

Selling Culture by the Pound

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Introduction

The topic of this project deals with the way in which popular music in the United States and Britain evolved and changed from 1965 to 1980. I chose to focus on music from a transatlantic perspective because I was interested in how and why my favorite musicians and artists were influenced by each other, and how their music helped to shape the popular and youth cultures in their, and each other's, countries¹. This project is primarily about cultural transfer between the young in the United States and Britain and why young British men in the late fifties into the early sixties were inspired by American blues music². This cultural transfer was made possible through the changing technology in radio and television, as more music from abroad could be transmitted into homes through these mediums, along with more accessibility to vinyl records. Increased travel by air and sea between the two countries made it possible for the young British bands to travel to America and see firsthand the environment that created the blues.

My initial questions revolved around what caused young British artists after the Second World War to relate to American blues music that had been written and performed by older African American men. The climate after the war in England shaped the musical taste of the era as topics of financial hardships, political strife, and emotional suppression all lend themselves to the attitudes of working-class Britain at the time³. The way blues was adapted in England, with the help of new technology, resulted in a new kind of youth culture and music scene, seeing rock and roll bands head some of the largest venues for ravenous fans. Blues music provided the basis

¹ Andy Bennet. *Popular Music and Youth Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Press, 2000), p. 34.

² Andrew Kellett. *The British Blues Network*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), p. 3.; Jin-Ah Kim, *Cultural Transfer as a Branch of Research for Music Sociology and Music Anthropology*, (Croatian Musicological Society, 2015), p. 43.

³ Stephen Brooke. *Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain During the 1950s*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 773.

for much of the song-writing formula employed by the emerging pop bands whose careers were being defined by three-minute singles, but whose lyrics spoke of the struggles that went along with fame and memories of a working-class upbringing. Blues music provided a language for outsiders and for those who felt different compared to their peers or familial units. With the formula of blues catering to a burgeoning popular music scene, the catchy hooks and melodies would lead to a level of fame never seen before.

The pop group or “boy band” we know of today took its first hold on youth culture as the groups and their respective members got more attention in the media, television, and even began starring in feature-length films. Because record labels and music promoters could sell their artists not only domestically but also within international markets, it was increasingly possible for these artists, particularly within a transatlantic context, to influence one another and each other’s music and youth cultures⁴. The social and political climates of both countries were explored in the music made in this time frame as well, the records themselves acting as time capsules for the thoughts and views of certain demographics. Although much of my narrative deals with the outsiders of society who produced art to speak on their culture and societal views, it is also the story of the ever-growing music industry who turn the outsiders into some of the most celebrated icons of the twentieth century⁵

Much of the music of the time period and the musicians within it are heavily celebrated, along with the lifestyles associated with the late sixties and early seventies. My goal was to examine these narratives and approach it with a more realistic and somber view, as much of my

⁴ Alan B. Kreuger. *Rockonomics: A Backstage Tour of what the Music Industry Can Teach Us about Economics and Life*, (Currency Publishing, 2019), p. 77.

⁵ Hal Roberts, Yochai Benkler, and Robert Faris. *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), Web, Pp. 315- 317.; Holger Nehring. *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and The Early Cold War 1945-1970*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Web, Pp. 16-17.

favorite art from this time was spawned out of struggle and tragedy. Through this I was able to see the evolution that music groups and artists went through as they traveled beyond their humble beginnings and interacted with new cultures and environments. By the late sixties it was commonplace for British blues bands to travel to America and perform on tours of the country. The context and struggle of the civil rights movement was not something these groups saw firsthand in England and performing for segregated crowds in the southern United States proved shocking for many musicians⁶. This social issue brought about a different consciousness among British musicians regarding the writing and performing of blues music, and questions of racial identity within the realm of music and culture. As radio play was becoming increasingly more important for groups trying to make it in the industry the role of the album changed drastically in the mid to late sixties, as groups began to depart from the radio and vinyl hit singles that were so important in the early sixties. Artists at the time began seeing the horrors of war and government oppression and sought to use the album format as a way of conveying more of their personal philosophy into long form listening instead of the constricting editing and tapering that writing for radio provided. With more full-length albums being made, many with songs that blended into the next, it became more and more important to tour these records as a main source of income. In the mid-seventies certain groups would experience the horrific stress of what would feel like non-stop touring in America and Europe to promote records that were made in similarly stressful and intense social environments. The subject matter of these records started to deal less with the social issues of the late sixties and rather the issue of commercialism and how it relates to music. The music industry in itself had started viewing promising acts as more of a commodity, and the longevity of their careers rested more on how current their style of music and visual presentation

