shooting synonymous with rockumentary; the development of mobile multitrack recording technologies also figures largely in this history. My analysis includes the historical, industrial and social conditions of film production and reception, focussing specifically on a matched set of film and music contexts with the North American film and popular music industries.

For my study, a preliminary filmography was prepared including those films previously identified as "rockumentary" in both the popular and academic literature and tangentially related films selected on the basis of the filmmakers and musicians involved. Additional films were selected using keyword searches in catalogues ranging from the BFI Film & Television Database to the database of my local video rental store. Dozens upon dozens of films from a range of periods and international locations were screened with an eye on recurring strategies for representing musicians and musical performance as well as for those films which best illustrated the key innovations contributing to the development and continuing growth of the genre. While a number of newspaper archives were consulted to track the reception of these films at the time of their release, preference was given to the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Billboard Magazine* for their record of arts and industry coverage (and for the simple fact that many of the films considered here were first released theatrically in those cities). Ultimately, two significant but necessary limitations were placed upon the selection of films considered here. The first is regional, with the primary focus of

the study being Western popular music and the North American film and music industries. This limitation is necessary to isolate a single set of film and music industries and develop a proper understanding of their relationship. The second limitation is my emphasis on theatrically released films. Theatrically released films are given prominence since this is the industrial context in which audiences understood the emerging genre to exist, this is the exhibition venue artists and management sought, and this is the marketplace we can quantify in terms of the economic growth of the genre (which closes the generic cycle and returns us to audiences and the attraction of the format to artists). The non-theatrical examples are significant for many reasons but their place in the evolution of the genre from the audience's perspective is complicated by the fact they were not widely seen beyond their original broadcasts (or limited non-theatrical) screenings and many remain unavailable to the general public. It is my intention to tease out the links between theatrical and non-theatrical examples so the evolutionary connections within the corpus as a whole is evident. The decision to focus on theatrical releases appears compromised during the early portion of the chronology, in which several of the films under consideration were produced for television (several of which are discussed at length later in this chapter) but it becomes necessary later in the chronology when the filmography becomes far too unwieldy to work through and comment upon if straight-to-home-video, pay-per-view, and fanclub films (e.g. bootlegs; compilation tapes) are to be accommodated. However, the arguments and analysis laid out in this study will provide others with the tools necessary to develop their own research on these related bodies of work, and I will conclude the history presented here with remarks

addressing the role non-theatrical distribution plays in cementing the legacy of these works (e.g. festival screenings; television broadcast; home video).[1]

A Note on Film Style: The Journalistic and Impressionistic Strategies for the Visual Representation of Musical Performance

Allow me to briefly return to the model introduced in Chapter 3 outlining two predominant visual strategies for the representation of musical performance in the rockumentary genre: the *journalistic* and the *impressionistic*. The categories are fluid and often appear within a hybrid context but one or the other often describes the representational strategy of an entire song sequence or performance-based film. The repetition and refinement of these approaches establish conventions which in part comprise the stable of recurring formal features typical of the rockumentary genre. They provide a way for viewers to distinguish between two distinct yet complementary aesthetic programs manifest in the visual representation of musical performance, specifically those favouring a strictly observational perspective on the action versus an impassioned one, and offer analysts an entry onto questions of directorial intent and the project's success or failure in terms of its documentation of the musical act. As we will see, the nature of the events often dictated or encouraged a certain kind of style. These strategies represent the filmmaker's improvised responses to the performances but also their solutions to various technological and practical problems posed by the performers and the

[1] Simon Frith has published work on the history of popular music on British television (Frith 2002) while Tim Wall, Professor of Radio and Popular Music Studies in the Birmingham School of Media at Birmingham City University, is currently researching the history of made-for-television popular music documentaries in the UK. Norma Coates, meanwhile, is completing a book-length study on the subject of popular music and American network television to be published by Duke University Press.

performance spaces (e.g. light conditions; camera locations; access to artists; expectation of music clearances; pre-established demands made by the artist, film producer, or record label). On a strictly practical level, this model provides us with a shorthand with which to describe the *look* of performance sequences in rockumentaries in those instances of analysis where long descriptions are simply unnecessary given the coherence and consistency of the visual representation of musical performance within the genre. With all of this in mind, I hope to demonstrate how the innovation and conventionalization of the *journalistic* and *impressionistic* representational strategies produce those stylistic elements we identify as markers of genre.

With so many filmmakers racing to document popular musical subjects in the late-1960s and early-1970s, the solutions (or *schema*) for visually representing popular music evidenced in the earliest nonfiction films were adopted and revised by filmmakers in numbers so large that the visual language of the genre was pretty much in place and conventionalized before the second wave of work within the genre comes to an end. The alternation of *journalistic* and *impressionistic* strategies in a single film becomes, with exceptions, a generic strategy based on the formulae and conventions of rockumentary rather than a purely aesthetic or conceptual one, contributing in a direct way to the audience's understanding of the film's larger aims and its relationship to the genre as a whole. What is or isn't "rock", while central to the cultural and industrial context of the genre, becomes less important than how and why these representational strategies and quirky little sub-systems of intertextual exchange come into being and persist in contemporary visual culture.

The journalistic representational strategy, identifiable by its clear compositional qualities—including stable camera positions, sharp focus, adequate lighting, and a commitment to the coherent representation of the performer and the performance space—appeals directly to the evidentiary status of the documentary material and suggests an objective rendering of the musical event. It foregrounds the act of witnessing the musical performance. The goal here is intelligibility and in the context of nonfiction this is often understood as intimacy and demonstrates the level of access to the subject afforded the filmmaker. The result is a formal style bordering on conventional portraiture. In this scheme, pictorial clarity stands in for sonic detail in those instances where the audio quality of the soundtrack recording might not meet the audience's expectations due to practical limitations imposed by available technologies and the recording environment. This footage is amenable to conventions of analytical editing and often structured upon the relationships between the general (e.g. establishing shot of the performance space) and the specific (e.g. close-up of the performers or even the on-stage equipment) in the filmmaker's efforts to investigate the space of the performance and the performers themselves. Perhaps the clearest example of the journalistic photographic tendency in popular music documentaries is the convention of frontality, that is, the depiction of on-stage events from a camera position which approximates a position in the crowd and clearly communicates the film audience's position relative to the imagined stage. Drawing upon a limited repertoire of camera positions including profiles of the musicians and close-ups of musical performances and performance technology (i.e. microphones, amps, etc.), the journalistic photographic

tendency represents a conservative formal style demonstrating technical skill and craftsmanship.

In contrast to the journalistic approach, the impressionistic representational strategy results in a highly stylized, often abstract representation of the performance. There is less an interest in documenting the space of the performance than in communicating an emotional or psychological dimension of the music through formal techniques often evinced in experimental practice (e.g. instability of the frame; unusual compositions; unconventional focus and lighting; plastic cutting). Quite often, the impressionistic tendency is mis-read or mis-characterized as failed photographic or compositional technique and labelled 'DIY aesthetic' or 'amateur video'. This explicit formalism, however, has a history within the genre and produces a representational ambiguity reminiscent of the avant-garde genre identified by P. Adams Sitney as the lyrical film. The lyrical film, according to Sitney, "replaces the mediator with the increased presence of the camera." He continues "We see what the filmmaker sees; the reactions of the camera and the montage reveal his responses to his vision." (Sitney 2002, 368) The predominant aesthetic of the lyric film is that of stylization to such a degree that the figure as it is represented on screen maintains only traces or impressions of its actual form. As it concerns the visual representation of popular music performance, instead of attempting to capture an objective rendering of the event, the filmmaker uses the camera to capture and communicate the experience of witnessing a live musical performance. The visceral elements of the image supersede its documentary status and it serves instead as an archive of experience or emotion. My rationale for the delineation

of the impressionistic tendency stems in part from the contemporaneous film and art practices of several avant-garde filmmakers, including Andy Warhol and Peter Whitehead, who directly participated in the rockumentary genre in its first phase.

The *journalistic* and *impressionistic* visual strategies briefly co-exist at the genre's inception and throughout its first wave. Over time, however, the *impressionistic* grows increasingly marginalized and by the mid-1980s it is all but jettisoned from the mainstream of the genre, existing and evolving instead in the nascent music video format. The reasons for this growing divide between the two visual strategies appears to be imposed upon the genre by the audience's expectations of the documentary form in light of the abstract and increasingly experimental representation of rock on music television. In this way, the founding myth of rock's authenticity directs the genre toward more conventional portraiture which is perceived by the audience to be less mediated and therefore less constructed than experimental forms. As the genre matures and its commercial profile within the mainstream increases, the divide between strains of journalistic documentation and more experimental forms of representation—once extant in a single film; e.g. *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, *The Velvet Underground and Nico: A Symphony of Sound* (Andy Warhol, USA, 1966), *Tonight Let's All Make Love in London* (Peter Whitehead, UK, 1967), *Monterey Pop* (D.A. Pennebaker, USA, 1968)—grows with the latter almost entirely ejected from the feature-length rockumentary and subsumed by the emerging music video form (see Kaplan 1987; Straw 1988; Goodwin 1992; Faller 1996; Donnelly 2007). There is a parallel in terms of two key sonoric strategies evinced in soundtrack of music documentaries that moves us away from these visualist tenets;

they will be introduced and examined in Chapter 6. Despite the relative diminishment of the impressionistic tendency within the rockumentary as it evolves, the persistence of both of these visual strategies for representing popular music in moving images in contemporary film and television and new media demands our attention in terms of their heritage and their meaning to new generations of audiences. Their grasp on contemporary visual representations of popular music is powerful.

Timid Beginnings: The Roots of the Theatrical Rockumentary in Short Nonfiction Subjects and Television

In the first wave of documentary films on pop and rock subjects following *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, a unifying element—apart from the musical subject matter—is the influence of formal conventions of television production and the practical constraints of the television broadcast format upon the rockumentary genre. Perhaps it was Bert Stern's professional career as photographer and his intention to release the film theatrically in repertory cinemas that set his project on a separate path from contemporary television documentaries, but the role played by television broadcasters as a source of funding and an exhibition outlet for documentary films on pop and rock in the earliest years of the genre is a significant one. Three noteworthy examples from North American television are *Lonely Boy* (Wolf Koenig & Roman Kroitor, CAN, 1962), *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A.* (Albert Maysles & David Maysles, UK, 1964), and *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* (UK/USA, 1965). All three films anticipate the torrent of rockumentaries in the late-1960s with their innovative

portrayals of pop royalty and their utilization of new motion picture technologies. With the theatrical release and box-office success of *T.A.M.I. Show* (Steve Binder, USA, 1964), a film very much indebted to the technology and formal techniques of television production, the rockumentary became a regular feature of the North American box-office. The genre remains perhaps the most high-profile and consistently profitable documentary form in terms of theatrical releases (see Introduction), and it occupies a central place in the realm of home video.

Lonely Boy is a revealing biography of teen songwriter-performer Paul Anka, produced by the NFB's accomplished Unit B crew for CBC-TV (and released theatrically in both the United States and Canada) after the conclusion of the ground-breaking Candid Eye series, thirteen observational documentaries produced for television under the watch of executive producer Tom Daly using state-of-the-art mobile 16mm motion picture film and sound technology. It is a natural extension of *Jazz on a Summer's Day,* sharing the latter film's observational mode of representation and journalistic visual strategies during sequences of musical performance in a documentary that otherwise illustrates the behind-the-scenes biography current. *Lonely Boy* exemplifies the growth of arts documentaries in Canada and the natural development of the pop culture documentary at filmmaking institutions freed from their obligations as official information services. Where it distinguishes itself is its examination of the backstage areas and use of candid interviews to explore the Paul Anka persona (and not, necessarily, Paul Anka the person). It is a study of the "phenomenon" of entertainers becoming pop icons wherein privileged access to the subject is both a

prerequisite and prime attraction for the production. Other examples of this include the NFB's *Ladies and Gentlemen... Mr. Leonard Cohen* (Donald Brittain & Don Owen, CAN, 1965) and two early works from the prolific Maysles brothers who contribute significantly to the rockumentary, *Meet Marlon Brando* (Albert Maysles, David Maysles & Charlotte Zwerin, USA, 1966) and *With Love from Truman* (Albert Maysles & David Maysles, USA, 1966). All of these films approach their subject with the same thesis, one that rests at the heart of biographic studies within the rockumentary genre and highlights the complexities of discussing performance: the true personality of the performer is not available to audiences on-stage or on-screen but is available through the exploitation of lightweight, mobile film technology with the goal of capturing intimate moments in the life of the artist.

I contend we must approach the behaviour of *social actors* in nonfiction film as performances; not the performance of a fictional character by a professional actor in a fictional narrative, but a performance all the same.[2] Sociologist Erving Goffman argues social relationships constitute a performance and writes, "I assume that when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation." (Goffman 1959, 15) He defines performance in social settings as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers." (Ibid. 22) This description tellingly identifies a reciprocal relationship between the the performer and the observer, a relationship which produces a performance on behalf of the observer and

[2] Nichols identifies performers in nonfiction as *social actors,* a term he uses to "[designate] real-life characters playing their own social roles in non-fiction film and presumably having an extratextual autonomy". (Nichols 1981, 181-85)

implicates them in motivating the original performance. Nowhere in Goffman's dramaturgical model is there a performance-free space—only social situations where individuals and observers might have different motives for, and expectations of, the roles they play and the performances they enact—and nowhere in documentary film and video is there a performance-free space. Intimacy and revelation are a construction of the subject, the filmmaker, and audience. Sociologist Richard Sennet argues intimacy, as it relates to any social situation, is a form of performance and a veneer which quickly falls away to reveal tensions that are decidedly anti-social:

> Intimacy is a field of vision and an expectation of human relations. It is the localizing of human experience, so that what is close to the immediate circumstances of our life is paramount. The more this localizing rules, the more people seek out or put pressure on each other to strip away the barriers of custom, manners, and gesture which stand in the way of frankness and mutual openness. The expectation is that when relations are close, they are warm; *it is an intense kind of sociability which people seek out in attempting to remove the barriers to intimate contact, but this expectation is defeated by the act*. The closer people come, the less sociable, the more painful, the more fratricidal their relations. (Sennet 1996, 338; emphasis added)

The filmmaker's act of recording during intimate moments does not represent or communicate the removal of barriers and access to the social actor's true personality but, in fact, only highlights the transformation of their on-stage persona in the off-stage environment and confirms their behaviour 'in private' as a performance of another order. Thomas Waugh's identification of *presentational* and *representational* modes of performance in documentary film and video encapsulates this transformation and distinguishes between two orders of performance evidenced in nonfiction film. The former involves the convention of

performing an awareness of the camera (e.g., executing an action for the express purpose of its documentation with no effort to conceal the act of recording), while the latter is the practice of subjects striving for naturalism by ignoring the camera and behaving as though they are unaware of the filming process. This difference further serves to highlight the evolving relationship between filmmaker and subject becoming, as Waugh contends, "a gauge of the ethical and political accountability of the filmmaker's relationship with [her] subject." (Waugh 1990, 81) Paul Arthur, discussing the Direct Cinema movement of the United States in the late-1960s and early-1970s, argues practice, ethics and ideology coalesce and "in pragmatic terms, all traditional *a priori* activities, such as research, scripting, rehearsal, and various *posteriori* stages, such as narration, musical scoring, and analytical editing, are either eliminated or collapsed onto the moment of recording." (Arthur 1993, 118) I would argue it is the dynamic nature of this collapse—textually manifest as immediacy or the illusion of unmediated access—which too often disguises or conceals performance as a feature of nonfiction film in need of analysis and critique. When professional performers like screen actors and musicians appear as the social actors in nonfiction film, the aforementioned problematic is extended to its limit. Rock musicians muddy these already murky waters especially well.

Phillip Auslander argues, "the visual artifacts of rock serve a particular function within rock culture and live performance plays a pivotal role in this regard. The function to which I am alluding is that of establishing the *authenticity* of the music for the rock fan." (Auslander 1999, 65; emphasis in original) Returning to the discussion of rock authenticity

from Chapter 2 (and Keir Keightley's comments in particular), what sets rock culture apart from other popular music audiences is their investment in these debates. (Keightley 2001, 133) As one type of visual artifact of rock, documentary films about rock music illustrate this discursive environment explicitly; it could be argued that documentary portraits of other popular music subjects work to conceal such debates. What distinguishes the nonfictional depiction of rock musicians and performances from other performers and popular musics is rock culture's investment in explicitly performative elements (both on-stage and in those moments coded as performance-free) as a determining factor of an artist's perceived authenticity. This trait manifests in the rockumentary audience as a special investment in those sequences which should draw the most scrutiny from audiences of nonfiction—the intimate spaces off-stage—and an acceptance (born of convention) of the on-stage behaviours of rock musicians as constituting a performance which does not continue backstage. Jonathan Romney writes, "Backstage may be literally the space behind the stage, or it may more generally be the 'off-screen' of in-concert fantasy—the tour coach, the hotel room, the interview situation in which the stars 'play' themselves off duty." He continues,

> 'Backstage' is the most potent of all concepts designed to separate performer and fan. It is a space of privacy, a world behind the curtain in which the *real being*, the ineffable precious essence of the performer's self, supposedly lies shielded from sight.
>
> [...] An element of demystification is partly at stake; such footage demonstrates to us how the illusion of on-stage spontaneity is the result of careful planning and struggle against seemingly seemingly insuperable odds. (Romney 1995, 83)

Romney attaches the spectacular power of on-stage musical performance as a constitutive element of backstage's allure. In Romney's model, 'backstage' has the power to structure the

viewer's relationship to on-stage performances by drawing attention to the processes and personalities which produce the musical performance. Curiously, for the rockumentary audience, this dynamic neither undermines those performances in terms of their perceived authenticity, no matter how viewers ascribe it.

Returning to our consideration of *Lonely Boy*, Jane M. Gaines, in her study of the film's portrayal of adolescent female sexuality, considers the NFB's motivation for such a project and suggests, "one need look no further than the importance of asserting Paul Anka's Canadianness, of claiming him and distinguishing him from popular American crooners such as Tony Bennett or Frank Sinatra," (Gaines 1999, 102) before continuing, "one gets the sense that the cinéma-vérité shooting style, in its experimental stages in 1961, was itself part of the rationale behind the project. One could say that the backstage subject matter lends itself to this special kind of documentary treatment [...]". (Ibid. 103) The film is a perfect marriage of cultural project and technological experiment, but more importantly it establishes the onstage/backstage dichotomy as the central trope of the biography current within rockumentary. There is, of course, the oft-cited sequence involving Anka in his undies as he rushes to prepare for the stage and the noteworthy coincidence of 'old' technology's failure to capture the intimacy of this moment: Koenig and Kroitor's compact 16mm motion picture cameras roll on as a bumbling still-photographer humorously fails in his attempts to properly focus and operate the flash on his 35mm single-lens reflex still camera in time to catch Anka as he darts around the room. There are other moments, however, which equally demonstrate the reach of the documentary lens and serve as signposts for future rockumentarians.

Specifically, there is a sequence featuring a pre-show rehearsal which captures a candid solo-Anka piano performance of a then-unreleased composition. In this moment, the film audience is the only audience (the seats of the auditorium remain empty save for a few hangers-on and maintenance people) and we are, for the only time in the film, privy to a song uninterrupted by the wild jubilance of a thousand screaming teenaged fans. With Romney's model of "backstage" in mind, we understand such moments of privileged access and glimpses into the creative process are precious among popular music fans and rest at the centre of rockumentary with its ability to reveal the creative process at work. The filmmakers successfully strike a balance between scenes of live musical performance and those which revel in the off-stage elements of Anka's growing celebrity both afforded to them by the willing participation of the artist (and management) and new technology ideally suited to such an observational format. *Lonely Boy* suggests the restraint and conservatism which characterizes latter rockumentary entries despite their focus on a popular music identified with innovation and rebellion.

Originally aired on Granada Television as rough-cut footage during a 30-minute television special in the spring of 1964, *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A.,* mirrors the approach and final result of the Paul Anka documentary in many ways, although the scale of celebrity chronicled is exponentially larger. It foreshadows a long tradition of feature-length performing arts documentaries focused on pop and rock produced for British television which continues to this day with projects which re-inscribe many of the rockumentary conventions and techniques established in these earliest films (see Forman

2002; Frith 2002). Indeed, the participation of Albert and David Maysles in the first wave of American Direct Cinema and their recurring role in the first wave of rockumentary is key to understanding the centrality of the observational mode of representation within the visual language of the genre. Prepared by the Maysles as a feature-length film for theatrical release immediately following the airing of footage on Granada, *What's Happening!...* saw its theatrical run complicated by the sensational success of *Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester, UK, 1964) in July of that year. Unsure of its box-office prospects in the face of competition posed by its fictional counterpart, distributors pulled a 55-minute version of *What's Happening!...* from their release calendar before its premiere. (Lewisohn 1992, 144) After its U.S. television premiere on CBS in November 1964 (with the title, *The Beatles in the U.S.A.*), contractual conflicts blocked its public availability for decades before it was finally released in an altered, 81-minute version on home video by Apple Corps Ltd. as *The Beatles: The First U.S. Visit* on 13 November 1991.[3] The original 50-minute version of the film remains unavailable outside of bootlegs, the most notable of which is the painstakingly comprehensive audio-visual archive known as *Turn Left at Greenland* (Darthdisc, UK, 2008), a 5-DVD box-set containing every known unreleased television performance and radio interview by the Beatles.[4] It differs in several ways from the officially sanctioned *The First U.S. Visit* and underscores my sense that the original unreleased version of the film is its definitive version and best illustrates the Maysles' first contribution to the preliminary wave of rockumentary

[3] Contrary to claims that the film "enjoyed [a] uniquely profitable theatrical run," (Plasketes 1989) *What's Happening!...* never appeared on U.S. cinema screens.

[4] *Turn Left at Greenland* was the source of my consultation copy of the original version of *What's Happening!...*

films (as opposed to re-inscribing these conventions through a process of revision undertaken a few decades after the fact).

Demonstrating an observational mode of address, *What's Happening!...* is in many ways the nonfictional counterpart to A *Hard Day's Night*. Many of the most memorable scenarios in Lester's film—the train trip, the snappy exchanges with interviewers, and the band's childish behaviour during photo shoots—first appear in the Maysles documentary. The film is not overly concerned with the music of the Beatles and instead focuses on the lives of the band during the storm of publicity surrounding their first visit to the United States. Indeed, the key difference between the original and home video versions of the film is the addition of complete song sequences to the latter (most of which were shot by personnel other than the Maysles and adopt a strictly journalistic representational style) where the original only features music from on-screen, environmental sources (such as radios and televisions) save for the penultimate segment of the film and its montage of songs from the band's performance in the round at the Washington Coliseum (songs rendered all but inaudible by the screams of the audience and the location of the Maysles' single microphone far, far away from the on-stage public address system). The differences between the original version of *What's Happening!...* and the home video version illustrate a turn to performance in the rockumentary genre in the mid-1970s. The predominance of the behind-the-scenes current in the first wave of rockumentaries, with its candid views of the musician both backstage and away from professional life is gradually usurped by the concert film and its extended sequences of live musical performance; this evolutionary quirk will be discussed at

length in later sections of this chapter. For their part, the Maysles make it clear that their interest is primarily the personalities of the band and the feverish response to their music, not the performance of the music itself. The clearest illustration of this strategy is a fascinating scene wherein the Maysles visit a private residence and train their cameras on three school-aged children as the youngsters sit mesmerized by the Beatles's first television appearance on the Ed Sullivan show. This scene is entirely absent from the official home video release but it illustrates a directorial interest evident throughout the original version of the film, namely the mediated nature of the Beatlemania phenomenon and the central role played by radio and television in the ascendency of popular music stars in these early moments of this cultural form.

What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A. begins with a candid scene depicting DJ Murray "The K" Kaufman accepting an on-air request for "She Loves You" during his radio show by announcing, "Here's what's happening, baby! The Beatles!" A brief glimpse of Murray dancing to the tune in the studio is interrupted by a smash cut to a gang of Beatles fan club members singing the song *a capella* in a public gathering. This sequence is itself interrupted by the sound and image of screaming fans racing toward an airport terminal as the Beatle's Pan-American flight taxis in the background in advance of their now-famous arrival and tarmac photo-op (which is certainly the Maysles' brothers' greatest contribution to the canon of Beatles iconography). These images are followed by a title card announcing the film's title before an extended sequence features the band in the back of a limousine as they travel through New York City en route to their hotel where the Maysles observe the

band watching their own television coverage and listening to themselves on the radio—imagery which persists throughout the film—as they await a call from London. They welcome Murray the K (who broadcasts live from the Beatles' suite via telephone and repeats his "What's happening!" proclamation as the band continue to listen with their own portable transistor radios) before departing for their appearance on the Ed Sullivan show. It is at this point in the film that the two versions of the movie diverge significantly from one another (although most of the material in the Maysles' version appears at one point or another in the Apple home video release). What follows in the original version of the film is an adventure with the Beatles through New York City to Washington, DC as the Maysles brothers are granted a degree of access to the group that would be unheard of throughout the remainder of their careers together (officially-sanctioned projects like the *Anthology* television series notwithstanding). From uninhibited dance parties at the Peppermint Lounge to late night hotel arrivals and young schoolchildren pleading for pecks on the cheek from Ringo as he clowns around for the photographer-pool accompanying the band on their train trip, the camera follows the group everywhere they go, revealing a side of a musician's life on the road and in the centre of a pop cultural maelstrom with a starkness and clarity that is all but missing from contemporary accounts of this lifestyle in an age of endless self-promotion, carefully choreographed public appearances, and paparazzi attacks. The film ends on a subdued note with the Beatles returned to their rooms in the Plaza Hotel in New York City after trips to Washington and Miami, sitting with Murray the K as they listen to The Impressions' "Talking About My Baby" on the radio.

Like *Lonely Boy* before it, *What's Happening!...* features a noteworthy sequence involving the press corp.'s inability to capture the band using their 'old' technology—the still-camera—as the group is either moving to fast and mugging too much, or openly disdainful of the photographers' requests to perform for the camera during a photo-op in Central Park. Albert Maysles, meanwhile, stands back with his camera and records the action unfolding, at once capturing an unseen side of the Beatles' personalities and pulling the curtain back on the choreographed nature of their many public appearances. Most significantly, the band remains playful for the motion picture camera throughout these encounters, suggesting the band is comfortable with the unobtrusive two-man film crew despite the fact they appear quick to tire of the still-photographers who will be on hand for the duration of their visit to the United States. The spectacle here is both the band itself and the act of documentation. Ehrenstein & Reed charge "this approach backfired [...] So aware were [the Beatles] of camera technique that there was no way to 'catch them with their guard down'." (Ehrenstein & Reed 1982, 57) I would counter the film is interesting precisely because of the Beatles's awareness of the camera and their interaction with the filmmakers—there is no onstage, or rather, the personalities of the Beatles are revealed to be enmeshed with their stage-managed roles within the band. Returning to the dramaturgical model of social behaviour forwarded by Goffman and Waugh's adaptation of its on-stage/backstage paradigm of everyday lives to the realm of nonfiction film, we might understand the appeal of the Beatles as documentary subjects is the way in which the hybridity of their performances, at once presentational (actively aware of the camera) and representational (ignoring the camera),

draws the viewer in and appears to throw back the curtain on their private lives. It is important to recognize that it is not a question of technique or technology which affords the perceived intimacy on display in these films but rather the nature of the relationship between filmmaker and subject, directorial decisions relating to the behaviour of social actors, and editorial decisions concerning the narrative and structure desired for the finished film. More importantly, one cannot disregard the innocence of the industrial and cultural moment within which these independent filmmakers sought out or were commissioned to follow these acts, and the relatively undeveloped sense of the audience's access to celebrities relative to our present day environment of tabloid publications, gossip industries, and social media networks which invite the dissemination of mundane facts with an ease far outstripping a celebrity's ability to control their public persona. If, for example, *A Hard Day's Night* appeared in theatres without images from *What's Happening!...* (or their televised press conferences) already circulating throughout popular culture, it is quite possible that audiences might not have been convinced by the Beatles' on-screen hi-jinx or the believability of the fictionalized candid footage in Lester's film. The lasting iconography of the Beatles could have been very different, indeed, if the Maysles hadn't first captured and enshrined the group's playful spirit and confidence in front the cameras within a nonfictional context.

A second Beatles documentary appeared soon after the broadcast of *What's Happening!...,* sharing many of its qualities. It is arguably a superior piece of filmmaking despite its absence from the accepted rockumentary canon (exacerbated in part by its continued unavailability on home video). *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* was produced by Ed

Sullivan's company for ABC in the United States for airing on 10 January 1967 and NEMS Enterprises Ltd. for the BBC in the United Kingdom where it aired a year earlier on 1 May 1966. (Lewisohn 1992, 199–200) It captures on film what was, at the time, estimated to be the largest pop music concert in history with over 55,000 fans in attendance. Comprised primarily of performance footage but also featuring a number of behind-the-scenes moments with the band and promoters, it represents an interesting concert film/making-of hybrid early in the history of rockumentary and is undoubtedly the blueprint for the revised version of *What's Happening!...* . The film is quite ambitious in terms of its strategy for capturing the action—thirteen cameras were used, including one attached to a helicopter, according to a brief item in the 14 August 1965 edition of the *New York Times*—and boasts the talent of a young Gordon Willis (Academy Award-winning cinematographer of such acclaimed films as *The Godfather*, *Annie Hall*, and *Manhattan*) who served as a cameraman in what was one of his first professional jobs. It should be noted that little to no critical attention was paid to the television special when it originally aired; notices in major U.S. newspapers at the time were limited to air-date announcements.

The film opens with a peculiar introductory message from Arthur Fiedler, long-time conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, who explains that the Beatles registered their approval of his orchestral arrangements of their early hits before professing in a monotone register, "I think the Beatles are great—yeah, yeah, yeah." It appears this humorous episode was intended to keep an older generation of television viewers from flipping the channel for fear of the cacophony of sound which they presumed would follow. It is interesting to note,

however, that the fade to black following Fiedler's remarks is not quite swift enough to disguise the forced grin falling from his face as he concludes his prepared statement. Perhaps a more convincing spokesman of similar stature in the world of 'respectable' music could not be found. Images of an empty Shea Stadium follow, accompanied on the soundtrack by unscripted remarks from the Beatles at the conclusion of their performance offering their amazement at the scope of the event, before the band appears on-screen and rips into the song which concluded their set, "I'm Down". After the band beats a hasty retreat to a car waiting on the infield of the stadium, the crowd rushes the field as an aerial view of the stadium fills the screen and a title card proclaims, "The Beatles at Shea Stadium". Footage of the production crews preparing the stadium for the show and security officers receiving instructions from officials appears on-screen as the Beatles' recollections of the event continue on the soundtrack. The footage of the event coming together is revelatory, setting it apart from the earlier Beatles doc and foreshadowing the widespread use of this narrative device in subsequent concert film/making-of hybrids such as *Gimme Shelter* and *Woodstock* (a development which will be considered at length before the conclusion of this chapter). A dissolve returns us to the night of the performance as New York City radio host Murray "The K" Kaufman is introduced to the stage and welcomes the screaming fans in attendance at Shea Stadium to what he calls "probably the biggest concert ever in the history of pop music." A brief performance sequence featuring The Discotheque Dancers (a six-person dance troupe) is interrupted by a freeze-frame and optical zoom-in/focus blur effect (punctuated by the sound of an engine revving) before dissolving to footage of the fans arriving at the stadium.

The soundtrack returns to the Beatles as they comment on the adoration of their fans and the behaviour they exhibit during the performances. They speak directly to those who attack the group and their fans:

> John [in voice-over]: "I'm just sorry for the people who can't see us live. Sometimes you haven't missed anything because you wouldn't have heard us, but sometimes I think you might have enjoyed it. I'm sorry for them."
>
> Paul [in voice-over]: "There was a fellow writing in the paper today saying we should stop all these concerts. This wasn't fun, he said, this wasn't teenagers enjoying themselves. Well, I don't agree with him. I think it's the greatest, and if that wasn't teenagers enjoying themselves, what was?"

The next performance sequence features King Curtis and the Kingpins. Curtis, a highly respected saxophonist who worked extensively with both The Coasters and Aretha Franklin before his untimely death in 1971, is well-received by the audience but the most interesting moment in his brief appearance on-screen is a glimpse of the sound engineers hidden behind the stage, seated at a console of pre-amplifiers and mixers. It subtly suggests the increasingly important role sound reproduction technology plays in the live performance of popular music and foreshadows the expansive growth of this equipment in the presentation of rock in the decades to come.

The pattern of behind-the-scenes footage accompanied by the Beatles in voice-over and sequences of live musical performance continues throughout the remainder of the film though the majority of screen time is focused on their headlining performance. There are several backstage sequences which play out at length, including the band's departure from the New York City heliport and tour of the city by air in advance of their arrival at Shea Stadium,

and glimpses of John, Paul, and George tuning up before taking the stage. The latter footage is accompanied by candid remarks from Paul and Ringo about the preparation required for such a big show and the paradoxically diminished sense of responsibility they feel knowing much of what they play will not be heard over the screaming crowd. Once the Beatles take the stage, it becomes clear by the disparity heard between the sound of their barely-in-tune guitars during a brief on-stage warm-up and the quality of their subsequent performance that the soundtrack of the film is not an accurate representation of the performance itself. Mark Lewisohn discovered that the sound available to technicians producing the event was rendered unusable for the purposes of the film as result of the continuous screams of fans throughout the stadium; the Beatles returned to London studios in January 1966 to record overdubs before the special was broadcast in the United Kingdom and the United States. (Lewisohn 1988, 215) Liveness, in this particular case of the cinematic representation of concert sound, is a complete fabrication; we will return to this issue in Chapter 6 for a focused consideration of what is at stake. Interestingly, the conclusion of the film features a performance of "I'm Down" usurped on the soundtrack by the voice of George Harrison who thanks the fans in attendance at Shea Stadium and those viewing the concert at home. In this moment, the Beatles as a musical group are overwhelmed by the Beatles as pop cultural icons whose relationship with their fans transcends their talent as songwriters and performers. Practically speaking, this device is a means of concealing the poor audio quality of the live concert recordings (and diminishes the redundancy of using the same musical performance as bookends to the film presentation); symbolically, however, Harrison's

appearance on the soundtrack foreshadows the genre's investment in spectacle and star-making at the expense of the faithful documentation of popular music performances.

If the birth of rockumentary is first signalled by *Jazz on a Summer's Day* and confirmed by the appearance of *Lonely Boy* and the Beatles documentaries on television, the eldest child of the genre is undoubtedly the multi-artist concert film, *T.A.M.I. Show.* The film firmly establishes technological and formal innovation as an engine driving the development of the genre, and the interplay between art and industry within the film and music businesses as a central thematic of the corpus. Nearly all of the big picture issues which shape rockumentary are evidenced in this early, pioneering film, including one which grows increasingly complicated as the genre matures: the rights necessary for both the theatrical and non-theatrical distribution of films featuring popular music. With that last point in mind, it should be noted that *T.A.M.I. Show* was, until recently, a missing link within the genre's history. Originally released in North American theatres on 29 December 1964, the film was unavailable for over 45 years as a result of murky ownership and a morass of unresolved music licensing issues arguably unmatched by any film before or since. The film circulated almost exclusively via bootleg video recordings of the original theatrical prints and a limited number of cable television broadcasts before the legal issues were finally resolved when Dick Clark Productions consolidated the various rights and licenses for the film in early 2010, paving the way for its home video release.

T.A.M.I. Show arrived during a period of monumental change in the film and music industries. Through the 1950s and early-1960s, a series of divestments, takeovers, and

conglomerations resulting from the Paramount decision of 1948[5] increased the number of film studio-owned music subsidiaries and dramatically altered the profile and profitability of film music soundtracks. During this same period, the size of the North American record industry quadrupled in size to more than a half billion dollars, of which independent labels—home to the first wave of both rock'n'roll and rock—accounted for sixty percent of all 45-rpm singles. (Sanjek 1988, 333-66) The film industry singled-out pop and rock music in particular as ripe for exploitation in a decade where the profile and profitability of film soundtracks was growing exponentially with the success of *My Fair Lady* (1964), *The Sound of Music* (1965), and *Help!* (1965) among many others. Referring to the two most iconic examples of this new direction in film soundtracks, Jeff Smith writes, "By the time of *The Graduate* (1967) and *Easy Rider* (1969), soundtracks were no longer simply promotional tools but were intrinsically valuable musical commodities." (Smith 1998, 25) Originally conceived as the first of an annual film event featuring rock'n'roll artists in support of music scholarships for teenagers (Bart 1964b), *T.A.M.I. Show* is as a valuable document of the diversity of teen-oriented popular music at the time and a vivid illustration of the impact of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (only months old at the time of the event) with its integrated cast of musicians and dancers and an integrated audience. Binder credits producer and band leader Jack Nitzsche for the selection of the majority of the acts, most of whom went on to significant careers in pop music. The film is a record of the so-called British Invasion of

[5] The Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948 (United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc., 334 US 131) found the vertical integration of the major film studios and their control over the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures to be an illegal monopoly. This Supreme Court decision set into motion a series of events which essentially ended the classical Hollywood studio system and indirectly contributed to a two decade-long period of relative uncertainty at the United States box-office (Schatz 1999, 326-328).

American popular music as it was taking place (despite the absence of the Beatles—who had made their own big screen debut several months earlier with *A Hard Day's Night*; "They wanted too damn much money," executive producer William Sargent told the *New York Times* on 15 October 1964): Gerry and the Pacemakers; Billy J. Kramer & the Dakotas; The Rolling Stones. Established crossover acts like Chuck Berry, The Supremes, and Marvin Gaye share the stage with dedicated rock'n'rollers and one black artist who was a legend to some but not yet a mainstream presence in white America: James Brown. An independent production financed primarily by Sargent and distributed by American International Pictures (known now as the preeminent distributor of B-movies during the 1960s and early 1970s—especially horror and teen-oriented fare like the 'beach party' series), the film was not only a showcase for pop music but was supposed to introduce Sargent's Electronovision technology to a mainstream audience.[6] According to a 1964 *Hollywood Reporter* article publicizing the concert event and the as-yet-unreleased film, the budget for the film was $1.4 million (including $600,000 for the 2200 theatrical prints and $350,000 for a worldwide advertising campaign), three times that of *Hard Day's Night* but a fraction of the cost of their contemporary box-office heavyweights *Mary Poppins* ($6 million; Robert Stevenson, USA, 1964) and *My Fair Lady* ($17 million; George Cukor, USA, 1964).

Electronovision was an early video-to-film system which used specialized broadcast television cameras to capture electronic video signals and convert them on-the-fly to motion picture film. The proprietary conversion technology provided an image resolution (800-plus

[6] Sargent hoped to secure the necessary rights to release a soundtrack album—"The album could be bigger than the picture, couldn't it?" he asked in a *Billboard m*agazine article on 21 November 1964—but ultimately failed in his efforts. (*Billboard*, 24 November 1964)

vertical lines) higher than that of standard television broadcasts (525 vertical lines of which 486 are visible in the rasterized image) and this allowed for acceptable 35mm theatrical projection at a fraction of the cost of a full-scale film production. Most importantly, the cameras (modified RCA TK 60s) required significantly less light than conventional film and television cameras. (Abramsom & Sterling 2007, 103) A major draw-back to the technology, however, was its reliance upon existing television production processes such as live-switching to ensure these savings were achieved. Necessarily or not, this meant individual cameras did not record their own footages to be edited later but instead fed to a central console (a RCA TFR television film recorder, according to Abramsom & Sterling) whereupon the director compiled a "final cut" as the live performances were recorded—no work print, no outtakes, but limited post-production delays in preparing the footage for theatrical release. (If each camera were to produce its own footage both the economic benefits and swift production workflow of the format would be nullified.) The speed, simplicity, and cinema-ready nature of the Electronovision process were its only competitive attributes when compared to the improved-quality and budget-smart 16mm film processes of the era. Advertisements for the film proclaimed, "Don't miss the once-in-a-lifetime special!", perpetuating Sargent's early PR claim that prints of the film would be destroyed after its initial theatrical run but wilfully ignoring the timelessness of the endeavour. History demonstrates Sargent was wholly misguided in his belief that one of the appeals of the format would be the ability of producers to quickly destroy their creations.[7]

[7] The story of Electronovision is an interesting one—the technology arrives (and disappears) at a time when some were questioning the traditional roles of both television (with its growing but increasingly segmented audience) and cinema (with its shrinking yet increasingly segmented audience). A related story is Sargent's

While *T.A.M.I. Show*'s innovative spirit is undeniable in terms of the technology at work, formally it displays a conservative approach which would be alternately mimicked and mocked for decades to follow. The film is built upon the formal conventions of television, specifically the well-established variety show format (in many ways the film is a theatrically released compendium of awards show-style musical performances still common today) and *T.A.M.I. Show*'s broadcast television contemporaries *Shindig!* (ABC, 1964-1966) and the Binder-directed *Hullabaloo* (NBC, 1965-1966). Binder, then 23 years-old, selected many of his crew members from the original Steve Allen Show to operate the four cameras (one crane-mounted) required to capture the action after two trial runs (one public) were undertaken in advance of the five-hour show photographed for the finished film. Using conventional television studio cameras, the camera operators were severely limited in terms of camera movement and this in part explains the journalistic strategy of representing musical performance on display in *T.A.M.I. Show*. The film does, however, make use of a crane-mounted camera as tool to explore the space of the stage and offer a perspective of the performance markedly different from that of the audience. However, its use is largely limited to providing an elevated frontal view of the stage, but it hints at the creative use of this camera technique in rockumentary films to come. Another noteworthy device, and the only photographic technique on display in *T.A.M.I. Show* demonstrating an impressionistic representation of musical performance, is diffusion; specifically, the use of vaseline smeared

role in the development of closed-circuit and pay-television, and its contemporary manifestation in the direct-to-theatre phenomenon (e.g. The MET in HD).

on a glass plant mounted in front of the camera lens as a means of creating a dreamy atmosphere during songs from Gerry and the Pacemakers, Lesley Gore, and the Beach Boys.

The film is composed primarily of 3- or 4-song medleys from each artist with edits limited to the transitions between acts (in some cases, these cuts are remarkably unfinished; i.e. James Brown to Rolling Stones) and introductions by Jan & Dean serving as bumpers. Most artists appear alone on-stage (i.e. Chuck Berry) and receive support from select members of the "Wrecking Crew"—the famed L.A. session musicians, including Hal Blaine (drums), Tommy Tedesco (guitar) and Lyle Ritz (bass), whose work appears on a dizzying assortment of classic recordings ranging from Frank Sinatra and Herb Alpert to the Beach Boys and Simon & Garfunkel. Individual songs are generally edited with cuts appearing at the end of each bar or verse, with very little camera movement apart from panning or sporadic dolly- and tilt-effects achieved with the crane-mounted camera. Binder felt it was counter-intuitive to cut away from performers or change views of performers if the intensity of the performance fostered an intimacy between the audience and the image. (Steve Binder, *T.A.M.I. Show*, DVD commentary, 2010) It is precisely this thoughtful directorial program which would be turned on its head over the development of the rockumentary with an increased emphasis on alternate views and cut-aways (which produces a significantly shorter average shot length), and it complicates our attachment to artists featured in those films which abandon Binder's brand of restraint.

The most thrilling sequence in *T.A.M.I. Show* is undoubtedly James Brown's performance of “Out of Sight”, “Prisoner of Love”, “Please, Please, Please”, and “Night

Train". Captured primarily in a static, full-frame view of Brown, his three dancers, and supporting band The Famous Flames, the sequence demonstrates the limits of conventional frame compositions when the subject is such a dynamic performer. Brown refuses to be contained by the camera's frame and regularly jumps, spins, or falls to his knees out of view, necessitating a cut to secondary or tertiary views from oblique angles. Binder's documentation of Brown's performance is all the more remarkable with the knowledge that Electronovision's use of live-switching (in lieu of conventional film cutting) removed the possibility of composing the sequence after the fact, and was doubly complicated by Brown's refusal to take the stage for a rehearsal where his actions could be previewed for the camera operators. (Ibid.) These cutaways to closer views provided by cameras angled at the side of the stage offers viewers glimpses of minute details unlikely observable to all but a few of the 3,000 fans attending the event; Brown's anguished face, trembling hands, and sweat-soaked brow underscore his commitment to the performance and feed his legacy as one of popular music's greatest showmen. The camera reveals and accentuates physical details of the performance much in the same way new microphone techniques and amplification equipment accommodated "a new kind of emotionalism and eroticism in pop". (Frith 2001, 97-98) At the end of Lesley Gore's performance, in a gesture to prove the liveness of the event to the audience in the movie theatre and at home, Binder invites all acts who had performed up to that point to appear together on-stage to demonstrate they did indeed participate in a proper revue performance. This gesture is repeated at the conclusion of the Rolling Stones finale with the entire cast taking the stage for a group rendition of "Let's Get

Together". It is a simple device but it is one which appears in later multi-artist concert films including *The Last Waltz*, *Urgh! A Music War* (Derek Burbidge, UK, 1981) and *Shine a Light*. With one simple organizational flourish it effectively communicates the spirit of community pervading such an event and assures the audience (rightly or wrongly) that the event took place as it appears on-screen.

T.A.M.I. Show's one deviation from the variety-show format and the related aesthetics enforced by the Electronovision technology is a verité-style opening sequence shot on 16mm which recalls earlier experiments in observational documentaries and shares many qualities with the Beatles films. On the soundtrack, a Jan & Dean-sung theme song explains the film's featured artists are "coming from all over the world" as a cross-section of the performers appear pouring out of train stations and jumping into cars, buses, roller skates, and taxis before the crowd itself is pictured entering the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium (welcomed by pre-caged, camera-ready go-go dancers) through a wall of police officers and elderly ticket-takers. Brief backstage glimpses of Diana Ross, James Brown, and other performers preparing for the stage echo similar moments from *Lonely Boy* but in *T.A.M.I. Show* this material is entirely limited to the opening sequence. The cameras employed by the Electronovision process simply could not shoot in such locations because of their unwieldy, studio-bound size. Directors of subsequent rockumentary concert films would ensure the motion picture technologies of choice did not impede the filmmaker's efforts to both establish and blur the lines between the on-stage and backstage environments; in *T.A.M.I. Show* it is a limitation soon forgotten because of the spectacle which takes place on stage.

The opening credit sequence concludes with a dissolve to the empty stage before an off-camera voice announces, "And now, Electronovision presents your hosts for Command Performance, Jan & Dean...".[8]

T.A.M.I. Show opened nationwide in U.S. theatres on 29 December 1964 and it was an immediate box-office success. Forty years later, acclaim for *T.A.M.I. Show* is nearly universal among those familiar with the film, but at the time of its release success was achieved almost entirely along generational lines. Howard Thompson, the 55 year-old critic for the *New York Times*, completely dismissed the film and suggested it "is strictly for the teen-agers. Old-timers trapped in the middle of it can be glad they were young once and only once." (*New York Times*, 28 January 1965) A reporter for *Billboard* magazine did note, however, that the gallery assembled at a press screening was impressed by the collection of performers (especially James Brown) and immediately understood its appeal to a young audience. (*Billboard* 1964, 3) Sargent hoped to release a soundtrack album to accompany the film, signalling his intent to exploit the cross-promotional benefits of such a venture, but he was unable to secure the necessary rights for such a release. (Ibid., 6) It was only a matter of time before he lost the rights to the film itself. Until the final revisions of this chapter, the tale of *T.A.M.I. Show* was one of a lost film, but recent events involving Dick Clark's acquisition and re-negotiation of a knotted collection of domestic and international rights

[8] Electronovision, the company and the technology, did not last much longer than *T.A.M.I. Show*'s theatrical run. Beset by financing problems dating back to the poor box-office performance of the first Electronovision production, a two-day limited run filmed performance of Richard Burton's *Hamlet* on Broadway, William Sargent Jr.'s attempt at breaking into cinema was permanently derailed when the Screen Actors Guild of America cancelled its contracts with the company in May 1965 alleging breach of contract following a series of missed payments. (*New York Times*, 19 May 1965) Electronovision subsequently re-signed an agreement with SAG but declared bankruptcy less than a month later because of its mounting debts. (Bart 1965b; Bart 1965c)

saw the restored and remastered film swiftly released on home video (DVD) for the very first time. Its release was accompanied by a small wave of journalistic notice that returned the film to the public eye and exponentially increased its audience, limited for decades to rock connoisseurs and bootleg-trading cinephiles. It was an important recovery. *T.A.M.I. Show* serves as the median point between *Jazz on a Summer's Day* and the rock-centric, widely seen *Monterey Pop* in the early history of the concert film trend. It plays a part in confirming the place of formal techniques derived from televisual conventions in the representation of musical performance on film while simultaneously highlighting the shortcomings of such an approach (see Forman 2002; Frith 2002). The film demonstrated to producers, investors, and studios that there was a large audience for a pop music performance film but also served as a warning to those same parties about the potential complications performance fees and music licenses can pose to such productions.

The success of *T.A.M.I. Show* paved the way for what is perhaps the first and only rockumentary sequel, *The Big T.N.T. Show* (Larry Peerce, USA, 1966)—the T.N.T. stands for Tune 'n' Talent. Produced by American International Pictures in 1966 after the collapse of Electronovision and the temporary departure of Sargent from the movie business, it played an important role in both perpetuating the myth of (and obscuring the true form) of its predecessor but was otherwise a failure insofar as it relied on outmoded televisual conventions and the sterile variety-show format at a time when the observational mode of representation evinced in the Beatles films and Anka portrait captured the imagination of young audiences.[9]

[9] *The Big T.N.T. Show* appeared on television and home video in the early eighties in a revised form which included extended sequences from *T.A.M.I. Show,* confusing many viewers about the heritage of the material since the original film was unavailable at the time.

Moreover, in the face of multi-artist concert events like Monterey Pop and their film counterparts which were revolutionary not only in terms of form but in the way the musical event was attached to broader cultural and political zeitgeist, the conservative programming of *The Big T.N.T. Show* (featuring The Byrds, The Lovin' Spoonful, and the Ronettes) lacked the high-energy and air of unpredictability which would soon come to define the music and musicians resting at the centre of the rockumentary genre.

The Classical Rockumentary of the Late-1960s

T.A.M.I. Show demonstrated that there was a demand for spectacular popular music documentaries at the box-office. Perhaps just as importantly, record labels observed that granting permission to their artists to participate in these projects benefitted their bottom-line. While it would be some time before another rockumentary opened as widely as the hundreds of screens boasted by *T.A.M.I Show*, the film signalled the beginning of the regular appearance of music documentaries in North American cinemas both capitalizing on and propelling the pop music juggernaut. Among this group of films are two rockumentaries now regarded as classics of the genre, D.A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* [sic] (USA, 1967) and *Monterey Pop* (USA, 1968), and three contributions from the avant-garde which received scant attention at the time of their production but now offer insight to the evolution of the genre and its many variable forms: *Charlie is My Darling* (Peter Whitehead, UK/USA, 1966), *Velvet Underground and Nico: A Symphony of Sound* (Andy Warhol, USA, 1966), and *Sympathy for the Devil* (Jean-Luc Godard, UK/FRA, 1968).

In the eighteen months following the release of *T.A.M.I. Show*, two noteworthy entries in the rockumentary genre were produced but failed (if they were, in fact, ever destined) to receive a proper release for differing reasons. The first is a tour movie following a band about to explode onto the world stage; the second is a quirky art film focused on an underground act who toiled away in obscurity during their brief career. Peter Whitehead, trained in filmmaking during his time at Slade School of Fine Art in London, was commissioned by the Rolling Stones' then-manager Andrew Loog Oldham to produce a documentary of the band's January 1965 tour of Ireland with the hopes that it would attract financiers for a feature-length vehicle similar to that of *Hard Day's Night* released a year earlier.[10] The result, *Charlie is My Darling*, is a 50-minute blend of life on the road, backstage moments, public appearances, and several brief musical sequences. Structurally, the film offers viewers no sense at all of the itinerary of the tour, the venues, the scale of the performances, or the audiences themselves; the material is meaningful only when refracted through the lens of the Stones' fifty year history. Never released as a result of litigation between the band and their former manager (which is to say nothing of the many different unlicensed music sources which appear on the soundtrack, all serving as a major impediment to any official release of the film), the film has nonetheless been widely available on bootleg videocassette for many years and occasionally screens at retrospectives of Whitehead's work when the director is in attendance.[11]

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[10] It is conceivable that *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*, produced for the BBC in 1968 but not broadcast and unavailable until a home video release in 1996, was one such project.

[11] Peter Whitehead personal website, http://s120937152.websitehome.co.uk/pw/html/charlie.html [accessed 01 August 2008].

Charlie is My Darling serves as a counterbalance to the overwhelming number of rockumentaries which adopt a strictly observational mode of address. Adopting the mobile 16mm motion picture camera and then-new wireless synchronized sound recorder favoured by so many of his contemporaries (likely an Éclair NPR camera matched with a Kudelski Nagra III recorder), Whitehead is an active participant in the events he photographs. At times, the film is emblematic of Nichols' interactive mode of address as it regularly features Whitehead's voice, heard off-screen, asking questions of the social actors and directing the action. Recurring images of youthful fans and synch-sound interviews with members of the public feature Whitehead's insistent queries, "What do you like about them? Why? What is it? When did you first grow your hair long?". Meanwhile, several extended exchanges between Whitehead and band members directly address the hysteria surrounding the group and the dilemma facing young musicians recognized more for their behaviour than their music. Guitarist Brian Jones explains he is satisfied with the success of the Stones but creatively unfulfilled by life as a pop star; at Whitehead's prompting he discusses an unrealized film project based on the principles of Surrealism. Drummer Charlie Watts, after whom the film is named, feels humbled by his experience in the Rolling Stones and plainly states he is not yet an artist, simply a musician in a successful band. These weighty moments clash with scenes of bored looking band members prepping for the stage and jockeying for a turn in front of the mirror (all appear to be blotting cold sores and other blemishes with cover-up) but all leave viewers with the same impression that the most powerful acts of revelation in the film are those which suggest the Stones have let down their guard.