⁶ Andrew Kellett. *The British Blues Network*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), p. 74.

was rather than the merit of their music⁷. For every genre and style of music/musician there could be numerous acts pushed by the industry to release a similar type of music to be sold in large quantities. With more rock bands experimenting with progressive modes of musicianship and writing, this topic of commercialism merged in song lyrics, especially those composed by British bands who railed against the American style of business structure that had made its presence felt in the British music industry.

The time period I chose allows me, on the one hand, to follow the careers of some of the twentieth century's most prominent musicians as they matured while, on the other, providing a particularly dramatic and dynamic social and political background to the music. For each decade I sought to compartmentalize every few years and closely look at the social and political events that were often discussed in the songs of the era. The relationship between the environment in which artists were producing music also lent itself to music about topics that were more on the edge of taboo, especially in relation to the previous decade. The late sixties certainly had many songs and records written about drugs and their effects, but with a more ambiguous tone and lyrical content. The seventies saw the younger generation of up-and-coming musicians explore the truth about drugs, sex, and the realistic toll it was taking on band members personally or the people around them in less fortunate areas of their cities. The punk movement was certainly spawned out of economic worries and the increasing feeling that the government was of no help to their situation. The inverse of progressive, long form, modal music produced by financially successful groups would see the opposition posed by younger inexperienced musicians who sought the three-minute single as a way to efficiently speak to their philosophy and messages in the music they made. The lines between the government and the music scene of this period

⁷ William M. Krasilovsky. Et al. *This Business of Music: The Definitive Guide to the Music Industry*, 10th ed, (New York: Billboard Books, 2007, Print), p. 16.

became increasingly blurry as well, and it became more obvious to the consumers of this music that the people in power were both put off and intimidated by this harsh form of lyrical and musical content. The divisions in music culture were becoming clearer too, as genres like punk were responses to their disdain of the rock music of the time, and almost every other genre could be seen as a way to break through what was seen as undesirable in music production. Every two to three years in the era I was able to see noteworthy feats in musical innovation, along with issues in the artists realities that further developed the identity of the musician in the period they worked in.

This project is not just a collective biography of the leading bands of the era but is primarily concerned with the role that these groups and their music played in the wider youth culture of the era in the United States and Britain. The early sixties saw the first waves of the ravenous type of boy band following, with cities in each country being flooded by crowds of young fans who wanted to see their favorite members up close. The power that certain groups had at this time was growing, and the influence over the consumers of their music was evolving with it. The patterns in the ways youth culture engaged with music and its lifestyle could be seen through every era and genre I discuss, the main focus being on the way the youths' insight into issues of the time were starting to become mainly through the artists they idolized. In the seventies particularly the visual presentation of both punk and disco was becoming synonymous with those who consumed the genres, with style of dress becoming one of the main focuses for the youth that wanted to be part of a group. In the times of great conflict in both America and England the need for the younger generation to identify with something outside of politics or their families' values became more necessary for certain groups⁸. These groups became the

⁸ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, (Penguin Books, October 6, 2005), p. 357.

spokespeople for an entire generation of youth culture, who also inspired the fashion, style, and political views of those who consumed their music.