Stylistically, there is little of note apart from a brief step-printed sequence focused on Jagger's acrobatic stage persona. "All of it's acting," Jagger explains in voice-over, "But there's a difference between acting and not enjoying it, and just doing what you want to do. It's like getting into a part." Images of the band travelling in cars, waiting in airport lounges, and racing through crowded train stations as enthusiastic fans clutch-and-grab occupy a large portion of the film's running time. There is the now-customary backstage-to-front-of-house tracking shot so common to the genre, a feature *Charlie is My Darling* shares with the more widely copied shot from Pennebaker's Dylan film produced in the same year. This commonality seems to confirm that the conventionalization of this device is simply a function of the filmmaker finding a natural solution for transitioning from behind-the-scenes moments to segments of musical performance. The soundtrack is a melange of clips from Stones recordings with preference given to "Play With Fire" (a track recorded and released shortly after the conclusion of the Irish tour), instrumental versions of Stones songs recorded by other acts, and candid audio interviews with band members in a manner quite similar to *The Beatles at Shea Stadium*. There is not, however, a single musical performance sequence featuring synchronized sound apart from brief moments of the group warming up and jamming backstage. There is an extended performance segment in the middle of the film featuring a number of songs but the soundtrack appears to be a separate audio recording of the event (poorly) post-synchronized with the image track. The sequence concludes with a stage invasion which completely disrupts the performance and ends the show; the band makes a hasty retreat from the venue with the assistance of police officers as the crowd of

screaming girls chants, "We want the Stones! We want the Stones!" It is an eerie portent of the events captured in *Gimme Shelter*, which serves as a document of the end of the 1960's idyllic dream of free love and non-violence.

According to Whitehead, *Charlie is My Darling* received a Gold Medal at the 1966 Mannheim Film Festival and was screened in a truncated version on German television while the BBC and Granada refused to put it on the air; according to Whitehead, Joseph von Sternberg, director of the festival that year, reportedly said of the film, "When all the other films at this festival are long forgotten, this film will still be watched—as a unique document of its times." (Whitehead 2002) Whitehead went on to a successful career in alternative cinema directing several films with a strong interest in popular music culture. Of note is his document of the late-1960s political counterculture and the nightlife of "swinging London", *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London: Pop Concerto for Film* (1967), which largely abandons the quasi-journalistic approach of his Rolling Stones film and instead relishes in a stream of consciousness montage aesthetic punctuated by step-printing, strobe effects, and superimpositions. The highlight of the film is undoubtedly a step-printed sequence featuring stage invasions at Rolling Stones concerts set to the slow tempo of the Jagger-Richards ballad, "Lady Jane", from the *Aftermath* LP (Decca, 1966). Demonstrative of the impressionistic strategy for visually representing musical performance, Whitehead's marriage of the glacially paced acts of violence to the gentle instrumentation of the song is ahead of its time in anticipating a recurring trope of contemporary music video.

Andy Warhol, the noted visual artist and avant-garde filmmaker, made a unique contribution to the rockumentary genre with his 1966 film experiment documenting a Velvet Underground rehearsal at the legendary Midtown Manhattan studio and event space, the Factory. *The Velvet Underground and Nico: A Symphony of Sound* debuted publicly in August 1966 but was not screened in public again until it appeared as part of several Warhol exhibitions in the 1970s.[12] (Angell 1994, 27) The film was shot during a phase of Warhol's career in which he was consumed by his interest in filmmaking, producing over sixty films in the decade beginning 1963 (many with the assistance of his collaborator, Paul Morrissey). Warhol, who served as manager, graphic artist, and financier to the Velvet Underground early in their career, designed the film as visual accompaniment for VU performances staged as part of the artist's well-documented Exploding Plastic Inevitable multimedia events. While the band is now regarded as art rock royalty, in the mid-1960s they were just one of many underground rock acts in New York City; it was Warhol's participation in their career that secured their first contract with the MGM-distributed Verve Records label. I earlier identified Warhol's formal strategy in *The Velvet Underground and Nico* as demonstrative of the impressionistic visual representation of musical performance. Pictorially, the film is comprised largely of a static camera which maintains an observational distance from the band and is consistent with the journalistic tendency. Warhol, however, challenges the journalistic status of these images via extensive sequences best described as structuralist exercises akin to Michael Snow's film works of the same period. Through the regimented deployment of

[12] The film is now available commercially on a DVD produced by the Italian home video company, Raro Video.

whip-pans, zooms, rack focus, and tilts, Warhol provokes a reflection on the act of recording through the force with which these various camera techniques collide with the rehearsal audio soundtrack (which consists of long percussive drone). In this sense, it is not the space of the non-performance being scrutinized but the relationship of the camera to the group—the result is the communication of a musical experience and a meditation on the representation of music and musicians as opposed to a documentary portrait of the performance.

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On 6 September 1967, a film opened in New York City which confirmed the viability of the feature-length theatrical rockumentary in ways first suggested by the made-for-television *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* and announced with *T.A.M.I. Show*. The Bob Dylan behind-the-scenes tour biopic *Dont Look Back* is recognized by many as one of rockumentary's quintessential entries. Like *What's Happening!...* before it, *Dont Look Back* is the creation of a major figure in the American Direct Cinema movement and this fact contributed to its long-term acceptance by critics despite a chilly initial response (see Ebert 1968; Kael 1970; Sarris 1971). Pennebaker was trained in filmmaking by Robert Drew as part of his Drew Associates collective (which also included Richard Leacock and Albert Maysles) during a commission for "Living Camera", a television documentary series produced by Time-Life. *Dont Look Back* was Pennebaker's first feature-length project after leaving Drew Associates. The register at which *Dont Look Back* connected with audiences was markedly different from *T.A.M.I. Show* and the Beatles documentaries. Pennebaker's film, which presents itself as the portrait of a performing artist whose complex personality contributes to the creation of music which

transcends commercial pop music, signals the start of a process of legitimization of the rockumentary genre. That it remains one of only a few rockumentaries to regularly appear in histories of post-war nonfiction film (see Barnow 1974; Barsam 1992; Beattie 2005; Hall 1997; Rothman 1997) feeds this perception and places it at the vanguard of the popular conception of the rockumentary genre.

Dont Look Back uses Dylan's 1965 tour of the United Kingdom as the backdrop for an examination of the singer-songwriter's growing celebrity. Dylan had become a countercultural hero through the early 1960s with his literary songs of protest and participation in the civil rights movement; he became a major figure in popular music with the release of his third album, *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (Columbia Records, 1964), and a coordinated effort on behalf of Warner Bros.'s publishing arm to have his songs performed by a wide range of mainstream artists. (Sanjek 1988, 385) Structurally and stylistically, the film shares many qualities with *Lonely Boy*. Pennebaker, however, claims to have been uninfluenced by Kroitor and Koenig, saying, "Frankly, I think that *Lonely Boy* wasn't a very good film. Certainly Paul Anka didn't seem to me to be a very interesting guy; but on the other hand, I think he was more interesting than was shown by the people filming him." (Rosenthal 1971, 191) Notwithstanding this negative review of his predecessors' efforts, Pennebaker's basic strategy for *Dont Look Back* is no different than Kroitor and Koenig's formula for *Lonely Boy*: a balanced mix of musical performances, behind-the-scenes material, and documentation of the various off-stage responsibilities of a popular performer demonstrates the subject's appeal to audiences and implies a degree of access to an artist

previously unavailable to fans and casual observers. (The Beatles documentaries granted a similar degree of access but Dylan's introspective nature sets the film apart from its predecessors.) Musical performance sequences adopt a journalistic representational strategy with Pennebaker's single modified 16mm synch-sound motion picture camera, wireless synchronized sound recording, and specialized film magazines (with capacities ranging from 400-feet to 1200-feet and uninterrupted shooting times up to thirty minutes) capturing Dylan's remarkably simple stage presentation in an equally unadorned way. However, on-stage musical performances represent only a small fraction of the overall film.

Pennebaker emphasizes backstage moments, exchanges with the press, and the in-between days of the tour schedule. In doing so, Pennebaker suggests Dylan's true personality is not on display in his musical performances but is instead discernible in his activities away from the stage—this premise becomes a basic conceit of rockumentary biographies. Pennebaker's strategy is somewhat disingenuous considering Dylan's reputation for offering very little in the way of his personal life despite his participation in the open and 'celebrity-free' zone of the 1960s folk scene. Writing in *Senses of Cinema* following the release of Martin Scorsese's authorized Dylan biography *No Direction Home* (produced for the PBS documentary series, American Masters), Tim O'Farrell charges, "there was a clear disjunction between the authenticity and integrity associated with the folk or protest tradition, and Dylan's penchant for performance, his wildly invented persona. As *Don't Look Back* [sic] was being filmed, Dylan had built a career and a reputation based upon lacerating political commentary in folk music, a genre privileging authenticity over all other qualities. At the

same time, however, he was also a seasoned tale-spinner." (O'Farrell 2006) The duality of Dylan's persona is not interrogated or unmasked by Pennebaker, who abstains from conducting direct interviews and maintains an observational distance from Dylan by instead documenting Dylan's interviews with members of the media. Critics of the film were unimpressed by this contradictory practice. Paul Arthur writes,

> [...] the narrating posture of image and sound maintains a seemingly discreet neutrality hinged precisely on dietetic figures such as newspaper and magazine reporters who ask the questions and conduct the interviews eschewed by filmmakers on ethico-aesthetic grounds. Thus, an unspoken drive to reveal through verbal language a hidden or more truthful facet of personality is projected onto others. (Arthur 1993, 122-123)

Herein lies the contradiction resting at the centre of this and other New Documentary portraits: too often it is the tools and talents of traditional journalism purportedly transcended by observational documentary forms which are called into service to deliver the narrative material so central to Direct Cinema-styled biography. Like the Beatles documentaries before it and so many rockumentaries to follow, *Dont Look Back* offers little in the way of intimacy and instead draws our attention to a more complex performance taking place away from the stage. According to Bill Nichols, "[...] the 'real' Bob Dylan remains an elusive figure. We emerge with the sense of a psychologically realistic portrait of elusiveness and of the ability of performers to confuse us about their level of performance both on and off stage." (Nichols 1991, 173)

With *Dont Look Back*, Pennebaker introduces several structural and stylistic approaches which serve as schema for subsequent filmmakers and quickly coalesce as conventions of the genre and become touchstones for rockumentary filmmakers. The first is

the oft-cited and endlessly copied tracking shot following Dylan from his position on stage at the conclusion of a performance, through the backstage corridors of the venue, to a waiting car on the rainy streets of London. It is itself an echo of Albert Maysles' noteworthy tracking shot of then-Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy taking the stage at campaign event in Pennsylvania immortalized in Robert Drew's *Primary* (USA, 1960). (The first musical performance segment of the film is preceded by backstage footage of Dylan but there is no tracking shot following him to the stage; a silhouette fills the frame and masks a cut connecting the two spaces of the venue.) Though it now stands as an iconic image from the rockumentary repertoire, copied endlessly in other rockumentaries and parodies of the genre alike, it is best understood as a simple solution (greatly abetted by new mobile film technologies) for navigating the transition from behind-the-scenes moments to segments of musical performance. In fact, a similar shot appears in the unreleased *Charlie is My Darling* from the same year. In another scene we witness manager Grossman negotiating an exclusive television appearance for Dylan; it is a sequence of events which play themselves out with a dramatic edge that is far more revealing in terms of its behind-the-scenes cache than any of the backstage moments with Dylan elsewhere in the film. Grossman (with the assistance of former band leader and talent manager, Tito Burns) is a tough customer and he drives the price for Dylan up by playing Granada and BBC against each other. Scenes such as this foreshadow similar sequences in subsequent rockumentaries which use 'the negotiation' as as both a structuring device and a means of distinguishing the business side of rock from the creative and performative responsibilities of the musician.

The depiction of Dylan as part of a community of musicians (including Joan Baez, Alan Parker of the Animals, and Donovan) is another interesting feature of *Dont Look Back* and hint toward Pennebaker's interest in introducing the audience as both a structural and pictorial element in his subsequent films. Dylan's solitary stage performances and minimal interaction with the crowd clash with the camaraderie depicted in hotel rooms and dressing rooms. In several scenes recalling the clandestine piano performance by Anka in *Lonely Boy*, Dylan and his friends take turns performing songs from a range of artists; Dylan, following Donovan's meek performance of his "To Sing For You", debuts a version of "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" to the amazement of the room and he grins endlessly at his own clever wordplay (a reaction shot of Donovan, mesmerized by the performance, suggests the British singer-songwriter recognizes a genius in Dylan that he himself does not possess). Pennebaker's camera is constantly in motion, tracking the participants and the close-knit collection of listeners in a manner quite different from the largely static camera position used to document on-stage events. It is this clash between the on-stage Dylan available to fans during concert performances and the off-stage Dylan available only through a film such as *Dont Look Back* that enriches the genre and explains its appeal to audiences.

The last and perhaps the most well-known stylistic flourish appears in the film's prologue and sits at odds with the unstaged material which follows. *Dont Look Back* begins with a choreographed sequence set to the music of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" in what is essentially one of the first modern-day music promos (interestingly, it differs very little from earlier musical shorts such as Soundies and Scopitones apart from its countercultural

conceptual flare). The lyrics of the song are literally visualized in the form of cue cards spelling out important words. Formally, the sequence is quite pedestrian, consisting as it does of a single long-take framing Dylan in a medium close-up. It is noteworthy, however, for the way in which it signals the nature of the relationship between Pennebaker and Dylan and encapsulates the cryptic quality of the musician's behaviour throughout the film. Keith Beattie, writing about the film within the context of the history of Direct Cinema, argues

> The film's prologue, which was suggested to Pennebaker by Dylan, exemplifies Pennebaker's willingness to abandon pure direct cinema by foregrounding off-stage performance as one of the film's central concerns—not as something to be minimized or banished, but as an activity to be encouraged and highlighted. (Beattie 2005, 27)

Perhaps more significantly, the sequence demonstrates the degree to which filmmaker and subject were collaborating on the project and the strength with which Dylan and manager Grossman were shaping the final film; William Rothman, in his thorough analysis of the film, describes filmmaker and subject as "co-conspirators". (Rothman 1997, 149) While such an explicit display of collaboration is not evident elsewhere in *Dont Look Back*, the implication of the opening sequence hovers over the remainder of the film and should be kept in mind when considering both Dylan's on-stage performances and his behaviour during backstage and other 'intimate' moments. Beattie characterizes such a relationship between filmmaker and subject "collusion" and a "transgression of the codes of direct cinema" but I would argue it is simply a characteristic of the New Documentary which emerges in the 1950s and fully blossoms in the late-1960s and 1970s (see Arthur 1993; Nichols 1991). Pennebaker once

described the performance of his subjects in *Dont Look Back* by saying, "They were enacting their roles—Dylan as well as anybody else—but they were enacting them very accurately." (Rosenthal 192) "Enacting" here describes the representational performance behaviours examined by Waugh; Dylan and his colleagues perform an unawareness of the camera and disregard the presence of Pennebaker and his camera. Stella Bruzzi rightly observes Dylan "[never] drops his guard for the camera or stops performing; the filming process becomes an extension of [his] public personae." (Bruzzi 91) When Dylan 'signs' the film with his autograph (it appears onscreen at the conclusion of the opening credits) it could be interpreted as his authorization of the portrait which follows.

It is difficult to quantify the box-office performance of *Dont Look Back* considering its limited opening release yet long-time circulation on the art house and college film circuits.[13] Despite the fact that the film was independently produced and financed by Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman, Columbia Records actively promoted *Dont Look Back* and considered it a vehicle for record sales, going so far as to provide participating theatres with Dylan albums for play in lobbies and box-office queues while also organizing a series of promotional tie-ins for the film.[14] (*Billboard*, 16 September 1967) What is certain is that the influence of the film upon fellow documentarians and like-minded music fans was vast despite an early

[13] It is the difficulty of tracking the theatrical exhibition of independently produced and limited-run releases that makes box-office numbers an unreliable metric for evaluating the success of rockumentary entries. The contemporary situation is remedied in part by more advanced methods for tracking box-office figures and more readily available sources for aggregating and publishing this data, but the figures remain skewed in favour of studio-produced and platform-released films.

[14] *Dont Look Back* has lasting power as a promotional tool for Columbia Records. When the film was first released on home video in 1986 it was done in conjunction with a Bob Dylan tour (co-headlined by Tom Petty) in support of the recently released *Knocked Out Loaded* LP and in advance of a new concert film featuring Dylan and Petty produced during the opening nights of that same tour. (McCullaugh 1986)

demonstration of doubt expressed by behalf of critics. Donal Henahan, writing in the *New York Times*, attributed the hand handheld camerawork and "crude editing" to Richard Lester's *A Hard Day's Night* and felt the film, despite its facade of innovation, follows "in the tradition of the chronological, sequential documentary familiar to several generations of movie-goers." (Henahan 1967) Nonetheless, understanding the powerful intervention the film makes in the public perception of the musician, he acknowledged the film was likely "one step towards [Dylan's] canonization." (Ibid.) Roger Ebert, writing about *Dont Look Back* quite early in his career, offered a scathing review that rejects the claims forwarded by some that the film provides a glimpse of the intelligence and iconoclasm that makes Dylan so revered. He writes

> [...] those who consider Dylan a lone, ethical figure standing up against the phonies will discover, after seeing this film, that they have lost their hero. Dylan reveals himself, alas, to have clay feet like all the rest of us. He is immature, petty, vindictive, lacking a sense of humor, overly impressed with his own importance and not very bright. (Ebert 1968)

In the end, Ebert provocatively suggests to those looking for insight into Dylan are best served by focusing on his music:

> Dylan's songs give a deeper, more honest impression of their author. And I don't think this movie should detract from them. When Dylan sings, he has hold of something precious. It is only his pathetic private life, as he has revealed it in this film, that should be dismissed or regretted. (Ibid.)

In simple terms, Ebert feels the film succeeds in its presentation of musical performance but fails in its attempts to establish Dylan as a character of interest for the audience. Dylan's contemptuous behaviour in the company of the press is certainly the source of the

immaturity, pettiness, and vindictiveness cited by Ebert.[15] Pennebaker believes Dylan, only months away from abandoning the folk style that made him famous in favour of the electric sound featured on *Bringing It All Back Home*, had simply grown tired of explaining his music and lyrics to others. (Miranda 2007) With this in mind, *Dont Look Back* is less a portrait of an artist arriving at the peak of his creative powers than a document of a musician struggling to reconcile one side of his creative identity with a newfound artistic impulse that isn't completely in tune with his audience's expectations.

A follow-up film, lensed by Pennebaker but directed and edited by Dylan with partner Howard Alk (who served as assistant cameraman in 1965), chronicles Dylan's return to England in 1966, one year after the acoustic tour documented in *Dont Look Back*. It illustrates the shift which occurs when the artist fully controls his documentary representation. *Eat the Document* (Bob Dylan & Howard Alk, USA, 1972) follows Dylan on a tour committed to showcasing the amplified rock sound introduced on *Bring It All Back Home* and fully explored on *Highway 61 Revisited* (Columbia, 1965) and *Blonde on Blonde* (Columbia, 1966). Commissioned by ABC for their Stage' 66 program, Dylan cut the film to conform to broadcast standards but the project was ultimately rejected by the broadcaster. (Sounes 2001, 258) It's not surprising that a major television network would deem the rambling, stream of consciousness road narrative with infrequent performance sequences (all shot with a single-camera resulting in an uninspired visual presentation) an unlikely fit with

[15] Jeanne Hall argues "*Dont Look Back* has an agenda, if not a script, and [it] mounts a systemic critique of the dominant media informed by a liberal view of the role of the press in contemporary democracy." (Hall in Grant & Sloniowski, 236) She feels Dylan the artist is an accomplice to Pennebaker the filmmaker in terms of the musician's control of both the various interview exchanges with the press and the version of his public persona presented in the finished film.

mainstream television audiences. It certainly didn't help that Dylan and some of his bandmates appear to be under the influence of drugs during several sequences (a fact confirmed by discriminating outtakes featuring Dylan on a heroin high in the company of an embarrassed John Lennon). Overall, the film feels somewhat like a lesser, colourized version of *Dont Look Back* with its brief glimpses of life on the road and overwhelming interest in the aimless activities of Dylan and his entourage. *Eat the Document* remains commercially unavailable though footage from the film figures largely in portions of Martin Scorsese's Dylan compilation biopic, *No Direction Home*.[16]

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Pennebaker followed-up *Dont Look Back* with a multi-artist concert rockumentary which is arguably his finest contribution to the genre. It is an ambitious project charting entirely different territory from the Dylan portrait both in terms of the representation of live musical performance and its interest in profiling the community of listeners gathered at the event. *Monterey Pop* (D.A. Pennebaker, USA, 1968) is a chronicle of the Monterey International Pop Festival, a three-day arts and culture fair held in June 1967 featuring a who's who of rock and pop acts. The event is recognized as a totem of the Summer of Love and established a template for subsequent rock festivals (including Woodstock, the original Isle of Wight Festivals (1968-1970) and the Altamont Speedway Free Festival) and their cinematic representation. Monterey Pop's organization as a multi-artist, multi-generational popular music festival, the first of rock's golden age, was itself patterned after the successful Newport

[16] The film is arguably more successful as a revenue engine for Dylan than a viewing experience for audiences; footage from the project is licensed to filmmakers and broadcasters for fees described by one studio vice-president as "extraordinarily expensive." (*Billboard*, 15 September 1995)

Jazz & Folk Festivals held each July since 1953. The format adapted the traditional revue-style stage show (multiple artists playing shorter sets with introductions and notices by an host or announcer) to the emerging rock idiom. In the case of Monterey Pop, major figures from folk and jazz who had previously starred on the stage at Newport (including Paul Butterfield, Scott McKenzie of the Journeymen, Cyrus Faryar of the Modern Folk Quartet) were invited to perform alongside rock's rising stars (including Jimi Hendrix, The Who, and Jefferson Airplane) in a manner that attached the prestige of the established event to the new festival. In doing so, Monterey Pop and *Monterey Pop* not only traded on the prestige offered by linking themselves to the tradition of jazz and the success of the Newport Jazz Festival (knowingly or not) but directly tapped the reservoir of institutional and cultural knowledge of these traditions to ensure the success of the festival itself and the film production. The film is an indispensable document of this particular moment in rock history and is valuable as a record of the social movements and political gatherings which shaped youth culture in the Vietnam War era. It inaugurates the theatrical concert film as a major current of the rockumentary genre, much in the way *Dont Look Back* establishes the behind-the-scenes biopic, and signals the arrival of a new cinematic subject with its decision to largely forego the approximation of vantage points of the original spectators in favour of points-of-view unavailable to anyone other than the filmmaker and film audience. Importantly, Pennebaker placed an emphasis on sound quality and adopted live sound recording techniques which assured a quality theatrical experience, thus setting a precedent for subsequent rockumentaries and their ongoing engagement with new cinema sound technologies.

Pennebaker was commissioned by festival organizers Lou Adler and John Phillips (of The Mamas & The Papas) to film the event on the basis of *Dont Look Back.* Adler and Phillips went so far as to seek out ABC Television to underwrite the festival in exchange for rights to the film. The deal fell apart but not before $400,000 was advanced to the organizers, putting Pennebaker (and production partner Leacock) in the position of having to pay back his film production costs (estimated at $125,000 to $150,000) with the grosses of a theatrical release. (Rosenthal 1971, 193) Using these resources, Pennebaker employed a team of five cinematographers including Albert Maysles and Richard Leacock which provided greater coverage of all aspects of the event. Just as the availability of new, faster motion picture film stocks was central to the experimentation of the Free Cinema participants and works such as *Momma Don't Allow*, the accessibility and relative affordability of new 16mm colour film stocks figures largely in story of *Monterey Pop*. Pennebaker adopted Kodak's 7242 Ektachrome film; the colour chemistry of the stock, combined with its speed (rated at 500 ASA), allowed the director and his crew to shoot at both day and night in well-lit areas and those filled with shadows and achieve good results.[17] (Ibid. 195) Combined with the filmmaker's decision to deploy several of his cameras with 1200-foot magazines which allowed cameramen to shoot thirty minutes of footage without interruption (Ibid. 194), new opportunities in terms of the representation of musical performance were available to Pennebaker.

[17] Kodak introduced the film in 1966 and it remained an incredibly popular motion picture film stock through the late 1970s before it was discontinued in 1986. (Kodak: Chronology of Motion Picture Films—1960 to 1979, n.d.)

The organization and production of the festival serve as the narrative which frames and delivers the performance sequences in the film. A failure of *Dont Look Back* was Pennebaker's decision to disregard the itinerary of the tour and the scale of the concerts (save for Dylan's final showcase performance at Royal Albert Hall) in favour of a rambling episodic structure which obscured the magnitude of the tour for those in the audience unfamiliar with Dylan's growing celebrity. *Monterey Pop*'s quasi-chronological arc, like *Jazz on a Summer's Day* before it, serves to make the event comprehensible for concert-goers and causal viewers alike. Documentation of the behind-the-scenes coordination of the event foregrounds the presence of the filmmaker and reveals the business of popular music in a manner not dissimilar to *Dont Look Back* and in such a way that the perceived authenticity of the rock performers is not compromised. The first live performance sequence in the film, "California Dreamin'" by The Mamas & The Papas, is representative of all live performances in the film and among the most dynamic in terms of its shot count and the number of camera positions utilized (other notable segments include Janis Joplin and Ravi Shankar). A four-shot in profile from stage-right introduces the band and the positions of the performers on the stage. This establishing shot is complimented by a close-up of lead singer and guitarist Phillips (from the perspective of the audience, stage-left) before we return to the original four-shot which will orient the film audience for the remainder of the sequence. An alternating series of close-ups of the individual band members constitutes the entirety of the sequence with the exception of one image of the crowd (shot from the camera located on stage-right), several medium shots from the first camera located in the audience (stage-left) and a dramatic zoom-

out to a frontal shot of the band (often referred by filmmakers as the protection shot) which reveals a third camera location a dozen or so rows back from centre stage. These camera set-ups and the basic editing strategy are consistent throughout the film, and the visual strategy adopted by Pennebaker is overwhelmingly journalistic with its clear compositional quality and conventional focus and exposure. Yet these journalistic sequences are peppered with impressionistic moments which, cumulatively, challenge prevailing notions of documentary photographic technique with regards to the nonfictional representation of live musical performance. Perhaps the most glaring example of this occurs during Otis Redding's performance of "I've Been Loving You Too Long". A cameraman is placed—or trapped—behind the drummer at the back of the stage directly facing a spotlight which Redding alternately obstructs and reveals throughout his performance. (Pennebaker states he was operating this particular camera during the commentary recorded for the 2002 Criterion Collection DVD edition of *Monterey Pop*.) The result is a series of edge-lighting artifacts and over-exposures which produce a stroboscopic, nearly magical effect which heightens the expressive power of the performance and symbolizes Redding's star power with the retrospective understanding that the singer's tragic death would come six months after Monterey Pop and a year before the film's eventual release. Pennebaker's intentions—an embrace of the sequence's impressionistic qualities at the expense of figurative representation and photographic clarity—seem clear and appear to be confirmed by the existence of alternate angles subsequently used in a revised version of the sequence which appears in Pennebaker's short film, *Shake! Otis at Monterey*. Released in 1986, *Shake!* speaks to the

shifting perception of the effectiveness of the impressionistic representational strategy within rockumentaries 'post-MTV' (see Durant 1985; Goodwin 1992; Kaplan 1987) with its abandonment of the explicitly impressionistic footage in favour of the journalistic material which, it could be argued, struck contemporary viewers as more 'real' in light of the evolution of rock culture in the intervening twenty years (we will return to this debate at the conclusion of Chapter 5).

Monterey Pop is noteworthy for the way in which it initiates an anthropological engagement with the audience within rockumentaries which fully blossoms in *Woodstock* and asserts itself forcefully in the punk-rockumentary sub-genre of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Pennebaker's interest in the audience and his mapping of their relationship to the musical acts is the first step toward establishing the audience as an element of the rockumentary spectacle itself. The audience at a musical performance is an important component of the event and it is central to the experience of rock music. Theodore Gracyk argues:

> Concerts [bond] the audience members to one another; if one cannot bond personally with someone a hundred rows away, than at least one is confirmed in one's taste by the presence of other fans. For a little while, at least, the individual is tangibly immersed in a social community with a shared sense of purpose, an experience that often eludes us in modern culture. (Gracyk 1996, 78)

"Images of live performance," Gracyk continues, "encourage fans to imagine that they can be in an immediate and thus genuine relationship with the musicians." (Ibid.) Sociologist George Plasketes, writing in 1989, argues Pennebaker "is seduced by the power of the personality, which adds meaning to both the performers and *the audience*." (Plasketes 1989, 60; emphasis added) It is quite a different conception of the performer-audience relationship

in earlier modes of musical performance. It is this dimension of rockumentary—the sense of inclusion extended to the film audience—that grows from rock culture and works to conceal the business of popular music. Alan Durant, writing on the historical relationship between performers and audiences in the context of the European concert-music tradition, explains "Despite an emphasis in the concert-hall on a notion of occasion focused, except for social rituals such as clapping, around an aggregation of individuals (successive individual admissions, payments and consumptions), this institution of performance remains dependent upon a complex social form of production and reproduction." (Durant 1984, 22) The opening section of *Monterey Pop* signals Pennebaker's interest in the component parts of the rock community and festival experience, and examines the degree to which this community differentiates itself from the model of payment-and-consumption described by Durant. Hand-written credits listing the performers in order of their appearance are optically printed on a series of multi-layered, kaleidoscopic superimpositions featuring audience members, light projections, and images of the artists. The sequence concludes with a brief clip of a young girl describing the event ("Have you ever been to a love-in?") which introduces a montage of youthful faces, hippy parents with their children, girls with flowers in their hair, police and sheriff laughing, young couples dancing, and crew members preparing decorations all set to Scott McKenzie's "Are You Going to San Francisco?", written (by John Phillips) and released to promote the festival. The emphasis throughout these sequences is on the productive aspects of the event—the business of rock remains concealed. It is at this point that the soundtrack is slowly overtaken by the sounds of production crew and volunteers

assembling the main stage. Tellingly, the first image of a musician—Phillips of The Mamas & The Papas—is not a performance sequence but rather a soundcheck (we observe David Crosby vocalizing into a microphone at centre stage, "Oh, groovy, a nice sound system at last."), foregrounding sound quality as a key component of the musical presentation. (Intentionally or not, this act reveals cinema sound, not concert sound, as the superior sound reproduction system; this is a facet of concert films examined in depth in Chapter 6.)

Monterey Pop boasts a soundtrack recording of startling clarity and dynamic range relative to other documentaries of the era. It was tailored to a cinema experience and sought to capture and convey the energy of live rock performance; in doing so, Pennebaker and his associates established a sonic template for subsequent rockumentaries. Recalling the relationship between filmmaker and record label during the production of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, these later rockumentaries would benefit greatly from the record label's investment in attaining a high-quality soundtrack recording without necessarily asserting control over the material featured in the finished film. The involvement of Adler and Phillips with *Monterey Pop* guaranteed Pennebaker had the necessary resources for his soundtrack as well as the support of the musicians with regard to the filmmaker's music selections. The performances were recorded in eight-channel audio using an Ampex multitrack recorder borrowed from the Beach Boys (Lovece 1986); though the project began as a television feature (which would have required a mono mix) this approach provided Pennebaker with the necessary raw material to produce a 4-track stereo mix for the film's original theatrical release (Rosenthal 1971, 195) and it remains the source for multi-channel remixes of the soundtrack for

Monterey Pop's various home video iterations. In fact, a primitive version of surround sound mixing was employed in several sequences of the film despite the fact it was beyond the capabilities of most theatres exhibiting the film at the time of its original release. (Lovece 1986) Synchronization of performance footage with the multitrack audio recordings was achieved by embedding a crystal-controlled sync signal in one of the multitrack strips which the individual cameras, themselves synchronized using crystal-control, could be harmonized with during post-production. This wireless synchronization technology—generally based on the regulated oscillation of quartz crystals—was based on the pilottone and neo-pilottone systems developed by Kudalski and evolved throughout the 1960s beginning with projects such as *Primary* and *Lonely Boy*; it became the industry standard for maintaining synchronization of 16mm and 35mm motion picture productions for decades to follow. The mobile multitrack recording technology—distinct from the far more prevalent mobile mixing units which provided filmmakers with the ability to mix multiple sources to a high-quality stereo recorder but not preserve their individual channel strips for mixing and mastering later in the production process—was likely an Ampex AG-440-8 or MM-1000, the first mass produced commercially available eight-track recorder available in North America.[18] In *Monterey Pop*, these sound technologies provide film audiences with a record of the musical performances that is distinct from the experience of those in attendance at the event and set the genre on a path toward the exploration of new horizons in audio recording and playback

[18] Larry Miller, "Ampex History Project," Audio Engineering Society, http://www.aes.org/aeshc/docs/company.histories/ampex/ampex_history_project.html [accessed 05 October 2009].

which too often comes at the expense of innovating new models for the visual representation of rock music.

Upon its release in January 1969 (after a limited engagement at New York City's Lincoln Center during the 1968 holiday season), *Monterey Pop* was an immediate success and reinforced both the industry's and public's perception of the rockumentary as a central component in the mainstreaming of rock music and rock culture. Notices in the *New York Times* described Pennebaker's approach as innovating a new form of the conventional film musical by "using some of the talent and energy of what is still the most lively contemporary medium." (Adler 1968) Moments of impressionism and experimentation were not faulted for deviating from documentary's conventional representational strategies and were instead celebrated for communicating rock's "willingness to hurl yourself into things, without all the What If (What if I can't? What if I make a fool of myself?) joy action-stopping self-consciousness of an earlier generation, a willingness that can somehow co-exist with the idea of cool." (Ibid.) A subsequent wave of criticism upon the film's theatrical re-release in 1979, from writers perhaps accustomed to the era of bigger budget rockumentaries which followed *Monterey Pop* through the 1970s, at times questioned Pennebaker's techniques and grasp of the audience's interests. Regarding the visual design of the film and the “psychedelic” quality of some sequences, Ehrenstein and Reed write, “it could be that the filmmakers felt that these new-to-performing young talents couldn't hold a moviegoer's attention without the aid of visual lifts and spritzes. Whatever the actual intent, the result of Pennebaker and company's fuzzy, frenetic camerawork is an upstaging of the performers.” (Ehrenstein & Reed 1982, 76)

I would argue Ehrenstein and Reed overlook both the basic appeal of rock music's cinematic representation as central to this first wave of films—young audiences were fully invested in the performance conventions of rock music yet equally enthralled with the potential of film to expand the visual dimension of the rock experience—and its formal sophistication born of its early and ongoing relationship with experimental filmmaking. Confirmation of this complex relationship with audiences is found in the genre's expansion to blockbuster proportions through the 1970s and its continued association with the avant-garde.

Jean-Luc Godard's foray into the emerging rockumentary genre is in many ways influenced by Pennebaker and occurs during a period of collaboration between the French New Wave auteur and the American documentarian on another project (the alternately abandoned, disowned, and adopted *One P.M.*, 1972). Godard's curious portrait of the Rolling Stones, *Sympathy for the Devil* (FRA, 1968), features camerawork and backstage footage that is not dissimilar from Pennebaker's work but his methods and philosophy are something entirely different. (In fact, Godard's in-studio rehearsal footage is beautifully composed and photographed by cinematographer Tony Richmond who made vital contributions to the rockumentary genre in films such as *Let It Be* and *The Kids Are Alright* over the course of a forty-five year career that continues to this day.) Completed two years before its 1970 North American theatrical release, it is a complex film befitting Godard's temperament and challenges the conventional representation of musical performance in nonfiction film and the structure of the still-forming making-of rockumentary current. Focused entirely (musically, that is) on the recording of the title track of the film, Godard

alternately builds upon (and undermines) rock's political potential with a series of digressions that take the viewer far from the recording studio and focus instead on fictional sequences featuring Black Panthers, feminists, and Marxist revolutionaries spouting political slogans, prose from romantic novellas, and theoretical tracts. It is fair to say that no other example of this bricolage exists in rockumentary history though Godard's radical influence is felt in arts documentaries and biographies of avant-garde musicians which share a kinship with rockumentary.[19] It is a testament to Godard's talents (and patience) as a filmmaker that the in-studio footage of the Stones remains one of the most comprehensive and illuminating documents of rock songwriting and record production ever captured on film.

Monterey Pop is a quintessential example of the rockumentary genre. Adopting a structure similar to that of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, it establishes a template for multi-artist concert rockumentaries and introduces production practices adopted by other concert films and adapted to the emerging making-of and tour film currents whose productions grow in proportion to the enormous rock spectacles they chronicle. *Monterey Pop*'s representation of the rock audience, its adoption of impressionistic visual strategies, and innovative emphasis on live multitrack audio recording would influence multiple generations of filmmakers working in the genre. *Monterey Pop*, like other films considered within this project, is important for secondary reasons: Pennebaker's comprehensive documentation of the event produced an archive of historic audiovisual material (such as the iconic images of Jimi Hendrix's setting his guitar ablaze and smashing it to pieces) which subsequent compilation

[19] Peter Greenaway's *Four American Composers* (UK, 1983) and Charlotte Zwerin's *Music for the Movies: Toru Takemitsu* (USA, 1994) are excellent examples of independently produced fine art documentaries which reflect the avant-garde philosophies and techniques of their musical subjects.

films and long-form studies of popular music history continue to draw from when telling the story of rock music (e.g. *Dancing in the Street: A Rock & Roll History—As Told By The People Who Made It*, BBC, 1995; *The History of Rock'n'Roll*, Time-Life Video & Television, 1995). Pennebaker's film continues to occupy a central place in the contemporary history of rockumentary; it remains a top-selling home video property and is available in a range of formats; in fact, it is often among the first documentaries licensed and released by distributors when new video formats emerge, appearing on videocassette (Sony 1986) and laserdisc (Criterion 1988), and in the first wave of DVD (Criterion 2002), Blu-Ray (Criterion 2009) and online digital distribution (Criterion 2009), and its soundtrack is remastered and repurposed for each of these iterations.[20]

To Be Continued...

The rockumentary genre emerges in tandem with the meteoric rise both popularly and industrially of rock music through the 1960s. Developments in the field of mobile motion picture cameras and synchronized sound recording technologies (including mobile multitrack recording) coalesce with the interests of a new generation of documentary filmmakers and the public's growing interest in popular music celebrity. It is within this context of cultural revolution, industrial renewal, and technological innovation that the nonfictional representation of rock music and musicians arrives on television and movie screens. The birth of pop music documentary portraiture in television, illustrated by the behind-the-scenes

[20] Originally mixed-down to two-channel stereo for its original home video release before digital formats arrived with remaster audio prepared for 5.1 Dolby Digital and DTS Surround systems, the soundtrack is now available in DTS-HD Master Audio—the gold-standard of lossless, high-definition home theatre audio.

Anka biopic *Lonely Boy*, and the particular importance of two Beatles films in particular, is followed almost immediately by the arrival of *T.A.M.I. Show* at the box-office which sets a precedent for the feature-length rock music documentary. Alongside Pennebaker's important contributions from the late-1960s, the behind-the-scenes biography *Dont Look Back* and the multi-artist concert film *Monterey Pop* (taken together with the works from the 1970s discussed in the next chapter), these films represent the core of the rockumentary genre and its 'golden age' as a theatrical enterprise. The importance of contributions from the avant-garde and experimental filmmakers including Peter Whitehead, Andy Warhol, and Jean-Luc Godard cannot be overlooked. It is the success of this foundational collection of films that makes subsequent projects viable for filmmakers and musicians, alike, and they play a part in carving out a space for other feature-length documentaries at the cinema. The stylistic features and innovations evidenced in these earliest works are quickly codified as rules of the new genre and establish the basic journalistic and impressionistic strategies for visually representing popular music within the context of rockumentary. Within these films, the importance of sound recording and the theatrical presentation of film sound takes on new significance within the documentary mode while the issue of performance in nonfiction film is complicated by the status of the genre's social actors as professional musicians and entertainers.

In 1970, the floodgates for the feature-length theatrical rockumentary truly open and a torrent of work appears in the first half of the decade which establish the genre as a serious box-office and record-selling concern by capturing the public's imagination with chronicles of

large-scale cultural events such as Woodstock and Isle of Wight, the new spectacles of elaborately produced stadium tours, and the outsized growth of rock celebrity all at time when record sales and the overall growth of the North American entertainment industries was expanding exponentially. The next chapter details this second portion of rockumentary's 'golden age' and charts the maturation of the genre in the early 1970s before a period of stasis sets the rockumentary on a course of uniformity that is largely uninterrupted for the remainder of the decade. It is during this period that the status of rock music in popular culture undergoes a dramatic transformation with the rebellious and politically potent elements of the music and its stars compromised in lieu of the gathering force of rock's commercial profile. Interrupted by moments of discovery and experimentation linked to emerging portable motion picture technologies (e.g. Super 8mm; VHS; BetaCam), the energy of new rock sub-genres including punk, and the participation of fans in the production of works, this period of conservatism in the theatrical rockumentary ends with the migration of the form to television and home video over the course of the 1980s, during which time noteworthy instances of rockumentary at the box-office are few and far between. This narrative concludes with an analysis of the renaissance enjoyed by filmmakers and audience of the genre in the 2000s as the rockumentary returns to cinemas in meaningful numbers and includes a consideration of rockumentary's status in a new media landscape of digital filmmaking and alternative distribution platforms.

Chapter 5: The History of Rockumentary II—
Style, Technology & Performance in a Documentary Genre

> "They have access to certain kinds of money other arts people simply don't have. The new U2 film *Rattle and Hum* cost $5 million. More than ten times our budget on Depeche Mode. Who else but a rock band can film themselves for that kind of money?"
>
> - Frazer Pennebaker, son and business manager of filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker, on the financial realities of rockumentary production as opposed to other arts documentaries (quoted in Swift 1988)

The rockumentary genre emerges in the 1960s as part of a larger shift in the character and content of Western youth culture and popular music. Its swift ascent to the status of the theatrical documentary *par excellence* during this period occurs directly in proportion to the growth of rock music as a cultural and economic force. On the subject of the rise of popular music industry in relation to Hollywood and its central place in youth culture, David James writes

> By 1974 popular music had outstripped film as the most profitable branch of the entertainment industry, earning $2 billion as opposed to the movies' $1.6 billion (Chapple and Garofalo 1977, xi). Given the greater flexibility of its modes and institutions, music became the privileged form of the culture industries and also the chief vehicle of individual or subcultural attempts to challenge them. As industry, commodity music came to be organized in patterns similar to those of cinema in the previous decades, with subcultural production and industrial appropriation feeding off

> each other in cycles of innovation and decay, it displaced film from any but the most archaic and academic role in alternative social organization. (James 1989, 349)

Paradoxically or not, popular music is at once a mainstream economic engine and a vehicle for the identity and messages of a subculture, and rockumentary is an elemental force which explicitly bridges the film and music industries. It is during the late-1960s and early-1970s that the compilation score—film soundtracks that rely solely on pop and rock music to serve as score—cements the synergistic relationship between film productions and record releases with what Jeff Smith describes as "a challenge to the forms and functions of the classical Hollywood score." (Smith 1998, 154) This challenge extends to the economic dimension of the compilation score with popular music soundtracks including *Zabriskie Point* (Michelangelo Antonioni, USA, 1970), *Super Fly* (Gordon Parks Jr., USA, 1972), *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1973) and *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, USA, 1973) setting precedents for sales success at the box-office, on the record charts, and occasionally both. The rockumentary both contributes to and benefits from this reorientation of the place of popular music on-screen and in the commodification of live rock performance through the 1970s and beyond.

Emerging benignly enough with several television docs, including an innocent portrait of Paul Anka and a collection of films focused on The Beatles, rockumentary announces itself as viable theatrical property with the youth-oriented special engagement *T.A.M.I. Show* in December 1965. Over the remainder of the 1960s, films including *Dont Look Back* and *Monterey Pop* refine several of the basic structures which comprise the genre and codify many of the formal strategies for visually representing musical performance in

nonfiction film; these include important contributions from the avant-garde, most notably *The Velvet Underground and Nico: A Symphony of Sound* and the work of Peter Whitehead. This period represents the first wave of a 'golden age' of the theatrical rockumentary which is followed by the first blockbuster in the genre in 1970, Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock.* A second wave of high-profile theatrical releases during the same calendar year, including *Let It Be* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, UK, 1970) and *Gimme Shelter* (Albert Maylses, David Maysles, & Charlotte Zwerin, USA, 1970), permanently establish the rockumentary as a mainstream nonfiction film genre with a stable of classics.[1] A string of less commercially successful yet nonetheless beloved films follows throughout the 1970s, culminating in the releases of *The Last Waltz* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1978) and *The Kids Are Alright* (Jeff Stein, UK, 1979) at the end of the decade. Chapter 5 continues the historical narrative initiated within the previous chapter with a particular interest in this second wave of creative and commercial successes in 1970 which represent the zenith of rockumentary. The remainder of the 1970s would see the rapid conventionalization of the concert film and biography currents and a brief continuation of the experimentation and avant-gardism first glimpsed in the late-1960s; all of this occurs alongside the emergence of the archival compilation project and the fan-made ethnographic studies epitomized by work from the punk rock subculture. This period in the development of the rockumentary genre includes its large-scale migration to 35mm formats from its earlier home on 16mm film, the arrival and industry-wide adoption of Dolby Stereo as a theatrical exhibition audio standard, the experimentation with 70mm and

1 I use the word *classic* in the colloquial sense of the term; it is not my intention to invoke the terminology adopted by Schatz within his model of genre evolution (see Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

multi-screen formats, and the adoption of video and small gauge film formats in the growing number of amateur productions at the end of the decade.

By the end of the 1970s, the decline of the theatrical rockumentary amidst its migration to television and home video is apparent and the genre largely abdicates its position at the box-office in the 1980s (just as rock is challenged atop the music charts) with the exception of several high-profile releases of varying degrees of success including *Stop Making Sense* (Jonathan Demme, USA, 1984) and *Sign 'O' the Times* (Prince, USA, 1987).[2] It is during this same period, however, that several new forms of rockumentary emerge sparked by the energy of new rock sub-genres, including punk, and the participation of fans in the production of works abetted by the accessibility and affordability of consumer-grade motion picture technologies such as Super 8mm, VHS, and BetaMax. Nonetheless, the conservatism of the genre first glimpsed in the early 1970s (and evident in the majority of high-profile releases, then and now) ultimately compromises the maturation of the form and the innovation once so vital to its spectacular appeal. Though the number of rockumentaries produced through late-1970s and 1980s remains relatively stable as film production becomes the vanity outlet for many rock artists and the home video market assures artists and labels of a small return on their investment, theatrical distribution becomes a less common platform for the genre and examples of experimentation and innovation don't truly return until the arrival of the new century and a new environment of digital filmmaking and alternative

2 The *Sign 'O'' the Times* concert film was conceived and produced by Prince in response to weak record sales of his album of the same name; the film, however, was poorly received and both the film and album quickly fell from view before fans and critics re-considered the film upon its release on home video the following year.

distribution platforms. The dissertation concludes with a consideration of this recent activity in what could best be described as a renaissance for the rockumentary.

A Blockbuster & the Rockumentary Boom

In 1970, the Beatles were among the world's biggest acts with sales of over six million copies of their final album *Let It Be* during its first year of release in North American. (Simon & Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* led the way with over ten million in sales.) The North American box-office, meanwhile, was dominated by Hollywood-produced genre fare with *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller, USA, 1970) on top with nearly $50 million in ticket sales. Curiously, a documentary film would finish the year in the top ten box-office with sales of over $16 million.[3] Not surprising, however, is that it is a documentary film trading on the zeitgeist of the late-1960s. The Woodstock Music & Art Fair enshrined the North American counterculture of the 1960s and its motion picture document, Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock*, entrenched the rockumentary genre in mainstream cinema with its unprecedented box-office success and long-lasting profile within rock culture.

Of the many rockumentaries released throughout the decade, several other important films followed immediately in the wake 1970's highest profile releases. Of note are two Elvis Presley documentaries which were innovative in their own right: *Elvis: That's the Way It Is* (Denis Sanders, USA, 1970) which represents the first rockumentary shot on 35mm film (exempting the founding example of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*) and boasted a bestselling soundtrack release, and *Elvis On Tour* (Robert Abel & Pierre Adidge, USA, 1972) which

3 Box Office Report; http://www.boxofficereport.com/database/1970.shtml [accessed 08 August 2009].

features extensive use of split-screen compositions designed by Scorsese (and became the only Presley film to win a major award if you allow the 1972 Golden Globe for Best Documentary).[4] Equally significant is *Mad Dogs & Englishmen* (Pierre Adidge, USA, 1971), a concert tour film released to theatres in conjunction with the album of the same name in a move that effectively cemented Joe Cocker's status among the top tier of rock vocalists of the decade after his breakthrough performance at Woodstock, and established the template for the rockumentary road movie with its scale and dynamic performances (multiple performances in multiple cities). The film, which features two- and three-part split-screen compositions that remain among the most exciting in the rockumentary canon, was described by Vincent Canby as the "most satisfying, record-album of a movie, for which the group's off-stage experiences—traveling by bus and plane, radio interviews, picnics, getting up in the morning—act as liner notes." (*New York Times*, 30 March 1970) Before the decade is out, *The Last Waltz* takes the concert film to previously unimagined heights with its sophisticated visual style and all-star cast, and *The Kids Are Alright* introduces the compilation current to the rockumentary genre, laying the foundation for what is arguably the most pervasive form within the rockumentary category. But first came *Woodstock*.

Released on 26 March 1970, *Woodstock* played in theatres through 1970 and has grossed $50 million dollars since its original release, ranking it among the most successful

4 The official 2001 home video release of *Elvis: That's the Way It Is* (now owned by Turner Movie Classics), in a sign of the times discussed earlier in reference to Apple Corps.'s decision to revise the official home video release of *The Beatles First U.S. Visit*, fundamentally altered the film by excising large portions of the non-musical observational sequences and replacing it with additional concert footage; what was once a comprehensive glimpse of the on- and off-stage routines of one of popular music's most famous icons became just another concert film. The original theatrical version reappeared in a 2007 DVD edition.

rockumentaries of all time in terms of dollars and cents.[5] It remains available across a range of home video formats including DVD and Blu-Ray, all of which incorporate a wealth of audio-visual material not included in the original theatrical release. *Woodstock* is significant not only for the monumental size of the event it captures (and perhaps the unreasonable expectations it set for theatrical rockumentaries released in its wake) but for its investment in the audience as a crucial element of the festival experience, the use of split-screen compositions during both off-stage sequences and musical performances, and the importance of the soundtrack and its status as a commercially available commodity independent of the film experience.

Often over-looked in discussions of *Woodstock* is its provocative opening: a blue-band R-rating from the Motion Picture Association of the Arts (MPAA) occupies the screen as the sounds of Jimi Hendrix's now-famous rendition of The Star Spangled Banner climaxes in an explosion of feedback and a special effects image of the celluloid bursting into flames. This sequence at once evokes the revolutionary potential of the young generation gathered together for the event and the organizing force of sound and music. Like Pennebaker's *Monterey Pop* before it, *Woodstock* begins by highlighting the audience and underscores the communal spirit and utopian objectives of the crowd, and Wadleigh maintains this interest in the audience for the duration of the film. An elderly local business owner is interviewed on screen and opines, "The kids were wonderful [...] and when they see this moving picture they will really see something." This is the first of many interviews with local citizens and shopkeepers who comment on the events of the festival as it unfolds. Plasketes

5 IMDB Pro, http://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0066580/ [accessed 16 August 2009].

underestimates what Moore describes in the context of musical performance as the "second person authenticity" of these images of testimony and exchange (that which validates the experience of the audience; Moore 2002, 220) when he writes, "The social and political revolution symbolized in the film is, at times, undercut by the lack of articulate spokespersons. This shortcoming placed the full burden of political relevance upon the music." (Plasketes 1986, 63) It is precisely the unpolished and seemingly unmediated images of the young festival-goers and local citizens that give the film its flavour and speaks to film audiences in a vernacular that likely strikes the movie-going audience as harmonious with the sound of the rock music emanating from the stage.

Adapting the 'event planning and execution' structure introduced by Pennebaker and adopted within so many multi-artist concert films since, *Woodstock* illustrates the pre-event construction and planning which takes place but does so with the unique role played by the Woodstock audience in mind; there is an emphasis on both the spirit of cooperation and the enormous scope of the project that produces images reminiscent of an old-fashioned barn-raising (but it is the stage and lighting rigs specifically designed for this outdoor rock spectacle that rise from the earth). In a manner which confirms the power of the genre's basic conventions and their significance for viewers after less than a half-decade of existence, Plasketes describes the opening of *Woodstock* with its images of stage construction and event planning as "typical" of rockumentary. (Ibid. 61) Unlike *Monterey Pop*, the business and logistics of the Woodstock festival are central to the narrative of *Woodstock* and in this regard festival co-organizer Michael Lang is a major character in the film. He appears on screen

during interactive moments giving interviews to journalist Jim Hickey from ABC News speaking of the red-tape involved in staging the event and his disinterest in earning a profit assuming the event takes place safely. Hickey and the ABC News crew appears several times throughout the film, serving as representatives of mainstream media and a foil for the hippy spokespeople who engage with Hickey in order to espouse countercultural ideals for the benefit of Wadleigh's cameras. Wadleigh reveals the news apparatus and the construction of news stories in the same way he documents the construction of the festival, but the former is presented as an inauthentic media form in the face of the grassroots, socially-engaged movement behind both the popularity of the music and the success of the festival itself.

In terms of its representation of the audience from the vantage point of the stage, Beattie observes, "*Woodstock* (following *Monterey Pop*) informs the stylistic language of onstage through widespread use of a shot from the back of the stage in which performers are framed against the audience in a way which depicts the size of the crowd and which establishes performers in symbiotic relationship with the audience." (Beattie 2005, 30) The majority of the film's musical performances are accompanied by images of the audience and the activities of the festival goers across the site; few songs appear in the absence of any documentation of the crowd (exceptions include The Who and Crosby, Stills & Nash) and most sequences adopt a journalistic strategy for the visual representation of musical performance which meshes seamlessly with observational views of the festival audience. Those sequences which do omit views of the crowd are generally those which eschew the journalistic strategy for an impressionistic visual representation of musical performance

which, it could be argued, draws attention to itself in unfavourable ways when contrasted with images of the community gathered together for the festival. In these sequences, the "symbiotic relationship" between performers and the festival crowd is de-emphasized in favour of the revelatory power of music and the spectacle of its live performance. Split-screen compositions and an impressionistic visual strategy become the preferred visual device for such moments.

No doubt inspired by the large-format and multi-screen projections showcased in the 1967 World Exposition in Montreal and the adoption of split-screen compositions in mainstream narrative cinema, *Woodstock* notably featured several sequences involving multiple 16mm footages printed within a 70mm film frame. It would be the first of many rockumentary concert films to foreground the device. Optically printed in post-production, the design of these two-part and three-part compositions is attributed in part to Martin Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker who served among the team of editors on the project. Popular music scholar Andy Bennett summarizes the use of split-screen imagery in *Woodstock* in terms of its ability to link on-stage events with the audience and its ability to match interview commentary with images in such a way that those images serve as illustration for the arguments and observations made by those called upon by the filmmakers to speak in the film. The latter point would seem self-evident but the first function strikes at the heart of the primary appeal of concert films for many audience members:

> [It enhances] the feeling of performer/audience communication that many of those who attended believed to be central to the ethos of the Woodstock festival. This, in

> turn, facilitated the transference of this feeling to those who would later see the film in the cinema. (Bennet 2004, 47-48)

Split-screen images matching performers with audience members structure a relationship between film audience and screen event wholly invested in the original spectacle thus establishing, as Wootton argues, "an emotional identification between the 'real' spectator participating in the atmosphere of a live event and the passive consumer watching the recorded performance." (Wootton 1995, 95) Concert films in the rockumentary genre adopt this compositional strategy to such a degree that it is quickly conventionalized and the musician-audience member matching shot remains a basic feature of contemporary work even in the absence of split-screen effects.

Crosby, Still, Nash & Young's "Wooden Ships" accompanies *Woodstock*'s first dual-screen images of late-night arrivals to the festival site and the on-going construction of the stage. The flashing of headlights, brake lights, welding sparks, and on-stage lighting tests create a psychedelic visual display wherein the nighttime activities of crew members and logistics people flashing across the three separate areas of the screen gradually give way to images of sunlight breaking across the festival grounds and additional observational footage of festival-goers arriving on the scene matched with interactive moments featuring townspeople speaking about the event and its participants. At this point in the dual-screen sequence, musicians (including Jerry Garcia) and technical staff appear and comment on the unexpected turnout which foreshadows the destruction of security fences and the transformation of the ticketed event into a free concert. Musicians begin arriving at the festival site via helicopter and assemble backstage—Joe Cocker, Janis Joplin, Richie Havens—

while the final soundcheck and public address system tests compete with the sounds of helicopters and the noise of labourers hastily completing portions of the stage. Lasting fifteen minutes, this opening split-screen presentation is representative of most others in the film with its blend of observational and interactive material chronicling the on-stage performances, the actions of the festival-goers and the reactions of local citizens; it ends with the arrival of singer-songwriter Richie Havens to the stage and the first live musical performance of the film. A key exception concerns the first use of multi-screen composition during the representation of a live musical performance.

The first appearance of a three-part split-screen design in *Woodstock* occurs during a performance sequence (the majority of musical performances from this point forward in the film feature split-screen compositions) and it is one of the only sequences in the film to jettison the journalistic strategy for representing musical performance in favour of an explicitly impressionistic approach. If there is a single sequence in *Woodstock* which encapsulates the potential for the impressionistic strategy for representing popular musical performance it is the headline act of The Who. Comprised of performances of "We're Not Going to Take It" from the *Tommy* LP and "Summertime Blues", the sequence features freeze-frames, step-printing, superimposition and abstraction produced through extreme close-ups and coloured lights. (Sequences featuring Santana and Jimi Hendrix include impressionistic elements but not to the extent of The Who's extended appearance; it could be explained in part by the fact both acts performed under daylight and the well-lit footage was not amenable to a formalistic presentation.) The Who sequence transforms the dynamic

physical expressions of its lead musicians, singer Roger Daltrey and guitarist Pete Townshend, into abstract, purely cinematic forms marrying sound and image in a manner most often identified with experimental modes. It forsakes the evidentiary status of the documentary image but is nonetheless legible as a nonfictional representation of musical performance as a result of its context within the rockumentary genre.[6] Such formalistic elements become commonplace within the genre and quickly migrate to the nascent music video form through the 1970s where they fully evolve.

Split-screen compositions appear in several rockumentaries following the release of *Woodstock*—including a visually interesting closing credit sequence in *Born to Boogie* (Ringo Starr, UK, 1972) that brings to mind the hallmark mosaic opening of *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, USA, 1968)—but like so many other stylistic techniques typical of the impressionistic strategy for the visual representation of popular music, these aesthetics fade from view in theatrical rockumentary before reemerging with force in music videos. A notable participant in this rockumentary split-screen boom is *Elvis: On Tour*, and once again, Scorsese is partially responsible the sophisticated split-screen compositions.[7] Co-directors Abel and Adidge, working with Scorsese, adopt this device and employ it creatively by using it to highlight the routine and repetition of Elvis Presley's tour itinerary and nightly rituals.

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6 It is interesting to consider this explicit formalism in the context of documentary portraiture vis-à-vis arguments forwarded by Trinh T. Minh-ha and others regarding the fallacy of those very documentary conventions purporting to confirm its evidentiary power; see Minh-ha 1985, Renov 1986, Winston 1993.

7 Robert Abel's contribution to the rockumentary genre, specifically the concert and tour film currents, cannot be overstated. He was a major figure in the burst of activity in the early 1970s and his adoption of split-screen compositions was the beginning of a life-long investment in visual effects technology; he founded the visual effects studio Robert Abel & Associates in the early 1970s, contributing effects sequences to television, advertisements, and feature-length films including Disney's landmark computer effects films, *The Black Hole* (Gary Nelson, USA, 1979) and *Tron* (Steven Lisberger, USA, 1982).

They achieve this by placing visually similar episodes side-by-side—and the degree to which Presley's pre- and post-show habits are maintained night after night is remarkable. Intentionally or not, like *Lonely Boy* before it, the film provides the viewer a very clear sense of how the performer, no matter their mood, must transform themselves when they take the stage. The film's use of split-screen during performance sequences—presenting different views of Presley's theatrics or isolating individual members of the band as they engage with The King as he works the stage—illuminates the rote nature of the singer's trademark hip swivels and vocal flourishes, but more importantly it provides the viewer with an almost systematic overview of the concert's careful pacing and choreography. In this way the device distinguishes itself from the highly impressionistic sequences in *Woodstock* and puts the split-screen images in service of an explicitly journalistic representational strategy gesturing toward comprehensive documentation of the event. In a curious way it foreshadows the popular convention of contemporary rockumentary DVD and Blu-Ray releases including outtakes and supplemental footage delivered via the format's ability to provide different views of the performance on demand (specifically, alternate angles selectable by the home viewer via remote)—the concert film now implies 'all access' to the live event in a way unimaginable to an earlier generation of filmmakers and artists in the genre.

As ambitious as the visual elements of Wadleigh's *Woodstock* are, the soundtrack of the film represents one of the most ambitious and commercially successful undertakings in the history of documentary and all of cinema. It is with *Woodstock* that filmmakers and musicians make the jump from monoaural and two-channel stereo soundtrack recordings to

the multi-track mobile recording units and theatrical soundtracks originally foreshadowed by *Monterey Pop*.[8] Michel Chion argues the decision to adopt multi-track sound in *Woodstock* and other musical films of the early-1970s had a profound impact upon the theatrical experience:

> These rock movies were made with the intent to revitalize filmgoing by instituting a sort of participation, a communication between the audience shown in the film and the audience in the movie theatre. The space of the film, no longer confined to the screen, in a way became the entire auditorium, via the loudspeakers that broadcast crowd noises as well as everything else. (Chion 1994, 151)

Recalling Bennet and Wootton's separate analyses of *Woodstock*'s split-screen compositions wedding performers, concert audience, and moviegoers in an emotional experience, multi-track sound design works in harmony with the image-track in the service of communicating a sensorial experience of the original event to the film audience. Moreover, *Woodstock* initiates the practice of coordinating the production of a concert film with the recording and release of a live album, an exercise that firmly embeds the synergistic relationship between film studios and record labels within the fabric of the rockumentary genre. Eddie Kramer, whose career as an engineer began in the United Kingdom working with artists including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Small Faces, was selected to record the Woodstock performances because of his relationship as producer for Jimi Hendrix (who was scheduled to headline the festival on its closing night; weather conditions infamously delayed the guitarist's showcase until Monday morning wherein he woke the huddled masses with his aforementioned rendition of

8 The history of sound technology in cinema, and Dolby in particular, is well documented in a number of publications; see Altman 1995, Lastra 2000, Beck 2003, Altman 2004, Sergi 2004, Kerins 2011.

The Star Spangled Banner). Concert audio was recorded with a soundtrack release in mind and Kramer found the production equipment supplied to him by Warner Bros., as primitive as it was, exceeded that of Wadleigh and his cameramen (who arrived at the site with the knowledge there was not enough film stock to capture each performance in whole or in part). Meanwhile, Kramer and his technical assistant Lee Osborne had enough tape at their disposal to record each performance in its entirety. (Hobson 2005) The audio recording equipment consisted of two mobile 1" eight-track recorders (of a similar vintage to those used for *Monterey Pop*), two twelve-channel mixing boards, and a large selection of durable Shure microphones. (Ibid.) The eight-track recorders used 10 1/2" reels which necessitated a change-over of machines every 25 minutes—the machines were each paired with one of the twelve-channel mixing boards and operated serially in order to capture the performances and stage announcements without interruption. (Ibid.) Concert audio was mastered in 6-track stereo for theatrical exhibition in 70mm prints and 4-track stereo for 35mm release prints (which could not accommodate the six magnetic sound tracks of the 70mm format); these technologies are representative of the film industry's turn toward multi-track stereo sound presentations through the 1970s and the central influence of Dolby sound technologies in particular. (Sergi 2004, 11-34) Collectively, the details of *Woodstock*'s soundtrack recording represent a turning point in the rockumentary genre wherein presumptions regarding the unmediated nature of documentary sound fall away in favour of (or are obscured by) an increasingly mediated sonic text; we will consider this point in depth in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

The 3xLP soundtrack album *Woodstock: Music from the Original Soundtrack and More* was released in May 1970 several weeks after the theatrical premiere of the feature film. It spent four weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard charts in 1970 and stayed in the Top 200 for sixty-eight weeks; it has since been certified double-platinum (2 million or more sales) by the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America). (Waddell 2009, 24) The film served as a vehicle for bringing the soundtrack to market by leveraging the synergistic reach of Warner Bros. various media branches; the audio recordings were the property of Warner Bros. Pictures and the album was released by the Cotillion Records subsidiary of Atlantic Records, which was itself a subsidiary of Warner Bros. Records. (As a result, non-Warner Bros. artists including Mountain and Creedence Clearwater Revival were not filmed for inclusion in the film, while groups like The Band who did not agree with Warner Bros.'s fees and terms were likewise excluded). Since the release of the original *Woodstock* soundtrack, Kramer's audio recordings have been the source of no fewer than 13 official albums including the recently released 6-CD archival project, *Woodstock: 40 Years On - Back to Yasgur's Farm* (Rhino Records, 2009); the seemingly endless number of releases is a testament not only to the enduring power of Kramer's original recordings but also the ingenuity (and desperation) of record labels who find new ways to exploit this archive of popular music. The successes of the *Woodstock* LP and the soundtrack recording of *Elvis: That's the Way It Is* (which quickly became a bestseller) initiate a quirky marketing exercise—innovated and continually re-imagined by rockumentaries—wherein the live concert, undertaken in support of a studio album release, is filmed for use in a documentary for which the soundtrack is released while

the film is in theatres, whereby both media objects exist contemporaneously within the marketplace promoting each other at the limited expense of the producer. Noteworthy examples of this practice through the 1970s include Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*, Led Zeppelin's *The Song Remains the Same* (Peter Clifton & Joe Massot, UK/USA, 1976), The Band's *The Last Waltz*, The Who's *The Kids Are Alright*, and Sex Pistols mockumentary *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* (Julien Temple, UK, 1980); by the 1980s it became standard practice to coordinate such an album-film release strategy with rockumentaries, and the practice of selling music featured in films "as vigorously as (in some cases even more so than) the motion picture itself" was commonplace in the industry as a whole by the 1990s. (Sanjek 1998, 177)

In contrast to the success enjoyed by *Woodstock* and a clear signal of how hard it would be for the rockumentary to remain a mainstream commercial box-office concern in an age of wide-release and the gradual emergence of high concept fare, the relative failure of The Beatles' observational making-of/concert film *Let It Be* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, UK, 1970) illustrates the challenge facing theatrical documentary and the commercial limits of the rock culture niche. Released on 13 May 1970 following the 08 May 1970 release of the album of the same name, *Let It Be* arrived at a time when The Beatles were among the biggest bands in the world—sales of the *Let It Be* LP were over six million copies in its first year of release, ranking among the highest in the band's history (Sanjek 1988, 538), and the film would win the Academy Award for Best Original Song Score (this was the first time that particular award was given; it was subsumed by the Original Score category beginning in 1985). Marketed as

featuring "music from the motion picture *Let It Be*", the original UK release of the album included a 160-page booklet featuring photographic stills from the motion picture.

Originally conceived as a television documentary chronicling the band during rehearsals which would accompany a live television concert on the eve of the album's release, *Let It Be* was completed and released theatrically as part of The Beatles' three-picture deal with United Artists. Michael Lindsay-Hogg, a first time filmmaker, was selected for his experience as a television director (including the influential UK pop music series, *Ready! Steady! Go!*, 1964-1966) and his involvement with the group's early promotional shorts. The *Let It Be* collaboration went forward despite the band's early reservations about Lindsay-Hogg's portrayal of the tensions and inter-personal dynamics which would soon break-up the group. (Matteo 2004, 57) Indeed, the glimpse the film provides into the inner-workings of the world's most popular group—which culminates with footage from the now infamous final live performance of the group atop the roof of Apple Records headquarters in central London—demonstrates a rawness of emotion and suggests a degree of intimacy that certainly would have been unimaginable to the earliest practitioners in the genre. Whereas earlier Beatles documentaries and nonfiction portraits of artists including Dylan and Presley appeared to co-conspire with the musicians to keep the distinction between stage persona and backstage personality on a relatively superficial level, *Let It Be* gives viewers more than they bargained for and it appeared to hurt the film's chances for lasting commercial success. A *Time Magazine* review of the film published in June 1970 largely ignores the non-performance sequences, calling it "not much of a movie, but a fine concert". This review is

representative of the mainstream response to the film which seemed interested in Beatles performances as a spectacle but unmoved by the revelation of the internal politics of the band. (My how things have changed.) Overall, response to the *Let It Be* was mixed at best with screenings in some major cities, including Toronto, closing after only one week. (*Billboard,*13 June 1970)

Briefly made available on home video in the 1980s before it was pulled from distribution at the request of the band, the film was remastered from the original 16mm negative in order to excerpt sequences for *The Beatles Anthology* television event (ITV/ABC Television, UK/USA, 1995). When a DVD release was announced and promptly cancelled in the lead-up to the album release of *Let It Be... Naked* (Apple, 2003), it was widely speculated that McCartney and Starr blocked its release in an effort to protect the Beatles brand from any negative responses to the film's depiction of the band's troubled interpersonal relationships. Lindsay-Hogg, speaking before the cancellation of the home video release, explained it was quite likely that George Harrison was responsible for blocking the film's re-release and it was his death in 2001 which paved the way for Apple to revisit the issue. (Matteo 2004, 136) Perhaps it is deference to the late Harrison's feelings about the film that *Let It Be* remains officially unavailable.[9]

9 While the *Let It Be* documentary remains commercially unavailable, the rooftop performance sequence is a widely recognized and re-played audiovisual element of the Beatles canon. In 2009, the interactive rhythm game *The Beatles: Rock Band* (Harmonix) featured an animated rendering of the concert as a central component of the gameplay and attended to such specific details as the wardrobe of the musicians, the placement of amplifiers, and the shooting positions of Lindsay-Hogg's camera crew.

The End of the Beginning: Reflection, Recollection, and Compilation

> There is quite a lot of music and performing in *Gimme Shelter,* some of it beautifully recorded, but it is not a concert film, like *Woodstock*. It is more like an end-of-the-world film, and I found it very depressing. - Vincent Canby (*New York Times*, 07 December 1970)

With the December 1970 release of *Gimme Shelter*, arriving as it did eight months after the blockbuster success of *Woodstock* and only weeks after the premiere of *Elvis: That's the Way It Is*, the box-office future of the rockumentary genre seemed assured despite the unexpected failure of the Beatles' *Let It Be*. Recognized as one of the great achievements of the rockumentary genre, in large part the result of its serendipitous murder sub-plot and Altamont's symbolic standing as the final nail in the coffin of the 1960s peace-and-love movement, *Gimme Shelter* is a structurally complex film that transcends the rockumentary genre with its appeal to a general audience:

> Rockumentary films prior to *Gimme Shelter* couldn't claim to offer much in the way of food for thought. If you were drawn to a film's performers you went, if not you stayed away. *Gimme Shelter*—through its grotesque and tragic set of circumstances—became less a rock concert film than the *cinema verite* [sic] equivalent of Jacobean revenge tragedy. (Ehrenstein & Reed 1982, 79)

While the simplicity of Ehrenstein and Reed's description of the genre ignores the diversity of the corpus dating back to the mid-1960s and the mainstream success of *Woodstock*, it is difficult to argue with the sentiment that an interest in the music or an attraction to the musicians is the fundamental appeal of most rockumentaries. Yet *Gimme Shelter* became a touchstone for contemporary documentary practice and it remains a feature on home video and in classrooms. The death of eighteen year-old Meredith Hunter at the hands of the

Hell's Angels becomes the organizing element which structures the entire film and enlivens a series of performances photographed with a journalistic representational strategy. The death also brings to the fore questions of collaboration and responsibility that run throughout rockumentary (and documentary in general) by forcing viewers to question the role played by filmmaker and subject in the horrible attack. Pauline Kael famously described the film as akin to "reviewing the footage of President Kennedy's assassination or Lee Harvey Oswald's murder" and laid the blame at the feet of the filmmakers themselves in a controversial piece published in the *New Yorker* (19 December 1970). Popular music scholar Sheila Whitely offers a more nuanced analysis of the event:

> Whilst the arrogance and brutality inherent in [the Stones] songs suggest a certain correlation with the events at Altamont it would, nevertheless, seem somewhat simplistic to posit an unproblematic stimulus/response interpretation. Jagger might introduce himself as Lucifer, as 'the Midnight Rambler', but overall it is suggested that his role was more that of the symbolic anarchist, expressing the right to personal freedom, the freedom to experience. As such he provides an insight into degeneracy rather than an incitement to a pseudo-tribal response. (Whitely in Whitely 1997, 86-87)

Filmed over the course of several weeks in November and December 1969, *Gimme Shelter* features four distinct areas of action: on-stage and on-the-road sequences shot during the Rolling Stones US tour in advance of The Altamont Speedway Free Festival (which took place on 06 December 1969—the film premiered on the the first anniversary of the event); scenes of the group recording tracks at Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Alabama for their

forthcoming *Sticky Fingers* LP (Atlantic Records, 1971); observational footage of the band's managers and allies making arrangements for the one-day festival event; and performances from the Stones and other artists at the Altamont concert. Framing all of these elements are scenes of the band reviewing the Maysles' rough-cut of the film and commenting upon the unfortunate events of Altamont. It is not a representative portrait of the concert itself: performances by Santana and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young are not featured (the musicians do not appear in the film at all), while sets by Jefferson Airplane and The Flying Burrito Brothers are represented by single songs. Continuing the trend established with *Woodstock*, the filmmakers collaborated with an outside sound engineer for the recording of the concert audio tracks. Glyn Johns' (Bob Dylan, The Beatles, The Who) multi-channel audio recordings of the Madison Square Garden performances of 27-28 November 1969 were edited and mixed for use in *Gimme Shelter* before serving as the source for the band's seminal live LP, *Get Yer Ya-Yas Out! The Rolling Stones in Concert* (Decca Records, 1970); the album was released in advance of *Gimme Shelter*'s theatrical premiere.

The Altamont Speedway Free Festival and its filmed record are considered by many within and without rock culture to be the symbolic conclusion to the 'peace and love' movement of the 1960s and the shadowy counterbalance to the idealism of Woodstock (and its film). Noted music scholar Robert Christgau argued in 1972, "writers focus on Altamont not because it brought on the end of an era but because it provided such a complex metaphor for the way an era ended."(Christgau 2002, 219) The spirit of collaboration and the sense of community which has come to define Woodstock and the era as a whole is overturned by

Altamont's entanglement of complex business concerns and the Stones' cultivated egotism (who plainly desired to create and headline a concert event that would overshadow Woodstock) which reveals fissures in a youth culture so often identified as unified and single-minded. That the event concludes with a senseless murder only seems to confirm the film's status as a document of 'the end'. Film scholars focus—quite understandably—on Altamont as the death knell for 1960s utopian youth culture and the ethical quandaries *Gimme Shelter* presents because of the depiction of Hunter's death, but they do so at the expense of a discussion of the refined aesthetics and influential approach taken by the Maysles to document popular music culture at this turning point in its history.

Gimme Shelter is not the first rockumentary to focus on the off-stage personalities of the performers—*Lonely Boy*, the Beatles docs, and *Dont Look Back* were pioneers in that regard—nor is it unique in terms of its documentation of the act of making records. But unlike earlier rockumentaries and the concert film current in particular, *Gimme Shelter* foregrounds the role cinema plays in the act of recollection; the film is a meditation on the act of documentation and becomes something more than an exercise in representing a singular musical event or experience. Moreover, it accents the role of the filmmakers as complicit in the process of mythologizing the event. In his 1970 review of the film, Vincent Canby wrote

> As was the movie about the Woodstock festival, *Gimme Shelter* was a part of the event it recorded, being, in fact, a commissioned movie, the proceeds from which are to help the Stones pay the costs of the free concert (although they grossed a reported $1.5-million from the other, nonfree [sic] concerts on their tour). Thus, the movie that

> examines the Stones, and the Altamont manifestation, with such a cold eye, seems somehow to be examining itself. (*New York Times*, 07 December 1970)

It presents viewers with a flow of performances, conversations, arguments, and incidents that come together as a recollection of Altamont, leaving a foreboding sense that the Rolling Stones are particularly ill-suited to manage and contain the aggression and violence demonstrated at the event (a feeling underscored by their decision to employ the Hell's Angels as protectors); the Maysles foreshadow these events by employing audio recordings of callers to a KSAN radio show as an expository device throughout the film.[10] Through extensive scenes involving the business behind the production of the event (not unique to *Gimme Shelter* but accented in a way that eclipses similar earlier sequences in *Dont Look Back* and *Woodstock* and sets a precedent for similar sequences in the concert and tour film currents as a whole), the presence of band members during the editing of the film, and the incorporation of the KSAN broadcasts, the Maysles brothers contextualize the events of Altamont and encourage interpretation and critique.[11] It is a rare example of a rockumentary film engaging in the ethical debates concerning the relationship between filmmaker and

10 Over forty years later there remains debate as to whether or not the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club was hired as personal security for the band and to what extent the Rolling Stones understood the cultural divide between the American wing of the group and its British counterpart (who has assisted the group in the past). Boutique home video label The Criterion Collection has played a major role in the ongoing examination of the event and its cinematic representation with laserdisc, DVD, and Blu-Ray editions of the film supplemented by a rich archive of audiovisual material which properly contextualizes the event and documents its aftermath; these supplements include over two hours of audio recordings from San Francisco radio station KSAN's post-concert call-in show featuring interviews with event staff and Hell's Angels members.

11 This ambiguity was not appreciated by everyone. Plasketes writes, "The after-the-fact perspective of the film offers no conclusions or excuses, only ambiguity. The complicated levels of action within the film's structure are not so much complex, as they are overly intricate. Possibly this indicates the Maysles' confusion as to the significance of the event and their differences in synthesizing such disjointed activities. If Altamont were a logical progression of events, the film might be easily developed. The Maysles appear to be torn between their previous preoccupations with personality studies and a partial interest in social concerns." (Plasketes 1989, 64)

subject which were crucial to the development of the New Documentary of the 1960s and 1970s. *Gimme Shelter* regularly employs a reflexive mode of address during those scenes involving the band screening rushes of the film-in-progress and footage of Hunter; it is a representational strategy not yet explored within rockumentaries at this point in their evolution but employed here with striking effect. Much has been said and written about the passive, almost dismissive response of Mick Jagger to the violent footage captured by the Maysles (and Kael was particularly damning in her evaluation of Jagger's behaviour) but less has been said about Charlie Watts who serves as the Maysles' true object of interest during these passages precisely for his humane response to the events. Watts views the footage and tries to understand what happened and how things arrived at such a point, remarking, "Oh dear, what a shame." Whether or not the Maysles consciously construct Watts as sympathetic figure and a surrogate for the audience is up for debate but there is no denying his appearances convey none of the antagonism demonstrated by Jagger and his dismissive responses to the material he screens in the company of the Maysles (including his sexist evaluation of Tina Turner's searing performance as an opening act for the MSG shows; "It's nice to have a chick occasionally."). One might say Watts' *presentational* behaviours cast unfavourable light on Jagger's decidedly *representational* performance in the company of the filmmakers; his off-stage persona is no less constructed than the one he adopts during live performances.

Gimme Shelter refines many of the basic shooting strategies introduced by, and analyzed within, earlier works of this classical period of the rockumentary genre. While there

are fleeting impressionistic elements on display during musical sequences—particularly the slow-motion and superimposition employed during the "Love in Vain" performance which recalls the "Lady Jane" sequence from *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London*—on-stage performances are overwhelmingly shot in a journalistic style.[12] The cameras are positioned at the front and side of the stage and focus on Jagger at the expense of the rest of the band (particularly during the Madison Square Garden performances), and there is an assuredness and clarity to the framing and pictorial quality that dimly sets it apart from earlier work in the genre (including that of Maysles). What is noteworthy is a higher rate of cutting adopted by the Maysles and Zwerin during performance sequences relative to earlier examples from the genre. The resultant reduction in the average shot length (ASL) imbues these sections of the film with a particular sense of time and reflects the dynamism of Jagger's expressive performance style in a manner which is clearly differentiated from non-musical sequences of observation, interactivity, and reflexivity elsewhere in the film. Also of interest is the way in which the filmmakers accent moments away from the action that nonetheless communicate the decadence and mystique of life on the road and life on stage. The film is peppered with sequences concerned with the mundane moments of a rock star's routine but these passages are invigorated by Albert Maysles' wandering eye and his trademark attention to the quirky details of his subjects. His fascination with Jagger's flowing red scarf (both backstage and caught in the car door of the musician's chauffeured ride) and Keith Richard's scuffed and

12 It is worth asking the question whether or not these impressionistic elements were prompted by the likelihood of poor synchronization if the filmmakers proceeded with their decision to include "Love in Vain" in the finished film; the audio recording of the song available on *Get Yer Ya-Yas Out!*, and presumably the one available to the filmmakers during post-production, was from a performance in Baltimore preceding the New York City concerts.

scarred snakeskin boots in Muscle Shoals (reclining to take-in an early recording of the Stones classic, "Wild Horses") comprise the two most memorable images among Maysles' inventory of rock iconography and their resonance is not diminished by the fact they are captured far from the action. Such moments become central to conveying the sense of access—discussed in earlier chapters with reference to the work of Romney (1995) among others—leveraged by later works within the tour film and making-of currents in an effort to carve out the personalities of rock performers as their outsized celebrity begins to obscure their off-stage personas. Norma Coates, writing on the thirtieth anniversary of the film, writes "What ultimately may be most instructive about *Gimme Shelter* is its documentation of similarities between then and now, perhaps especially concerning celebrity culture, rock mythologies, and our complicity in events that veer dangerously out of control." (Coates 2000)

Two additional feature-length films featuring the Rolling Stones appeared in the years immediately following *Gimme Shelter* and did little to shed the aura of danger surrounding the band. Both films were made during the U.S. tour in support of the *Exile on Main Street* LP (Atlantic Records, 1972) under the guise of a single production. In the end, two very differnt films resulted with the first focused entirely on backstage affairs, reinforcing the veneer of irresponsibility that followed the band after the events of Altamont. *Cocksucker Blues* (Robert Frank, USA, 1972) is a portrait of excess and debauchery so raw and unflattering that the band immediately filed an injunction against its release and came to the unheard of agreement that it could only be screened on a limited basis within the context of a

retrospective of Frank's work and only if the filmmaker was in attendance at the screening.[13] (Glickman 1987) Frank's standing in the American art world as a photographer and experimental filmmaker has resulted in the film appearing in special engagements at major institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art (where it publicly premiered in autumn 1980), the Tate Modern (2004), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2009) but it is otherwise only available in various bootleg formats. Less interested in musical performance than the seamy side of the rock lifestyle with its drugs, adoring fans, celebrity hangers-on (including Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, and Dick Cavett), and the monotony that quickly comes to define life on the road, Frank leverages the mobility and discrete nature of 16mm and Super 8mm film formats to capture images off-the-cuff and when the band is most vulnerable. How else can we explain the scene depicting roadies sexually assaulting groupies on the Stones' private jet, images of Keith Richards strung-out on heroin, and Jagger with his hand down the front of his jeans masturbating for the camera? It represents a level of access afforded the rockumentary filmmaker never seen before or since (but it doesn't make for a very interesting film) and contributes to the development of the tour film current established by *Dont Look Back*, *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*, and *Elvis on Tour* wherein the personalities and lifestyles of the musicians are framed by their backstage routines and lives away from the spotlight.

13 Over several years of research I have been unable to find confirmation of this arrangement in the form of statement's directly from Frank or members of the band (although it appears anecdotally in most published biographies of the Stones). I have not, however, found any instances of the film's public performance in the absence of the filmmaker, his representatives, nor outside the context of a career retrospective. On that basis, it would appear there is some truth to the anecdotal evidence regularly cited in discussions of the film.

Ladies and Gentlemen: The Rolling Stones, the second film produced of the 1972 U.S. tour, is a relatively bland corrective to the portrayal of excess, abuse, and disaster which follows the band throughout *Gimme Shelter* and *Cocksucker Blues* (while nonetheless demonstrating the negative impact the band's infamous alcohol and drug use had upon their stage performances at this pivotal point in their career).[14] It is the first Rolling Stones documentary to be shot on 35mm film yet stylistically, with its static camera positions and conventional framing and editing, it represents a step backward from assured sophistication of *Gimme Shelter*. The leaden guitar playing of Richards and the preening of an often breathless Jagger are in no way softened by the years that have passed since the filming of the event (nor the protestations of Stones fans who regard this period in the band's history as a high-point in their career) and the absence of any framing material leaves the film floating free of any historical context with which a casual viewer could properly situate the performance within the band's career. In lieu of a conventional theatrical release, the band opted to "four-wall" the film and tour it as a special event through 1974 with a customized quadraphonic sound system; while individually the limited-engagement screenings were successful, they didn't happen in any significant numbers and never outside of major North American centres.[15] (*Ladies and Gentlemen: The Rolling Stones*, Eagle Rock Entertainment,

14 Like *T.A.M.I. Show*, *Ladies and Gentlemen: The Rolling Stones* is a film that was officially unavailable at the outset of this project and suffused with some mystique by fans of the band and film collectors; in early 2010 it was released to theatres and made available on home video after the band successfully regained various international rights to the film. (*Ladies and Gentlemen: The Rolling Stones*, Eagle Rock Entertainment, DVD)

15 In the film business, "four-walling" refers to the practice of filmmakers or distributors renting theatres and event spaces outright, covering the costs involved in promoting and exhibiting the work, and taking one hundred percent of the box-office gross; it represents a risk mitigated by the complete control the promoter has over the event and the likelihood that such an exclusive engagement will be well attended and create strong word-of-mouth for any subsequent screenings.

DVD, 2010) The film was unavailable on home video until it was recently restored and revised for release on DVD and Blu-Ray; *Cocksucker Blues* remains unavailable outside of the original screening agreement struck with Robert Frank and it isn't beyond the realm of possibility that whatever quality prints of the film still exist will go to the grave with the director unless the Stones acknowledge the historical significance of the film and accept it plays a major role both in their legacy and in the evolution of the rockumentary genre.

Whereas the social and political features of the Altamont event are overwhelmed by the death and destruction laid bare by *Gimme Shelter*, another rockumentary of the early-1970s makes these elements explicit in a manner that perhaps transcends even the idealized heights of *Woodstock*. Wattstax-72 was a multi-artist concert event hosted by Memphis-based Stax Records and held in August 1972 in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the Watts Riots which occurred in response to racialized police brutality by the Los Angeles Police Department in several neighbourhoods across LA. Widely regarded as the "black Woodstock", Wattstax was immortalized in a film of the same name (Mel Stuart, USA, 1973). A 6-hour audio documentary, "Wattstax: Revisted", was prepared for broadcast on radio stations in quadraphonic sound and syndicated for subsequent broadcasts throughout the year before Stax prepared the soundtrack double-LP, *Wattstax: The Living World* (Stax Records, 1973).

While at its core it is a multi-artist concert film building upon the conventions established in earlier works including *Monterey Pop*, *Woodstock*, and *Gimme Shelter*, *Wattstax* distinguishes itself by offering viewers a rich overview of the event while balancing a self-

conscious consideration of the relationship between popular music and society. It is the first rockumentary film to accent race in a meaningful way, in part because of the socio-political nature of the event but also because of the decision of the filmmakers and the featured artists —including Isaac Hayes, The Staple Singers, Rufus Thomas, Kim Weston and The Bar-Kays —to comment upon the role played by the event (and, by extension, the film) in articulating the African-American experience at that point in U.S. history. Underscoring this commitment to reflecting the contemporary state of things, *Wattstax* features the inventive decision to cast actor-comedian Richard Pryor as the host of interstitial observational and interactive sequences which chronicle his travels through the Watts neighbourhood interviewing and socializing with area residents. The concert event, sponsored by Stax and Schlitz Beer, raised $73,363 for the Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation and the Watts Martin Luther King Hospital and a series of premiere screenings throughout the U.S. were organized as charity events for local services in the black community. (*Billboard*, 02 September 1972; *Billboard*, 10 February 1973) The film received international attention as the opening film of the 1973 Cannes Film Festival in Venice and was restored for home video release in 2003. Alongside works such as *The Concert for Bangladesh* (Saul Swimmer, UK/USA, 1972), *No Nukes* (Daniel Goldberg and Anthony Potenza, USA, 1980) and television specials *Live-Aid* (BBC-TV and ABC-TV, UK/USA, 1985), we might understand *Wattstax* as representative of an activist strand of the rockumentary concert film.

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The 1970s closed with the release of the last of the great second wave rockumentaries. As rock culture moved past the era-defining festivals of Monterey Pop, Woodstock, Altamont, Wattstax, and Isle of Wight (itself later mythologized in Murray Lerner's *Message to Love* (UK, 1997)), the multi-artist concert film remained a viable format through the 1970s but it understandably never regained its original heights. Filmmakers turned their attention in increasing numbers to the single-artist concert and tour film formats and focused on individual stars; *Jimi Hendrix* (Joe Boyd, John Head, and Gary Weis, USA, 1973), *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (D.A. Pennebaker, UK, 1973), *Janis* (Howard Alk, CAN, 1974), *Journey Through the Past* (Bernard Shakey, USA, 1974), and *The Song Remains the Same* all appeared in theatres the wake of *Woodstock* and *Gimme Shelter*. Returning to David James' analysis from the introduction of this chapter, by the mid-1970s the North American popular music industry was a $2 billion giant with rock music serving as a substantial source of its year-over-year growth. Rock's brightest stars were no longer subcultural heroes but internationally recognized figures. The success or failure of theatrical rockumentaries through the 1970s was often dependent upon the celebrity of its subject, so a concert film focused squarely on rock's constellation of past and present stars (in the guise of a heartfelt tribute to a contemporary act) and a compilation film canonizing rock's biggest bad boys seemed destined to hit big. *The Last Waltz* and *The Kids Are Alright* demonstrate the genre's growing tendency to reflect upon the past and emphasize the history behind these acts, mythologizing the individuals and staking out their place in rock's rebellious origins despite their ascendance to the industry's leading edge.

Martin Scorsese's *The Last Waltz* signals the end of the second wave of rockumentary's 'golden age'.[16] The film is a sophisticated hybrid of biography and concert performance structured as a reflection upon The Band's influences and evolution into one of rock's most acclaimed acts. The 35mm colour cinematography of *The Last Waltz* rivals that of big budget productions of the era, and the coordination of crew, technicians, and talent established a benchmark for pre-production planning and execution that remains the measure of excellence for contemporary concert films despite the film's rigid adherence to a journalistic representational strategy. In terms of its soundtrack, *The Last Waltz* was at the vanguard of new multi-track postproduction audio with the adoption of state-of-the-art synchronization systems provided by a then-emerging firm, Canyon Recorders, which assured the filmmakers of unmatched sound-to-picture sync during the extensive editing process of the musical performance sequences. (*Billboard*, 29 July 1978) Much has been said and written about the film both in the popular press and in specialized fields such as film studies (see Garbowski 2001; Sarchett 1994; Severn 2002; Telotte 1978). The narrative regarding the film's production and its differentiation from earlier concert films is relatively consistent:

> Virtually every commentator on *The Last Waltz* quickly notices that, although the film is a documentary, as [Terence] Rafferty puts it, "there's nothing accidental about it" (1983, 190). Scorsese borrows a page from [John] Grierson's book in this regard: *The Last Waltz* is a meticulously planned, formal, and even scripted film. For example, the Winterland stage is actually a fully conceived set; Scorsese borrowed the set of *La Traviata* from the San Francisco Opera, and it suggests a faded, decadent ballroom

16 It is not my intention to diminish the importance of Scorsese's film within the corpus and its exceptional visual accomplishment with the abridged analysis offered here, but my stronger interest in *The Last Waltz* is its soundtrack; a discussion of sound in rockumentary, and *The Last Waltz* specifically, is found in Chapter 6: This Film Should Be Played Loud! Understanding Sound in Rockumentary.

> elegance. The cinematography is likewise self-consciously operatic, even polished to a degree of slickness by such heavyweights as Laszlo Kovacs and Vilmos Zsigmond. In all, Scorsese deployed eleven cameramen with the best in 35mm hardware, and apparently he and head cinematographer Michael Chapman examined the lyrics to each song in order to script line-by-line colour changes "intended to emphasize the content of each musical moment" (Fox 1978, 41). (Sarchett 1994, 28-29)

Unique to *The Last Waltz* at the time was Scorsese's refusal to photograph the concert-going audience (a device that is central to structuring the 'film audience-concert audience' relationship first examined within the context of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, discussed at length in relationship to *Woodstock*, and a basic convention of the concert film current ever since) and his preference for truly cinematic vantage points of the musical performances at the expense of the off-stage sequences rockumentary audiences had come to expect of the genre; the exception to this comes in the form of interviews with band members shot by Scorsese after the concert performance and presented within the context of the film as the story of The Band's career and its standing in the pantheon of rock.

It is interesting to consider the mythification of rock undertaken by Scorsese and collaborator Robbie Robertson within *The Last Waltz* (both the event and the filmed document) and the way in which it effectively closes off the classic phase of the musical genre —and the classical phase of the rockumentary genre—from the work which follows it. If *Gimme Shelter* is said to represent the end of the 'peace and love' era of popular music, *The Last Waltz* imagines itself as the nostalgic conclusion of rock's formative generations and a roadmap for audiences disoriented by the musical genre's ascendence through the mainstream of popular cultures. Writing in 1981, William Kelly argued

> The shift in cultural sensibility from the late sixties to the present—a shift which parallels the movement from adolescence to adulthood for many members of the rock nostalgia audience—has been complicated by the aimlessness of social direction. Rock nostalgia addresses the difficulty of this transition by offering rock and roll as an emblem of orderly evolution. *The Last Waltz* [...] epitomizes this process. The film recapitulates The Band's career by including appearances by the formative influences on the group's musical development. Marshalling performers ranging from Muddy Waters and Ronnie Hawkins to Bob Dylan, Neil Diamond and the Staple Singers, *The Last Waltz* is both a paean to and a capsule history of rock and roll. Although the film's intent is ostensibly elegiac, recording as it does the conclusion of The Band's career and by extension that of the rock tradition they embody, its tone is celebratory. (Kelly 1981, 157-158)

The counter-balance to this self-congratulatory take on *The Last Waltz*'s relationship to rock culture is found in those critiques of the film by those who do not see the end of an evolutionary phase of rock music's maturation but only the end of rock music. Janet Maslin used the release of *The Last Waltz* and the large number of music documentaries and fiction films featuring rock music through the last half of the 1970s to announce the death of rock music as a whole (Maslin was cited in the introductory chapter of this dissertation asking the same question of rock music twenty years later). She considered such exercises in nostalgia to be evidence of rock's sagging cultural relevance. Of *The Last Waltz* she wrote,

> If this wasn't a particularly sad or celebratory occasion for [the musicians], it can't mean much to the viewer either, unless the one approaches the film with a full set of memories of the principals in better days. A peculiarly myopic view of the aging process is also required, if one is to find *The Last Waltz* unusually stirring. The life of a rock star may be more draining than the life of a Maytag repairman, but when the film tries to

> milk too much from every last sign of wear and tear, it comes dangerously close to self-importance and self-pity. (*New York Times*, 26 April 1978)

The "wear and tear" she refers to is likely Robertson's mid-film explanation that life on the road for a rock musician is a thankless, difficult job that is only barely survivable (he makes these statements despite the fact the majority of his contemporaries invited to the stage during The Last Waltz were 'on the road' just as long as he was and continued their touring careers long after the guitarist hung up his axe). Textually, these tightly controlled exchanges between Robertson and Scorsese suggest the guitarist's central role in the creation of the film; evidence of this collaboration was widely reported in the weeks and months following its theatrical debut—only Robertson collaborated with Scorsese during the film's 18-month post-production calendar while the other members of the group waited patiently to see the results. (*Billboard*, 29 July 1978)

For all its stylistic and technical achievement, *The Last Waltz* is a portrait of the big business rock music became during the 1970s. The air of celebration, collaboration, and mutual admiration exhibited on-stage conceals the complex web of business transactions necessary to bring such an all-star cast together. The quantity and tone of Robertson's on-screen interviews with Scorsese, and the *representational* nature of his on-screen performances in these segments, acknowledge the new direction Robertson was taking his career in the late-1970s (which ultimately resulted in the dissolution of The Band) and demonstrate how he sought to leverage the film's profile to his advantage. Steven Severn provocatively argues

> It is often viewed in idyllic terms as an embodiment of nostalgia for the past, when in reality its focus is the future. Seeing it as a film built around a musical event reveals a

> calculated, committed, and personal narrative. The movie's real subject is not The Band as a whole, but Robbie Robertson. The film represents a highly crafted and complex exercise in image-making. There is ample filmic evidence to suggest that Robertson influenced Scorsese's construction of the film in order to establish himself as a star within the Hollywood community and launch his post-Band career. (Severn 2002, 26)

Robertson's 'the accomplished elder-statesman of rock' persona masks 'the ambitious Hollywood music man' he seeks to become and he carefully offers a series of explanations regarding the inevitability of The Band's demise. What is left unsaid by Robertson and his bandmates (and unquestioned by Scorsese) in these interactive moments is the guitarist's particular relationship with the group as business entity; as the primary songwriter for the group, Robertson's earnings from royalties far outstripped the money he earned as a touring musician so his investment in The Band as an ongoing concern was markedly different from his bandmates. Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, Rick Danko, and Peter Manuel all appear appear uncomfortable with the decision to end the group and their discomfort (and, occasionally, their open contempt) during interview segments with Scorsese is plain to see. Complicating matters were the particular circumstances surrounding the stage and film productions of the The Last Waltz event; reflecting on the experience in 1997, drummer Helm wrote

> People ask me about *The Last Waltz* all the time. [...] It was the biggest fuckin' rip-off that ever happened to The Band—without a doubt. (Helm in Helm & Davis 2000, 312)

His comments refer to an aspect of the business of rockumentaries that has thus far been difficult to discern but one which dates back to *Jazz on a Summer's Day* and becomes central

to any discussion of the industrial dimension of genre when a single artist drives the production of the film. Beginning in the 1970s, the financing practice of record labels (and affiliated film studios, etc.) with regard to rockumentaries—and, later, long- and short-form music videos—was to charge the cost of the film project against the soundtrack album (or other outstanding accounts and contractual obligations with the label), effectively ensuring monies from the box-office receipts remained with the label and not the artist no matter the success of the theatrical release or the nature of home video licences. (Helm & Davis 2000, 259) Until such time that the artist could be entirely responsible for financing their film projects and exercise some control over their release—a scenario which doesn't play out with any regularity until the mid-1980s— rockumentaries became another tool with which record labels and film studios could control their artists. *The Last Waltz* is thus not only an aesthetic achievement within the rockumentary genre but a turning point in the business of rockumentary, setting the genre on several paths which are each subtly differentiated from the practices that brought the first two waves of work to the screen. Increasingly, beginning in the 1980s, theatrical rockumentaries were no longer independently financed productions of impartial filmmakers or experimental arts documentaries, but rather label and studio supported promotional vehicles and big budget vanity projects that did not exist in the marketplace in the absence of corollary products (hence Frazier Pennebaker's rhetorical query used as the epigraph to this chapter). And the likelihood existed, as it did for Bert Stern in 1960 and does today, that an independently financed film would nonetheless require the

participation of its subjects in order to secure the music licenses necessary for an official release.

Arriving in theatres during the spring of 1979, *The Kids Are Alright* is significant both in terms of its foundational contribution to the archival compilation current of rockumentary and its standing as a return to the amateur roots of the genre. While the film was eventually officially sanctioned by the band, the project began with (and was largely completed by) a lone amateur filmmaker who was a fan of the group: twenty-one year old New Yorker, Jeff Stein. *The Kids Are Alright* altered the expectation that had gradually developed over the first fifteen years of the history of rockumentary that these films were the work of trained filmmakers and privileged insiders. It set the tone for a wave of independently produced and fan-made films equally indebted to the work of Bert Stern and Peter Whitehead. At times, these amateur projects interacted in meaningful ways with big business interests of record labels and film studios—this is certainly the case with *The Kids Are Alright*—but at other times these works remained on the margins of mainstream film and music culture (e.g. *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, John Heyn and Jeff Krulik, USA, 1986). This was certainly the case with films produced contemporaneously with *The Kids Are Alright* chronicling the nascent punk sub-genre of the late-1970s; we will consider this movement in the concluding section of this chapter.

An anthology of The Who's television and film appearances sourced and curated by Stein with the cooperation of the band on the occasion of their fifteenth anniversary, *The Kids Are Alright* represents The Who's first starring role in a feature-length documentary after

their participation in the rock opera *Tommy* (Ken Russell, UK, 1975) and the non-musical *Quadrophenia* (Franc Roddam, UK, 1979) based on their album of the same name. It features new interviews with band members and live performance footage recorded specifically for the film at Shepperton Studios in south London in May 1978. These new interviews and exclusive performances were arranged for Stein after The Who screened a rough-cut of the film and officially sanctioned the project. (Jeff Stein, *The Kids Are Alright*, DVD commentary, 2002) Tragically, this performance became the last time the original line-up of the band ever appeared together following the death of drummer Keith Moon in September 1979; in this way, *The Kids Are Alright* is a significant historical document both in terms of the band's personal history and their relationship to rock culture at large. The soundtrack album released by MCA to accompany the theatrical release of *The Kids Are Alright* was the highest selling soundtrack of 1979 and was described by MCA marketing director Sam Passamano Jr. as "a marketers fantasy":

> [This double LP is] a double pronged package, marketable both as a movie soundtrack and as a greatest hits package—and on top of that, The Who's first greatest hits package. (Peterson 1979, ST-6)

Passamano explains the advantage of such a scenario is the label's ability to sell the soundtrack as a greatest hits album in markets where the film has not yet opened. (Ibid.) This strategy—rockumentary soundtrack as greatest hits album—grows increasingly common through the 1980s and 1990s with many rockumentary projects in this period of limited theatrical-release opportunities designed specifically as promotional vehicles for album releases; e.g. Duran Duran's *Arena* (Russell Mulcahy, UK/USA, 1984), *Sign 'O' the Times*,

U2: Rattle & Hum (Phil Joanou, USA, 1988), *Depeche Mode: 101* (D.A. Pennebaker, et al., UK/USA, 1989), and Madonna's *Truth or Dare* (Alek, Keshishian, USA, 1991).

Apart from the spectacle of witnessing the evolution of The Who as they perform through their career, *The Kids Are Alright* is powered by Stein's juxtaposition of performance clips and interview segments (in particular an extended, often combative, exchange with TV presenter Russell Harty which is excerpted throughout the film). These interactive moments, culled from different periods of the band's career, highlight the way in which their legendary confidence and stage-craft was a central element of the band from its inception and underscore the way in which their rock personas fluidly migrate from on-stage to off-stage spaces. Though endorsed by the band, the film is a warts-and-all biopic featuring many contradictory statements and several out-and-out verbal attacks against their fans and each other. It is, quite simply, as fair and balanced a portrait of a career in rock music as had been seen at this point in the evolution of the rockumentary genre and it remains revelatory; its marked contrast from the control exercised by Scorsese and Robertson during the production of *The Last Waltz* (and earlier instances of censorship within the genre such as *Cocksucker Blues*) revealed new possibilities for the genre and, it could be argued, altered artists' perception of what they could and could not reveal on-screen within the context a documentary project—The Who insulated themselves from charges of decadence and irresponsibility by copping to it on film.

It is with compilation projects such as *The Kids Are Alright* that the function of rockumentary as a repository for the history of the visual representation of popular music is

most explicit. The compilation form remains the most conservative current within the rockumentary genre as a function of its over-reliance on an expository mode of address (not the case with *The Kids Are Alright*) but it is nonetheless invigorated by the sound of rock music, its iconography, and the sense of discovery sparked by the inclusion of never-before- or rarely-seen footage in such projects. Noteworthy among the discoveries on display in Stein's film are outtakes from the once-unreleased *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, UK, 1996) and the canonic *Woodstock*. *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* television special, completed in 1968 but unreleased until 1996 as a result of scheduling problems, various legal issues, and the band's own hesitancy to release what they deemed to be a sub-par performance, is the source of one of the best remembered sequences in *The Kids Are Alright*. There is nothing remarkable about the camera positions (front of stage) or frame compositions (a master shot and isolated mid-to-extreme close-ups of each band member) during The Who's performance of the 8-minute rock medley "A Quick One, While He's Away", but the combination of subtle camera dolleys throughout the sequence and the band's often frantic movements (save for bassist John Entwistle who, at best, lumbers side to side like Frankenstein's monster) energizes the proceedings. It is believed that in light of The Who's appearance and the Rolling Stones' displeasure with their own performance that the Stones shelved the television project indefinitely. (Grimes 1996) Perhaps the most interesting archival footage on display in *The Kids Are Alright* was not actually lost at all, but recovered and presented in a new way by Stein. The film features outtakes from The Who's Woodstock performance which 'reverse engineer' the Scorsese-designed split-screen and

superimposition compositions from Wadleigh's film and, in doing so, reveal features of the image unobservable in the dense visual field of *Woodstock* (particularly Pete Townshend's virtuosity and the sheer physicality of his performance as his figure contorts wildly during the windmill-filled "Summertime Blues"). In this way, Stein's archival project re-frames the documentary status of these iconographic images by jettisoning the impressionistic strategy originally used to visualize the performance in favour of a strictly journalistic strategy. It represents the possibility of the compilation form to serve as an archive of primary audiovisual material available for consultation by subsequent generations of popular music fans and filmgoers.

Most, if not all, rockumentary compilation projects following the release of *The Kids Are Alright* adhere to the conventions established in part by Stein or owe some debt to his project. He is not, however, the sole originator of the rockumentary compilation form: Tony Palmer's epic television documentary series examining the history of popular music, *All You Need Is Love* (UK/USA, 1976-1980), is a contemporary of Stein's work and stands as the preeminent long-form television rockumentary; its progeny include the well-known series *Dancing in the Street: A Rock & Roll History* (BBC, UK, 1995), *The History of Rock'n'Roll* (Time-Life, USA, 1995), and the aforementioned *The Beatles Anthology*. If a difference exists it is the lack of editorializing on the part of Stein which is a common element of contemporary compilation rockumentaries, which generally focus on mythologizing individual musicians and bands or the musical genre as a whole, heavily accenting either the filmmaker's bias as a fan or the subject's point-of-view in their role as the authorizing agent

of the project (e.g. *End of the Century: The Story of the Ramones*, Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia, USA, 2003; *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage*, Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn, CAN, 2010). It is only with the arrival of wholly independent rockumentary productions and works of ethnography that the influence of the image-conscious artist is mitigated.

Conclusion: The Third Wave—Punk Ethnography and the Home Video Migration

Rockumentary in the 1970s represents the second wave of work in the 'golden age' of the genre. Headlined by the blockbuster success of Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* and high profile films starring The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, the rockumentary genre establishes itself as a legitimate commercial entity, a mainstream presence at the box-office, and presents new opportunities to the film and music industries for exploiting the expanding rock music audience. A successful string of films appears in theatres throughout the decade, many of them accompanied by soundtrack albums that were as commercially successful as their box-office counterparts (if not more so). Over this period we observe the consolidation of particular structural conventions of the genre and the refinement of strategies for the visual representation of popular music performance. We witness a great deal of innovation in the area of sound recording and reproduction technology as the rockumentary plays a prominent role in advancing multi-track recording and exhibition (including the adoption of Dolby Stereo). It is within this context that the main currents of the rockumentary genre become apparent, particularly biography, the concert film, the tour or making-of rockumentary, and the compilation or archival project. The last of these rockumentary types, ethnographic

studies of rock music and its related genres and subcultures, only truly emerges in the late-1970s as the increasing availability of low cost, synch-sound motion picture technologies (e.g. Super 8mm, VHS, and BetaMax) encouraged a new generation of rockumentarians. It is during this same period that the large-scale migration of the rockumentary genre from theatrical exhibition spaces to the emerging venues of home video and cable television fundamentally alters the business of the genre and its mainstream profile. Finally, a widespread conservatism infects the genre as the basic conventions of rockumentary and its various typological streams become a shorthand for the visual representation of popular music and studies of its celebrities and subcultures; this marks a period, not of decline per se, but of rockumentary's reduced profile outside of the cultural milieu within which it was originally fostered and embraced.

Strictly speaking, what I describe as the third wave of rockumentary emerges contemporaneously with the final moments of rockumentary's classical period. International punk movements, specifically those in the United Kingdom and North America, materialize in the late-1970s and persist through the early-1980s. Rockumentary's ethnographic turn, if you will, is most evident in the independent films produced by these subcultures. The punk rockumentary sub-genre is, at its foundation, almost exclusively the domain of amateurs (although many of these filmmakers would go on to professional careers) and this had a profound impact on the visual style and structure of these films. It is not uncommon for entire sequences to be out of focus or for frame compositions to entirely ignore the speaking subjects and performers who would conventionally command the screen, but the roster of

talent responsible for this work matured as filmmakers in tandem with the musical subcultures they chronicled and the work they produced has lasting historical value.

Four figures in particular stand out for their contribution to the ethnographic current of rockumentary and the punk sub-genre. Don Letts, director of the seminal punk rockumentary *The Punk Rock Movie* (UK, 1978), was an insider—a well-known and well-liked DJ at the influential West End nightclub, The Roxy, which hosted the first wave of British punk bands—whose friendships with the Sex Pistols, The Slits, and The Clash positioned him to document the thriving London punk scene without restriction. (Cullen 2010) Letts would go on to a career in music with Big Audio Dynamite, formed with ex-Clash guitarist Mick Jones, and won a Grammy award for Best Long Form Music Video for his rockumentary biography, *The Clash: Westway to the World* (UK, 2000), but his career began as an amateur filmmaker with a Super 8mm camera who silently observed and meticulously recorded the music and fashion of the punk community. (It is befitting that punk's emblematic 2-minutes-or-less song structures accommodated Super 8's two-and-a-half minute cartridge size.) Julien Temple, who made a career out of chronicling British punk (and the Sex Pistols in particular), arrived on the scene as a student filmmaker and leveraged his friendships with members of the U.K. Subs and the Pistols to secure their participation in two of the rockumentary genre's earliest 'fakes': the short film, *U.K. Subs: Punk Can Take It* (UK, 1979), and the feature length mockumentary, *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* (UK, 1980). Temple would later direct definitive biographies of both the Sex Pistols (*Filth and the Fury*, UK/USA, 2000) and The Clash's Joe Strummer (*The Future is Unwritten*, UK, 2007).

Letts and Temple's Irish counterpart was Belfast College of Art graduate John T. Davis whose documentation of the Northern Irish punk scene of Belfast is comprised of a trilogy of rarely seen but celebrated observational documentaries starring the likes of The Undertones and Stiff Little Fingers. These films, shot on a combination of Super 8mm,16mm, and VHS, underscore punk as a form of escapism from the turbulent politics of the region and the contemporary threat of terrorist violence—The Troubles—that hung over the country dating back to 1968. On the other side of the Atlantic, Penelope Spheeris, a graduate from UCLA's film school who worked through the 1970s as a director of promotional films for bands, embraced her outsider status and set about documenting the lives of the teenagers and young adults who were carving out a place for punk music in West Hollywood. (Diamond 1992) Comprised of musical performances, observational sequences, and interviews with musicians and fans, *Decline of Western Civilization* (USA, 1981) is to American punk and the L.A. scene what *The Punk Rock Movie* is to Britain—it stands as the definitive document of the Los Angeles punk scene and its transformation into the hardcore movement that would ultimately revolutionize American popular music and the independent record label infrastructure through its influence upon the 'college music' and alternative genres of the 1990s (see Azerrad 2001).[17] Thirty-five years old at the time of *Decline of Western Civilization* (which in part explains the rough treatment she receives at different points in the film), Spheeris' career would take an interesting turn after directing the Hollywood

17 The east coast counterpart to Spheeris' film is certainly Amos Poe's *The Blank Generation* (USA, 1976) focusing on New York City's CBGB scene and bands including Blondie, The Ramones, Talking Heads, and Television, while the Midwest is now represented by *You Weren't There: A History of Chicago Punk, 1977-1984* (Joe Losurdo and Chris Tillman, USA, 2007).

blockbuster *Wayne's World* (USA, 1992), but she continued her examination of popular music through the 1980s and 1990s with several documentaries on the subject of heavy metal including *Decline of Western Civilization II: The Metal Years* (USA, 1988).

Stacy Thompson, writing on the subject of what he describes as a "punk cinema" of discernible aesthetics and particular economics, argues punk films "foreground their conditions of production, which stand as material signifiers of the possibility of making music or film, participating in critique, or doing both at once." (Thompson 2004, 64) The ethos of punk is reflected in the practice of punk filmmakers in the late-1970s; despite their overwhelming standing as amateurs in the field, their work effectively captures and communicates the energy of the music, the personality of the community, and echoes punk rock's call for the democratization of music in the face of rock music's increasing virtuosity and big business bedfellows. Moving forward, in a reflection of rockumentary's ethnographic turn within the punk rock subculture, innovation within the rockumentary genre generally occurs in response to new musical forms (e.g. *Halber Mensch*, Sogo Ishii, JPN, 1986; *Friends Forever*, Ben Wolfinsohn, USA, 2001), new technology and, on rarer occasions, the creative vision of artists and filmmakers (e.g. *Stop Making Sense*, Jonathan Demme, USA, 1984; *Benjamin Smoke*, Jem Cohen, USA, 2000).

In the late-1970s and early-1980s, film and record sales experienced a period of diminished growth and the concert industry was equally impacted. (Grein & Kozak 1980, 1) The theatrical release of rockumentaries was less common than their appearance on home video and cable television broadcast for most of the 1980s and 1990s. Rockumentary

projects by studios and labels emphasized their value as a relatively low-cost component of a larger promotional effort alongside short- and long-form music videos. It is at this point in the history of the rockumentary genre that tracking the release of non-theatrical rockumentaries becomes a nearly impossible task, and the situation is reflected in the contemporary context of low-cost digital production and the growing practice of artists and labels packing-in nonfictional audiovisual material with their album releases (e.g. making-of featurettes, rehearsal sessions, artist biographies). Alongside VHS, Betamax, and cable television outlets like HBO and Showtime, initiatives like American Multi-Cinema's (AMC) "Concert Cinema" series in 1984 provided new venues for the exhibition of music documentaries and musical shorts. In the case of "Concert Cinema", such an initiative had a direct impact on the aesthetics of the rockumentary. The Los Angeles-based company R&R Entertainment provided a proprietary technology which transferred videos from the BetaSP format (common within the television industry and often used to shoot music videos) to 35mm film, in the process altering their aspect ratios and remixing their sound to Dolby Stereo for theatrical projection. (Smith 1998, 202-203) It could be argued this is the moment when the lines between the feature-length theatrical rockumentary and made-for-television programming (both aesthetically and commercially) is blurred to the point that one is undistinguishable from the other. The quick-and-cheap workflow resulted in a widespread conservatism in terms of the visual representation of musical performance, one based upon the basic conventions of the rockumentary genre and its various typological streams but

constrained by the record label's focus on protecting their assets and guaranteeing a return on their modest investment.

It is during this period that the 'long-form video' category emerges. Ranging from modestly budgeted making-of documentaries with supplementary performance footage to feature-length concert films and, quite often, consisting entirely of an album's worth of music videos, the long-form video becomes the de facto rockumentary for a good deal of the 1980s and early 1990s. The production and home video release of long-form videos becomes standard practice within the industry for over a decade and is adopted by bands as diverse as Duran Duran (*Sing Blue Silver*, Michael Collins, USA/UK, 1984), Sonic Youth (*Goo*, DGC Records, 1990), and New Order (*New Order Story*, Warner Music Group, 1993). The Grammy Award's Best Long-Form Music Video category is the area in which rockumentaries are finally recognized by the music industry at-large, although the history of the award contains very few instances of feature-length films and theatrically-released projects winning the generally unheralded prize. In many ways, the Talking Heads' inventive concert film *Stop Making Sense* (Jonathan Demme, USA, 1984) represents the end of an era for the rockumentary just as the genre was becoming a ubiquitous media commodity. Released the same year as the Grammy first award the Long-Form Video trophy (won by Duran Duran's self-titled promotional video compilation) and Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap*—the satirical spin on the genre which effectively confirmed its place in the popular imagination and disseminated the 'rockumentary' label far beyond rock culture and the dedicated but dwindling theatrical audience for such projects—the Talking Heads film literally pulls back

the curtain on the pomp and circumstance which not only came to define the big ticket, large-scale rock concert of the 1970s and 1980s but also set the rockumentary on its course toward an over-reliance upon journalistic representational strategies and less sophisticated narrative forms. Demme and the band choreograph the stage show and structure the film presentation in such a way that the basic materiality of both the rock show and the filmmaking process is revealed to the audience. It dramatically highlights the uncomfortable truth behind the accomplished visual style of films such as *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars, The Last Waltz*, and the Stones' *Let's Spend the Night Together* (Hal Ashby, USA, 1983) and the path taken by too many rockumentary filmmakers in the 80s and 90s: the bigger the financial investment made by the artist and the record label in both the stage production and the film project, the less likely those sparks of innovation and experimentation which earlier epitomized the genre (and would later resuscitate it) will burst into flame and ignite both the audience and a new generation of rockumentarians. At the close of the classical era of the rockumentary genre and the dawn of a new wave of documentaries on the subject of popular music, the tendency of artists and filmmakers alike was to play it safe and draw an audience no matter the venue. Diminishing opportunities for theatrical distribution of rockumentaries in the era of the Hollywood blockbuster were mitigated by new exhibition outlets in the form of home video and cable television, and before too long the rockumentary returns to a place of prominence in film and music culture.

Chapter 6: This Film Should Be Played Loud!

Understanding Sound in Rockumentary

> "I can't believe that people really prefer to go to the concert hall under intellectually trying conditions, unable to repeat something they have missed, when they can sit home under the most comfortable circumstances and hear it as they want to hear it. I can't believe what would happen to literature today if one was forced to congregate in an unpleasant hall and read novels projected on a screen."
>
> - Milton Babbit, 1966; on the appeal of high-fidelity stereo recordings versus attendance at live concert events (quoted in Anderson 2006, 129)

> "This Film Should be Played Loud!"
>
> - opening title card preceding *The Last Waltz* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1978)

With the formal development of the rockumentary genre well-documented in earlier chapters, we now narrow our focus to the aspect of sound in these nonfiction films and examine both the theoretical and practical challenges it poses to the analysis and appreciation of this corpus. Rockumentary is an audio-visual genre which participates in and comments upon broader cultural discourses concerning the relationship between recorded musical objects and audiences. Through the 1950s, the separation between live musical performance and recorded music grows exponentially on the heels of several sound recording technology innovations, and anxieties concerning the "liveness" of the music industry's orientation post-

1948 manifest themselves in debates concerning the relative status of several genres and the real or imagined difference between *audio realism* and *spectacle* (see Anderson 2006, 112-114; 124) as it manifests itself in several areas including film, popular music recordings, and live musical performance. Rockumentary illustrates the transformation which finds *the recording* supplanting *live performance* in the postwar cultural, industrial, and aesthetic landscape. It highlights a continuing cultural fascination with the *live* in an socio-industrial context dominated by the *recorded*. (Gracyk 1996, 42-43) It is the consumption of a recording disguised as a performance.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 addressed the history of the intersections of nonfiction film and rock music, and examined a range of documentary films about popular music comprising the rockumentary genre. An important element of this narrative was the evolution and deployment of film sound technology—sound reinforcement systems for live music events; recording devices for film sound; and sound reproduction systems for cinema exhibition. This chapter uses the concert film to interrogate sound-image relationships in nonfiction film from a theoretical perspective and to chart a shift in the sound design of concert films and audio-visual representations of music at large. It expands upon established theoretical models pertaining to sound in cinema in order to better incorporate documentary into existing scholarly discourse on the subject. Many of the issues in this section are linked to conceptions of performance and authenticity examined in the preceding chapters. In this case, however, it is specifically the representation of live concert sound in cinema that focuses our attention. An awareness of the unique role played by sound recording and reproduction

technology in the production and exhibition of concert films serves to challenge prevailing cultural beliefs—linked to both documentary's status as evidence and the authorizing role sight plays in the live performance of music—that "seeing is believing". A case study of *The Last Waltz* provides us with an opportunity to examine how evolving sound technologies and shifting cultural expectations of cinema sound result in diverse creative approaches to representing sonic events in a single film over time. Concert films are both sonic artefacts and fully artefactual sonic events which highlight the disjunction between overly simplistic discussions of the genre and the complexities involved in the audio-visual representation of a live musical event. These often competing discourses highlight fundamental debates within film and sound reproduction theory over the nature of acoustic events and expectations for their mediation.

Imagining the Sound of Music Documentaries

A common charge from film music scholars is that there is a dearth of research from a music- or sound-first perspective of cinema, and yet numerous studies from a musicological perspective exist while the field as a whole is expanding. Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987), Royal S. Brown's *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (1994), and Anahid Kassabian's *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (2001) are perhaps the most widely known and cited studies of sound and music in film, but there exists an assortment of work on the subject featuring research on musical genres, the audiovisual industries (Smith 1998; Sergi 2004;

Kerins 2011), and various anthologies presenting theoretical frameworks for the study of sound and music in cinema (Weis and Belton 1985; Buhler, et al. 2000; Dickinson 2003). Arguably, the real lacuna in film music scholarship is the study of sound and music in nonfiction film. How do we approach and examine sound and music in cinema when the on-screen source is (or is purported to be) actuality?

While the documentary image receives its share of attention in film scholarship, the documentary soundtrack is a largely neglected object. The development of theoretical and historical models for evaluating and critiquing the ethical position of the documentary filmmaker or the impact of specific technologies in nonfiction film (to identify just two central fields of inquiry addressed in earlier section of this dissertation) has not been matched by similar developments addressing the shifting uses and impact of sound and music in documentary cinema. The limited selection of theories of sound in documentary cinema mirrors the theorization of sound in cinema generally, with its focus on a constructed binary of realism and illusion distinguishing between the central sonic representational strategies evinced in nonfiction film. Major figures including Eisentstein (1928), Vertov (1930), and Bazin (1945) offer founding contributions to the theoretical discourse on image and sound in cinema in the form of debates on the merits of illusory approaches to cinematic representation versus realist projects, and how sound factors in both. Of the three, Vertov's position is crucial to our understanding of sound in nonfiction film not least because of his status as one of cinema's earliest theorists and practitioners of documentary cinema. Unlike British and American filmmakers, Vertov develops his use of sound in documentary from an

experimental position, challenging synchronicity and naturalistic sound-image relationships by employing "the abstract and disassociative techniques of audiovisual collage." (Fischer 1985, 250) This position advocating for a non-realist (perhaps anti-realist) representational practice suggests an early precedent for evaluating rockumentary's complex sound-image relationships and provides a link to contemporary debates concerning the "mediatization" of musical performance referenced in earlier chapters (see Gracyk 1996; Lastra 2000).

Rick Altman's work on genre was especially helpful in establishing the generic framework for rockumentary introduced in Chapters 1 and 2. Altman is equally committed to the study of sound in film and his work will be considered here. He suggests the study of sound in film is overwhelmingly focused on technological histories and stylistic studies organized around Hollywood film and key sound auteurs. (Altman 1992, 171) An elementary post-WWII technological history of sound in nonfiction film has only barely sustained itself within scholarly discourse for the past three decades (see Mamber 1974; Nichols 1995; Ruoff 1992) when the subject is discussed at all.[1] These studies of documentary film sound trade in a technological determinism that emphasizes the role of new sound recording and playback devices in providing a degree of mobility previously unavailable to filmmakers of the era, but they too often fail to interrogate both the industrial and cultural implications of these developments. The exception to this rule are discussions of voiceover in documentary, a topic which appears with some regularity but relies too heavily upon analytical models founded upon the role of the device in fiction film (see Wolfe 1997).

1 The 1988 anthology edited by Alan Rosenthal, *New Challenges for Documentary*, widely used as the standard for readings on post-WWII documentary film, contains no essays focused specifically on sound; the second edition published in 2005 contains one.

John Corner (2002) addresses the centrality of sound in post-WWII nonfiction film but his work nonetheless exemplifies the limited scope of sound studies in documentary cinema. Moreover, Corner's study is focused specifically on a corpus of post-war works from Britain that excludes much of contemporary documentary cinema practice the present study seeks to address. Corner provocatively suggests that music in documentary programming is generally supplemental and too often decidedly affective in its deployment. (Corner 2002, 364) He evaluates documentary soundtracks in terms of their emotional affect and rational deployment, arguing "it is perhaps not surprising that the more the representational scheme of a documentary is framed by rationalistic imperatives and concern about 'balance', the more likely it is that music will seem extraneous if not wholly suspect, an importer of unwelcome emotion and feeling." (Ibid. 358) As is often the case in discourse on sound and music in film, anxieties stemming from the sound-image relationship are the adopted basis for concern—what we hear should unequivocally validate what we see. But Corner fails to consider documentary films or television programmes with music as their primary subject matter; in these examples, the soundtrack is internally motivated and thus preemptively rationalized for the viewer. For this reason, I suggest we step back and consider broader theories of sound and sound reproduction within the context of cinema without losing sight (pardon the pun) of the role vision plays in these efforts.

Richard Leppert argues, "Precisely because musical sound is abstract, intangible, and ethereal—lost as soon as it is gained—the visual experience of its production is crucial to both musicians and audience alike for locating and communicating the place of music and

musical sound within society and culture." (Leppert 1993, xx-xxi) Leppert's *The Sight of Sound* (1993), a study of musical representation in visual art from the seventeenth to twentieth century, traverses history, aesthetics, philosophy and sociology, examining musical iconography and its relationship with the body, and engages directly with the critical theory of Adorno, Jacques Attali, and Walter Benjamin to establish "a theoretical basis for delineating how sight acts as an organizer of musical semantics, and how the sight of music's performance connects abstract sonoric phenomena with the social." (Leppert 1993, xxvii) Evidenced in the summaries of work from Alan Durant and John Mowitt which soon follow, efforts to redress the terms upon which the relationship between sound and vision in popular music is negotiated remains a central problematic of popular music studies; Leppert's intervention provides additional insight to the significance of sound-image relationships in rockumentary. Rockumentary, and concert films specifically, contributes to the socio-cultural profile of rock music by visualizing it within popular culture.

It is here we resume our interrogation of the empiricist notion that "seeing is believing" (first introduced in Chapter 1) by re-focusing on the soundtrack and examining the phenomenon of synchresis, described by Chion as "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time. This join results independently of any rational logic." (Chion 1994, 63) Within the context of documentary cinema, this "weld" is especially problematic since the audience presupposes the indexical link between the event and its representation (see above). Alan Durant argues it is precisely the "positionings and contexts" established by

cooperative sound-image relationships—Chion's "weld"—through which "music acquires much of its conventional intelligibility." (Durant 1984, 88) Concert film sound, for example, bears only the faintest resemblance to the sound of the acoustic space (i.e. the sound of music, the acoustic properties of the building, the non-musical sounds of audience members, etc.) of the original event—it simply strives to re-imagine the event legibly for absent audience members. This practice is not, in and of itself, problematic, but any insistence on evaluating these texts on the basis of an essential link between the original event and its representation in a motion picture misapprehends their construction and complexity.

In *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (2001), Lastra makes a significant contribution to our understanding of sound and recorded acoustic events by positing a difference between *reproduction* and *representation*. In simple terms, *reproduction* connotes fidelity, a faithful copy of an original event that implicitly requires that we understand all recorded sound as a copy with a definitive original. *Representations*, in contrast, acknowledge their status as reconstructions and require no access to an original. Lastra argues that understanding this difference is the first step towards forming a foundation upon which we can evaluate mediatized acoustic events. He goes on to state that reproduction simulates "perceptual fidelity" vis-à-vis the "literal duplication of a real and embodied auditor's experience of an acoustic event" while representation places no emphasis upon the original and is instead concerned with the mediatization. (Lastra 2001, 181) The difference is important insofar as Lastra reframes our expectations of recorded

acoustic events, situating the paradigm outside of any debates concerning originals and copies.

John Mowitt, discussing the relationship of sight and sound in the evaluation of music recordings, questions the priority of looking as a means of notarizing the copy's relationship to an authentic original. (Mowitt 1987) That we can be sure we are listening to the original performance because we are looking at it is a cultural belief bound up with the relationship between inscription, authenticity, and live performance, but in actual fact the authorizing role vision plays rests at the heart of the myth of representations of musical performance (and concert films specifically). In the various reception studies presented within the history of rockumentary (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), the sophisticated audio technology used to deliver the soundtracks of concert films was rarely acknowledged; instead, critics and audiences revelled in the visual dimension of the genre. Arguing for the centrality of vision (no matter any accompanying suspicion) in assessing authenticity in rock culture, Lawrence Grossberg charges:

> The importance of live performances lies precisely in the fact that it is only here that one can see the actual production of the sound and the emotional work carried in the voice. The demand for live performance has always expressed the desire for the visual mark (and proof) of authenticity. (Grossberg 1992, 208)

Thus, for many, live performance is established as the arbiter of rock authenticity. Vision validates the emotional response of the audience fostered by the music, and vision re-establishes the grounds on which subsequent performances will be evaluated.

I would suggest the unified presentation of image and sound is not the most sought after feature of live performance, but rather the revelation of detail(s) which verify the performer's ability or the origins of the sound; perhaps not 'verification' in the sense of auditing the relationship between performance and recorded document, but rather an opportunity to have the musical performance embodied (made visual) by the original composer. Durant, in *Conditions of Music* (1984), speaks directly to this point and situates historically the eye/ear-relationship at live musical events, stressing the powerful nature of this dynamic as a result of its role in validating artistic production:

> Such knowledge provided by the eye for experience of sound is clearly of great significance within the history of music. The advent of visual emphases in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century musical performance is also a decisive moment in progressive relegations of music's supposed magical and religious properties, divorced from earlier metaphysical significances, and incorporated in emerging conceptions of human achievement and art. (Durant 1984, 88)

Durant argues it is the increasing number of ways in which the relationship between sound and image can be fixed and exactly reproduced which represents "a new accent on what is exclusively auditory", a reversal of the image-over-sound authorization though he accepts these circumstances have the effect of shifting the pleasure of listening-only towards an exercise co-dependent with the act of seeing. (Ibid. 89) Mowitt argues contemporary listening is not only organized by reproduction technology but "with its dependency on memory, is given its social significance" through such technological means (Ibid. 183) This echo of Adorno's critique of the phonograph and its relationship with the social dimension of music listening should be clear (see Adorno 1932; 1938), but instead of fearing the

diminished value of the act of composition and performance, Mowitt recognizes that recordings offer listeners access to the site of production in a manner now widely understood and accepted. Concert films, whether or not they are recognized by audiences as recordings, offer precisely this "access to the site of production" and underscore rock culture's investment in live performance by making visible (in whole or in part) the origin of these sounds. The status of these musical performances as documentary—that is, evidentiary—requires consideration.

Jonathan Sterne, in his cultural history of sound reproduction technology, argues "recording [does] not simply capture reality as it [is]; it [aims] to capture reality suitable for reproduction." (Sterne, 236) It is about "realism," he explains, "not reality itself." (Ibid. 245) I would suggest this distinction between *reality* and that which is suitably *realistic* is reflected in the sonoric representational strategy selected by the concert filmmaker, and this in turn establishes a framework for the audience's expectations as to the suitability of the sound-image relationship for the particular subject or event. And so a closer examination of the status of the 'real' in these films (that which is perceived as audio realism—and its reflection of rock's knotty authenticity—despite its status as an audio spectacle), while also questioning the implications of passively adopting pre-existing frameworks of liveness in the context of both film sound and popular music, will produce a deeper understanding of concert films as intensely mediated audio-visual representations of already mediated events.

Concert Films, Sound Theory, and Two Common Sonoric Strategies

Theodore Gracyk, in response to Camille Paglia's claims that the audience-artist bond was destroyed by the increasing size of rock concert loud speakers and a preference for special effects, argues "these were the very things that first made rock concerts into something more than party music." (Gracyk 1996, 193) He offers a historical sketch that takes the reader from the early days of rock and the "package" show featuring an assortment of musical acts performing only a handful of songs each (as seen in *T.A.M.I. Show*) to the feature-length rock spectacle pioneered by major acts including Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones. Gracyk cites Stones drummer Charlie Watts who explains set lengths rarely exceeded twenty minutes before the late 1960s when improved technology made amplification systems cheaper and louder, and stage monitors ensured musicians could hear themselves and each other, thus ensuring the quality of the concert event for performers and audiences alike. (Ibid.) Here we find fertile ground for the discussion of the (problematic) nature of the representation of concert sound in the rockumentary genre: the rock concert is an intensely mediated event and any consideration of its cinematic representation must negotiate this problematic.

Culturally, live rock concerts are endowed with a prior authenticity that complicates any understanding of what concert *films* offer as a representation of the event. Steve Wurtzler argues the performance of live music “in an event spatially co-present and temporarily simultaneous with consumers” establishes an aura positioned as inscrutable by the popular music industry because of its existence apart from mass produced studio recordings. (Wurtzler in Altman, 93) Yet both the concert event and its filmed counterpart should reveal

themselves to an audience as constructions upon inspection, not least because of its explicitly mediated form. Chion would suggest this intelligibility hinges on the apprehension of the differing qualities of *definition* and *fidelity* as characteristics of any recorded sound:

> A sound recording's *definition*, in technical terms, is its acuity and precision in rendering of detail. […]
>
> [*Fidelity*] is a tricky term; strictly speaking it would require making a continuous close comparison between the original and its reproduction […] However, it happens that today *definition* is (mistakenly) *taken as proof of fidelity*, when it's not to be confused with fidelity itself. (Chion, 98)

Contemporary sound technologies like surround-sound or lossless soundtracks on HD media, for example, do not offer fidelity—since that would require something approaching a quantitative real-time comparative analysis of the film presentation and its source material—but instead present an acute and precisely rendered representation of the previously mediated acoustic event. This confusion is further complicated by the often glittering and gleaming visual interface of concert films, insofar as the simple act of seeing implicates itself in the evaluation of sound fidelity. Moreover, viewers mistakenly perceive a well-*defined* representation of the acoustic event as a sign of audio fidelity and too quickly progress to an evaluation of the original event rather than its representation. The slick visual interface of so many contemporary concert films is made to serve as evidence of the possibility of presence at the original event. In actual fact, the constructedness of these films is manifest in the compilation of material from disparate places, from numerous performances and takes, with myriad layers of mediatization.

And so it seems there is a misunderstanding at the centre of discourses concerning concert films generally, and rock concert films especially. The confusion stems on the one hand from the problematic nature of visual representations of music, which often emphasize the image component at the expense of the auditory, and on the other, from evaluations of the auditory element of these texts as representative of an *original* event, somehow authentic and faithful to a set of *original* sounds. Discussion of concert films (whether critical or casual, even academic), regularly adopts clichéd summaries positing the film experience is 'just like being there' and generally emphasize the visual component of the film as the arbiter of a successful presentation, supporting my belief that more sophisticated approaches to the review and evaluation of these films remain available. If we want to evaluate concert films more effectively and address the true complexity of sound-image relationships in this corpus and other nonfiction films, we must confront the fallacy that is central to the experience: the audio event *as it happened* does not exist in its representation, no matter the faithfulness of the motion picture to the pro-filmic event.

Concert films shape reception via a complex visual interface and layers of sound reproduction technologies in an effort to convince viewers of being privy to an 'authentic' reproduction of the original audio-visual event—for the sake of the current discussion, I use the term *authentic* in keeping with Benjamin's description of an art object or performance's unique existence in time and space. (Benjamin 1936, 214) By way of their now-conventional formal stylistics, the image-track often distracts from the highly-constructed nature of the acoustic event presented in the concert film. To reiterate a point made earlier, concert film

sound strives to re-imagine the original acoustic event legibly for absent audience members; it bears only the faintest resemblance to the sound of the acoustic space of the original event. In an effort to more accurately describe and analyze the evolving relationship between the visual and audio dimensions of these nonfiction films and the intricate, often contradictory, claims established by the sound-image relationship in cooperation, I propose we approach the issue of sound in concert films with an understanding of two differentiated sonoric strategies. These strategies share affinities with those introduced and examined in earlier sections of this dissertation for the analysis of visual representations of musical performance in nonfiction film, the *journalistic* and the *impressionistic*. In the context of the concert film current of the rockumentary, these two sonoric representational strategies occupy two points along a quick evolution of sound practices beginning with the basic documentation of a musical event to the specialized representation of an audio event (i.e. stereophonic or spatialized sound). Both encourage the 'being there' discourse surrounding live popular music performance that pre-dates the rockumentary genre, extending back to early-to-mid 1950s developments and marketing of "high-fidelity" sound recording and reproduction systems (Anderson 2006), but differ in terms of their respective emphasis upon the image and sound elements. While the analysis which follows focuses on a very well-known and representative text, a wider selection of concert films spanning the last forty-five years of rockumentary filmmaking would serve to illustrate and reinforce the dichotomy.

The first strategy, which appears at the inception of the genre, is one based upon basic access to the emerging images and sounds of rock and rock culture these documentaries

offered viewers. The soundtrack is simply a representation of the original performances that does not seek to conceal the limits of its definition imposed upon it by the available sound recording technology and performance environment. That the camera could move fluidly from the perspective of the audience to the backstage space only confirmed their appeal and assured the sustainability of the rock concert film current as musical spectacle—if not artful cinema or historically significant records of live musical performance. In these cases, the 'there' of 'just like being there' was the event itself—the intensity of the images, the atmosphere of the crowd, and the exclusive backstage environment. The truth claims invoked by this sonoric strategy leverage journalistic images favoured in conventional portraiture of events (e.g. *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, *Monterey Pop*) rather than self-conscious formal techniques which might conceal more advanced sound design. D.A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* (and the concert sequences featured therein) is perhaps the most widely screened example of this approach, its run-and-gun shooting style and simple mono recording befitting Bob Dylan's folk aesthetic and anti-celebrity posturing. Dylan revels in both the acoustics of Royal Albert Hall and the richness of the piano sound in the backstage dressing room while the soundtrack recording crackles and pops with traces of its age and materiality. In one telling sequence, the crowd sits patiently as Dylan begins his set without the aid of a microphone; stagehands scurry to correct the problem and when Dylan's voice is finally heard over the PA the crowd erupts into applause. An often overlooked detail of presentations such as *Dont Look Back* is the audibility of the audience during both the performance—most contemporary concert films completely remove any trace of audience

noise for the duration of each song (a noteworthy subversion of this trend is Morrissey's *Who Put the M in Manchester?* (Bucky Fukumoto, UK, 2005) which opens and closes with an extended overture comprised entirely of chanting audience members). In many ways, the ascribed authenticity of films such as *Dont Look Back*, *Monterey Pop* and *Woodstock* is as dependent upon the technological limits of the original soundtrack recordings as it is its journalistic visual style.

The second sonoric strategy appearing within the evolution of the rockumentary concert film is the initiation of a project wherein concert filmmakers strive not to merely document the event but to play an active part in shaping the production to ensure its sonic reproducibility in theatres and at home. With the aid of ever-evolving sound reproduction technologies, particularly spatialized sound systems like Surround Sound, the soundtracks of these concert films seek to re-imagine the experience of hearing the music within the space of the event. Within this representational practice it becomes less clear where 'there' is: the polished cinematic shine of these 35mm and high-definition video productions offers a clinical, almost abstract visual presentation of live music performance yet provide the viewer a representation of the acoustic event that exceeds the original in terms of its faithfulness to the studio recordings of the same material.

For a clear illustration of both approaches I turn to a single film, *The Last Waltz*. It is a significant film because of its historical place within the genre, its continuing popularity as the result of home video (specifically the release of DVD and Blu-Ray editions with supplemental features and new audio options), and its foreshadowing of how subsequent

concert film soundtracks would blur the line between the simple documentation of the event and staging the event itself. Scorsese's meticulous approach to pre-production, the complex staging and lighting, and the dedication to capture a "high-fidelity" audio recording of the onstage performances are all of a piece with the slick presentation expressly demanded by the noted filmmaker. Moreover, the direction of Scorsese attracted a team of the most respected cinematographers working in the United States at the time of the event including Michael Chapman, Vilmos Zsigmond, David Myers, and László Kovács. The result of this coordinated effort is a live performance not solely intended for mechanical reproduction but ultimately tailored to ensure its successful reproducibility with a disproportionate emphasis upon the photographic look of the event. Yet to have people perform for machines fundamentally changes the process of representation and the event's subsequent reproduction.

The Last Waltz presents us with on-stage and behind-the-scenes footage which reveals a great deal about both the talents and personalities of the individual members of the band and their virtuosity as a group. At the same time, it represents onstage and choreographed soundstage performances that are post-dubbed to enrich and correct the original, and overdubs to live guitar tracks in an effort to expand the arrangements and conceal mistakes (particularly those made during solos). (Helm & Davis 2000, 257) Additionally, the decision is made (by both The Band and the filmmaker) to mute Robertson's microphone for large portions of the evening to obscure his notoriously flat vocal delivery. (Ibid.) His 'silent' performance is only rendered as audible on-screen. Only ten years after the guerrilla aesthetics of *Dont Look Back*, *The Last Waltz* begins with a title card proclaiming "This Film

Should Be Played Loud!" Interestingly enough, Jay Cocks (a frequent Scorsese collaborator) explains this command had the opposite of its intended effect: projectionists across the United States turned the volume *down* for fear that the soundtrack would damage theatre equipment. And yet this had no impact on the film's success, ironically because its high-production values assured a stunning photographic presentation even with a diminished representation of the acoustic event. The film did not need to be played loud—perhaps few, if any, concert films do. They need only introduce us to the original acoustic event before convincing us of its faithful reproduction within a merely *legible* representation of concert sound that otherwise requires that we *look* at the sophistication of the sound-image relationship to confirm its authenticity.

Concert films, like narrative films, operate on a principle of legibility where the soundtrack is concerned. As constructions, the sound of these films rely on what Christian Metz describes as "functional or narrative sense" and represent the *liveness* of the original event merely by presenting themselves as live in a sense that is understood within the cultural context of its production and exhibition. And yet strictly in terms of the carefully processed nature of the soundtrack, the audience of a concert film is hearing a performance that bears only the loosest resemblance to the original auditory event. With the continuing evolution of high-definition home theatre as the site for viewing concert films, this misunderstanding involving the experience of mediated sound now seems firmly embedded within the language used to discuss these films and the means by which they find validation as exceptional media

experiences. Robbie Robertson of The Band, commenting on the re-release of Martin Scorsese's seminal concert film *The Last Waltz*, explains:

> We went to the original master tapes and mixed all the music and sound again in stereo and 5.1 Surround Sound. It is amazing what we can do with today's technology to *improve* and *enhance* the whole experience of this movie. (Robbie Robertson, *The Last Waltz: Special Edition* DVD commentary, 2002; emphasis added)

Moving further away from the qualities and character of the original acoustic event—and in many cases diminishing or destroying the film's value as an artifact of the event—is now considered to improve the concert film experience, perhaps proving enhancement and supplementation is the objective of these representational practices, rather than fidelity or mimesis. There is nothing new about this propensity for improvement and enhancement; among rockumentary's earliest entries—*The Beatles at Shea Stadium*—resides a concert film with a soundtrack that all but abandoned live performances in favour of studio-recorded takes which assured the film's sonoric legibility in light of the source material's unintelligibility. In our contemporary moment of advanced sound reproduction technology both in cinemas and in the privacy of our homes, the sound of rockumentary is an increasingly sophisticated construct that challenges our understanding of the status of nonfiction film sound as realist and evidentiary.

Conclusion: The Rockumentary Renaissance

2009 saw the release of *All Tomorrow's Parties* (Jonathan Caouette, UK), a feature-length film documenting the history of the acclaimed artist-curated annual music festival of the same name on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. Comprised of footage shot over the course of those ten years on a range of media formats including Super 8mm, 16mm, DV, and 35mm still-photography by a mix of professional filmmakers, amateur videographers, and those in the crowd at the yearly festival and its satellite concerts, the film was compiled and curated by a young filmmaker, Caouette, who burst onto the scene with an autobiographical documentary (*Tarnation*, USA, 2003) made with iMovie, Apple's entry-level video editing software. Funded in part and "released" by internationally recognized music label Warp Records, the film premiered in the 24 Beats Per Second program of the annual South by Southwest music festival, secured theatrical distribution, appeared at special screening engagements featuring live musical performances from bands featured in the film, streamed online for free at a leading new music website (Pitchfork Media), and appeared on DVD and Blu-Ray home video formats at the end of 2010. There is no better example of the life-cycle and vibrancy of the contemporary rockumentary than *All Tomorrow's Parties* with its multitudinous creative, cultural, and industrial interactions, and no better evidence in support of the proposition that introduced this dissertation: rockumentary is an aesthetically rich and commercially viable documentary genre notable for its visual style, innovation in the

area of film sound technology, and the complex cultural and industrial interactions which establish its place in the larger histories of film and popular music culture.

The clearly defined structural and thematic contours of rockumentary, coupled with its place in our cultural imagination and its persistent industrial profile, invite the application of genre theory in distinguishing its features and setting the limits for a discussion of this corpus. As I argued in the introduction to this dissertation and outlined through Chapters 1 and 2, genres are not simply categories describing "a particular form, style, or purpose" but rather a matrix of textual, industrial, and socio-cultural systems of meaning and exchange we map onto objects. The genre as a whole reflects rock's many styles and myriad forms of live performance; in a very practical sense, rockumentary films exist as a repository of popular music history, documentary history, and film technology.

Rockumentary arrived when it did because of the profile of rock music within youth culture and the music industry, and it was delivered to the screen with tools and technology newly available to filmmakers. The genre emerges in the 1960s as part of a larger shift in the character and content of Western youth culture and popular music. Its swift ascent to the status of the theatrical documentary *par excellence* during this period occurs directly in proportion to the growth of rock music as a cultural and economic force. A series of high-profile films, soundtrack releases, and box-office success in the 1970s permanently establish the rockumentary as a mainstream nonfiction film genre with an identifiable stable of classics before diminishing opportunities for theatrical distribution in the era of the Hollywood

blockbuster are mitigated by new exhibition outlets in the form of home video and cable television.

The genre consists of five broad currents and trends. Rockumentary biographies are an explicitly hybrid form encompassing interviews, live performance sequences, and observational footage. These films derive their allure from the featured artist's status within rock culture and popular culture at-large. Concert and other performance-based rockumentaries span the gamut from rigorously choreographed and composed audiovisual spectacles to low-budget, sparsely edited, fan-made films and videos. A companion to both the biography and concert currents is the 'tour film' or 'making-of' rockumentary. Unlike biography which spans an artist's entire career or the concert film which generally represents a single event, these films are focused on the events surrounding a whole tour or the act of making a single album or planning a special event. A fourth trend within the rockumentary genre is ethnographic studies of rock music, its sub-genres, and subcultures. While other types of rockumentary serve as documents of rock culture and its participants, the ethnographic rockumentary makes explicit claims about the value of the research object and the filmmaker's purpose for documenting the music, musicians, and audiences in question. The last type of rockumentary, the compilation or archival project, is the most common made-for-television music documentary but it is less often produced for theatrical release. More than any other type of rockumentary, the compilation or archival project relies on the structure and expository mode of address of classical documentaries. While a single film might adopt various approaches resulting in hybrid forms and sub-genres, rockumentaries are

often best described by the approach which governs its structure and mode of address to the audience.

Notwithstanding the experimentation and innovation that naturally resides in such a large and diverse corpus of work, rockumentary is a decidedly conservative generic form in terms of its visual style and narrative structures. The basic structural, photographic, and sonoric strategies of the genre conventionalized in the late-1960s and early-1970s were subject to very little revision or reinvention in the decades which followed. In this way, rockumentary fails to deliver on the claims of rebellion which rock music and rock culture professes to embody and embrace (accepting, of course, the complexity and contradictory nature of these claims within the context of the global entertainment industry). Through the 2000s, however, there is mounting evidence that the widespread availability and ease-of-use of digital media technologies, combined with the exponential grown of new media platforms for the distribution and exhibition of work, is reinvigorating the rockumentary genre and reconnecting it with mainstream audiences—we might understand this moment as the fourth wave of rockumentary.

The preponderance of nonfiction music documentaries now produced and distributed with the assistance of digital and networked technologies demonstrate two especially curious results of the ubiquity of visual representations of popular music performance. The first is an emptying-out of conventional formal stylistics which results in material that fits neither the *journalistic* or the *impressionistic* models introduced and subsequently referenced throughout dissertation. A new generation of trained cinematographers and videographers such as

France's Mathieu Saura (aka Vincent Moon) are foregrounding the presence of their increasingly mobile cameras within the space of the performance in ways that were truly unattainable (if not completely unimaginable) to previous generations of rockumentarians. These new works re-imagine the *liveness* of popular music performance by situating the artist in commonplace environments (e.g. private homes, elevators, cafes, public transit, tourist attractions) and capturing the performance in a single continuous take—it is not the illusion of co-presence between the performer and home audience, but rather the co-presence of the performer and the filmmaker-as-creative-force who serves as a surrogate for the viewer as she carves out the performance from quotidian spaces. In online series such as *The Take Away Show* and *Southern Souls*, on-location performances appear to occur spontaneously: there is no clear introduction of the performers apart from on-screen text and no establishing of the technical means by which the performance will be executed (e.g. sound recording devices, additional cameras), just faith in the filmmaker that sound and image will be effectively captured and communicated in a way that preserves the emotion or energy of the performance. The second consequence of this profusion of rockumentary production is a disavowal of the notion (which gradually emerges within music videos and overtakes the long-form music video format) that the musical performance need not be represented at all. The highly stylized, fictional scenarios featuring popular music soundtracks that defined music videos through the 1980s and 1990s give way to an impetus to return to nonfictional representations of musical performance and rockumentary's roots in observational and interactive modes of representation.

As the global audience grows larger, the ability of cultural institutions like film festivals and new media platforms like Vimeo and Pitchfork.tv to reach out to niche interest groups and subcultures make the natural audience for rockumentary easier to target. The aforementioned South by Southwest music festival and the esteemed Sundance film festival have grown to become destination events and critical marketplaces for fans and distributors of music documentaries in North America and the United Kingdom. Film festivals dedicated entirely to music documentaries and rockumentary in particular are popping up with increasing frequency—noteworthy examples include Sound Unseen (Minneapolis), Don't Knock the Rock (Los Angeles), and Film Pop (Montreal)—and several boutique home video labels now specialize exclusively in the co-production, theatrical distribution, and DVD/Blu-Ray releases of rockumentaries and other arts documentaries (e.g. Plexifilm).

Perhaps the most curious contemporary example of rockumentary's reach and historical profile appears in the form of an interactive digital media project—a video game—that leverages the history of visual representations of popular music canonized within the genre and the iconic images of specific films for the purposes of intelligibility and immersion. *The Beatles: Rock Band* (Harmonix, 2009), an example of the rhythm game genre which features plastic musical instruments as opposed to conventional gamepads or joysticks and involves the virtual performance of popular music, emphasizes its fidelity to the historical record and its accurate (though not photorealistic) re-creation of various physical environments from the canon of The Beatles on the basis of audio-visual documentary sources—including *The Beatles Live at Shea Stadium*, their debut Ed Sullivan Show

performance, and the iconic *Let It Be* rooftop concert footage—in the service of communicating the band's creative history and place in the cultural imaginary.[1] As a result, the game itself functions as curious sort of documentary resource. The emphasis on visual evidence moves this and other rhythm games into a specific cultural sphere of recognition (one closely associated with the genre's target demography: family and mature player). This strategy employs routines and practices deeply rooted in 'older' forms of audiovisual representation. Thus, *The Beatles: Rock Band* is the most overt illustration of the remediation of visual representations of popular music codified within the rockumentary genre for the purpose of investing a narrow thematic conceit with a rich sense of history and cultural cachet.

If one asks the question, "Why does it matter if rockumentary films are largely absent from histories of documentary?", my first response is that these films—individually and as a group—make significant contributions to the historical understanding of post-war documentary's development. Perhaps more importantly, an understanding of the corpus examined in this dissertation fosters a deeper insight to the visual style and sound of contemporary documentary and its various social and industrial contexts. Moreover, the basic vocabulary for the visual representation of rock music in the contemporary moving image has it foundations in the strategies and conventions of a genre that is now fifty years

[1] It is interesting to note that in the current age of digital distribution of film and music, *The Beatles: Rock Band* represented the first time digitally remastered versions of The Beatles' original recordings were available to the public. Apple Corps' widely publicized announcement of the release of the remastered Beatles catalogue on CD occurred in conjunction with the release of *The Beatles: Rock Band* on 09 September 2009, yet the albums and tracks were not available digitally through iTunes until November 2010; for over twelve months, the only official digital source for the remastered tracks was a video game interface made in the image of several classic rockumentaries.

old. Important work remains in terms of a fuller examination of gender and race within individual films and the genre as a whole, and the political potential of individual films within rock subcultures and popular culture as a whole was only addressed in a limited way within this dissertation. But the rockumentary category identified here and the historical narrative of its early and on-going development provides the foundation for such projects.

Selected Filmography

Chronological by date; television productions indicated by (*)

Mili, Gjon. 1944. *Jammin' the Blues*. USA.

Reisz, Karel, and Tony Richardson. 1956. *Momma Don't Allow*. UK.

Drew, Robert. 1960. *Primary*. USA.

Stern, Bert. 1960. *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. USA.

Koenig, Wolf, and Roman Kroitor. 1962. *Lonely Boy*. CAN.

Binder, Steve. 1964. *T.A.M.I. Show*. USA.

Maysles, Albert, and David Maysles. 1964. *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A*. USA.

The Beatles at Shea Stadium. 1965. UK/USA: ABC/BBC. *

Brittain, Donald, and Don Owen. 1965. *Ladies and Gentlemen... Mr. Leonard Cohen*. CAN.

Peerce, Larry. 1966. *The Big T.N.T. Show*. USA.

Warhol, Andy. 1966. *The Velvet Underground & Nico (A Symphony of Sound)*. USA.

Whitehead, Peter. 1966. *Charlie Is My Darling*. UK / USA.

Lerner, Murray. 1967. *Festival*. USA.

Pennebaker, D.A. 1967. *Dont Look Back*. USA.

Whitehead, Peter. 1967. *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London*. UK.

Godard, Jean-Luc. 1968. *Sympathy for the Devil*. UK/FRA.

Pennebaker, D.A., and et al. 1968. *Monterey Pop*. USA.

Rafelson, Bob. 1968. *Head*. USA.

Reichman, Thomas. 1968. *Mingus: Charlie Mingus 1968*. USA.

Woodhead, Leslie. 1969. *The Stones in the Park*. UK: Granada Television. *

Lindsay-Hogg, Michael. 1970. *Let It Be*. UK.

Maysles, Albert, David Maysles, and Charlotte Mitchell-Zwerin. 1970. *Gimme Shelter*. USA.

Sanders, Denis. 1970. *Elvis: That's the Way It Is*. USA.

Wadleigh, Michael. 1970. *Woodstock*. USA.

Adidge, Pierre. 1971. *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*. USA.

Bryant, Baird, and Johanna Demetrakas. 1971. *Celebration at Big Sur*. USA.

Pennebaker, D.A. 1971. *Sweet Toronto*. USA.

Pilafian, Peter. 1971. *Jimi Plays Berkeley*. USA.

Sanders, Denis. 1971. *Soul to Soul*. USA/GH.

Abel, Robert, and Pierre Adidge. 1972. *Elvis on Tour*. USA.

Dylan, Bob, and Howard Alk. 1972. *Eat the Document*. USA.

Frank, Robert. 1972. *Cocksucker Blues*. USA.

Maben, Adrian. 1972. *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii*. BE/BRD/FR.

Starr, Ringo. 1972. *Born to Boogie*. UK.

Swimmer, Saul. 1972. *The Concert for Bangladesh*. UK/USA.

Wein, Chuck. 1972. *Rainbow Bridge*. USA.

Binzer, Rollin. 1973. *Ladies and Gentlemen: The Rolling Stones*. USA.

Boyd, Joe, John Head, and Gary Weis. 1973. *Jimi Hendrix*. USA.

Levin, Sid, and Robert Abel. 1973. *Let the Good Times Roll*. USA.

Pennebaker, D.A. 1973. *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. UK.

Stuart, Mel. 1973. *Wattstax*. USA.

Alk, Howard. 1974. *Janis*. CAN.

Drew, Robert. 1974. *On the Road with Duke Ellington*. USA.

Shakey, Bernard. 1974. *Journey Through the Past*. USA.

Yentob, Alan. 1975. *Cracked Actor*. In *Omnibus*. UK: BBC. *

Clifton, Peter, and Joe Massot. 1976. *The Song Remains the Same*. UK/USA.

Poe, Amos. 1976. *The Blank Generation*. USA.

Palmer, Tony. 1976-1980. *All You Need Is Love*. UK/USA: BBC. *

Büld, Wolfgang. 1977. *Punk in London*. GER. *

Garcia, Jeffy, and Leon Gast. 1977. *The Grateful Dead Movie*. USA.

McLaren, Ross. 1977. *Crash 'n' Burn*. USA/CAN: CFMDC.

It Makes You Want to Spit! 1978. IRE: Ulster Television. *

Brunton, Colin. 1978. *The Last Pogo*. CAN.

Dylan, Bob. 1978. *Renaldo and Clara*. USA.

Letts, Don. 1978. *The Punk Rock Movie*. UK.

Scorsese, Martin. 1978. *The Last Waltz*. USA.

Davis, John T. 1979. *Shellshock Rock*. IRE.

Paul, Stefan. 1979. *Reggae Sunsplash*. JAM.

Stein, Jeff. 1979. *The Kids Are Alright*. UK.

Temple, Julien. 1979. *U.K. Subs: Punk Can Take It*. UK.

Zappa, Frank. 1979. *Baby Snakes*. USA.

Davis, John T. 1980. *Self-Conscious Over You*. IRE.

Dionysius, Eric, and Eric Mistler. 1980. *AC/DC: Let There Be Rock*. USA/FRA.

Goldberg, Daniel, and Anthony Potenza. 1980. *No Nukes*. USA.

Temple, Julien. 1980. *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle*. UK.

Abson, Nick. 1981. *If It Ain't Stiff, It Ain't Worth A Fuck*. UK.

Hyndman, Dave. 1981. *The Anarchy Centre Movie*. IRE.

Mann, Ron. 1981. *Imagine the Sound*. CAN.

Spheeris, Penelope. 1981. *Decline of Western Civilization*. USA.

Burbidge, Derek. 1982. *Urgh! A Music War*. UK.

Ashby, Hal. 1983. *Let's Spend the Night Together*. USA.

Tuckett, Phil. 1983. *Journey: Frontiers and Beyond*. USA: NFL Films.

Collins, Michael. 1984. *Sing Blue Silver*. USA/UK.

Demme, Jonathan. 1984. *Stop Making Sense*. USA.

Mulcahy, Russell. 1984. *Arena (An Absurd Notion)*. UK/USA.

Reiner, Rob. 1984. *This Is Spinal Tap*. USA.

Small, Adam, and Peter Stuart. 1984. *Another State of Mind*. USA.

Hicks, Scott, John Hillcoat, Soren Jensen, Richard Lowenstein, and Yasuhiko Yamamoto. 1985. *INXS: The Swing and Other Stories*. AU.

Morgan, W.T. 1985. *X: The Unheard Music*. USA.

Blank, Les. 1986. *Huey Lewis & the News: Be-Fore!* USA.

Heyn, John, and Jeff Krulik. 1986. *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*. USA.

Ishii, Sogo. 1986. *Halber Mensch*. JPN.

Prince. 1987. *Sign O the Times*. USA.

Blackwood, Christian, and Charlotte Mitchell-Zwerin. 1988. *Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser*. USA.

Joanou, Phil. 1988. *U2: Rattle and Hum*. USA.

Spheeris, Penelope. 1988. *Decline of Western Civilization Part II - The Metal Years*. USA.

Alton, Charles. 1989. *Put Blood in the Music*. USA.

Pennebaker, D.A., Chris Hegedus, and David Dawkins. 1989. *Depeche Mode: 101*. UK/USA.

Keshishian, Alek. 1991. *Truth Or Dare*. USA.

Markey, David. 1992. *1991: The Year Punk Broke*. USA.

Robbins, Tim. 1992. *Bob Roberts*. USA.

Feuerzeig, Jeff. 1993. *Half Japanese: The Band That Would Be King*. USA.

Phillips, Todd. 1994. *Hated: GG Allin & the Murder Junkies*. USA.

Dancing In The Street: A Rock & Roll History (As Told By The People Who Made It). 1995. UK: BBC. *

The History of Rock'n'Roll. 1995. USA: Time-Life. *

Lindsay-Hogg, Michael. 1996. *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* (1968). UK.

Pray, Doug. 1996. *Hype!* USA.

Smeaton, Bob. 1996. *The Beatles Anthology*. UK: Granada/ITV/ABC. *

Waxman, Jeff G. 1996. *Freebird... The Movie.* USA.

Kopple, Barbara. 1997. *Wild Man Blues*. USA.

Lerner, Murray. 1997. *Message to Love: The Isle of Wight Festival*. UK.

Spheeris, Penelope. 1998. *Decline of Western Civilization Part III*. USA.

Wenders, Wim. 1998. *Buena Vista Social Club*. GER/USA.

Cohen, Jem. 1999. *Instrument: Ten Years with the Band Fugazi*. USA.

Kowalski, Lech. 1999. *Born to Lose: The Last Rock and Roll Movie*. USA.

Cohen, Jem, and Pete Sillen. 2000. *Benjamin Smoke*. USA.

Letts, Don. 2000. *The Clash: Westway to the World*. UK.

Phillips, Todd. 2000. *Bittersweet Motel*. USA.

Temple, Julien. 2000. *Filth and the Fury*. UK/USA.

Burlingame, Michael. 2001. *Big Brother and the Holding Company With Janis Joplin: Nine Hundred Nights*. USA.

Collins, Tom. 2001. *Teenage Kicks: The Undertones*. IRE/UK.

Mitchell, Justin. 2001. *Songs for Cassavetes*. USA.

Pray, Doug. 2001. *Scratch*. USA.

Wolfinsohn, Ben. 2001. *Friends Forever*. USA.

Bangs, Lance. 2002. *Pavement: Slow Century*. USA.

Garfield, Joey. 2002. *Breath Control: The History of the Human Beat Box*. USA.

Jones, Sam. 2002. *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*. USA.

Justman, Paul. 2002. *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*. USA.

Berlinger, Joe, and Bruce Sinofsky. 2003. *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*. USA.

Fields, Jim, and Michael Gramaglia. 2003. *End of the Century: The Story of the Ramones*. USA.

Freidrichs, Chad. 2003. *Jandek on Corwood*. USA.

Smeaton, Bob. 2003. *Festival Express*. UK/NL.

Spooner, James. 2003. *Afropunk: The "Rock'n'Roll Nigger" Experience*. USA.

Fitzgerald, Kevin. 2004. *Freestyle*. USA.

Fjellestad, Hans. 2004. *Moog*. USA.

Feuerzeig, Jeff. 2005. *The Devil & Daniel Johnston*. USA.

Fukumoto, Bucky. 2005. *Who Put the M in Manchester?* UK.

Irwin, Tim. 2005. *We Jam Econo: The Story of the Minutemen*. USA.

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