Chapter 1 deals with the rise of British blues in the early sixties, and how the blues form was adapted into rock n' roll. The issues of race and identity are tackled as white musicians try to find a place in music while adapting a black American art form. With groups beginning to tour overseas, British musicians were able to see first-hand the political and social climate of the United States. Chapter 2 focuses on the era of psychedelic music, and how groups in America began undertaking the folk form to make a departure from the increasingly vapid popular music scene that was still concerned with the single 45" record. The change from psychedelic rock to a more stripped-down traditional sound marked a new split in British and American culture, as the focus on borrowing turned to getting into the roots of their countries. Chapter 3 examines the early seventies, in particular the new genre of progressive rock which was being pioneered by mainly British musicians. The form went deeper into the identity of British musicians, with themes of class structure and British culture being the focal point on these records. The chapter also investigates the damage the late sixties and its lifestyle choices had on some of the most innovative musicians for the time, and how the commercial music industry was proving to suffocate the creativity of certain artists. Chapter 4 looks at punk rock as a cultural shift where politics and music were converging. For British musicians, the authority figures of cops and politicians were providing the fuel for a new rebellious music that was fast in pace and harsh lyrically. The newer culture of celebrity allowed for punks to be on mainstream television and influence bands at home and abroad, with the American punk scene also tackling the issues present in the government and youth culture. The other side of this story focuses on disco as a

subculture that takes on the issues in politics and youth culture but with a drastically different tone compared to punk.

The lines between artists and their fans certainly became skewed during this fifteen-year era, as interactions between the two groups became more frequent and sometimes volatile. Chapter 5 deals with the volatile aspect of this relationship, showing that, as tours and performances drew larger and larger crowds the ability of musical stars to moderate the behavior of their audiences decreased. This also reformed the musician's identity further as the responsibilities they held were put in question. Were touring acts being seen more as disc jockeys, playing the hits, and leaving, or did they have the real power to instigate crowds the way political leaders do? These kinds of questions led to asking how often or not an artist's intent and personal philosophy aligned with those who so closely consumed their work, and where certain ideas were lost in translation. This led further into my research into politics and music, as in the late seventies the issue of censorship and parenting took a hold over the production of music and its contents. From studying all the ways groups challenged previous customs and tried to depart from older traditions, I see how the relationships between music, politics, and youth culture are all deeply intertwined⁹. The reactionary attitudes of some of the most prolific artists opens up the popular music scene into topics of war, protest, and civil unrest.

⁹ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (Random House Publishing, 2013). p. 153.

Chapter I

The fall of 1966 would see an unknown Jimi Hendrix enter London as an aspiring blues guitarist. At this point the blues scene in England had been dominated by the likes of the band Cream, in particular their virtuoso guitarist Eric Clapton. The meeting of Hendrix and Clapton would prove to be monumental in the world of blues and popular culture for many reasons. This collision would change the way music, style, and race were talked about and portrayed in the age of heavy blues music in the late sixties. At this point in time Hendrix was almost unknown in the music scene, only being a backing musician for the likes of the Isley Brothers and Little Richards.¹⁰In 1966 Chas Chandler, recently departed as the bass player in The Animals, had retired as a performer and set his sights on managing promising acts in the music business. Then living in New York City Hendrix could be seen playing at clubs in the East Village and other hip venues in Manhattan. Chandler saw him perform while finishing an American tour with The Animals and quickly decided to become his mentor, manager, and promoter.¹¹Chandler already being privy to the British blues scene made it possible for Hendrix to develop an image in England as an act that would be unprecedented for his courageous and daring performances. Hendrix had been held back as it were when performing with the former touring acts he was associated with, not being allowed to play with his teeth and use the whammy bar on his Stratocaster to create a bellowing sound. Once in England Chandler made a point to showcase Hendrix, bringing him to a club in London where Cream was playing. Hendrix had the rare opportunity to go up on stage with Cream and play, a pivotal experience for him considering he

¹⁰ *Seven Ages of Rock: Episode 1 The Birth of Rock*. BBC, 2007.

¹¹ *Seven Ages of Rock*.

was a fan of Clapton's guitar playing. It was clear Hendrix was playing blues music in a way that had not been heard, besides the showy tricks he was known for employing. The fluidity and effortless prowess demonstrated by Hendrix resulted in Clapton leaving the stage, taking a cigarette break and saying something along the lines of, "Is he really that good."¹²

Even with Clapton feeling a bit slighted by the skills of Hendrix at his own show the two quickly became friends, sharing ideas about music and art in relation to their lives and how they would continue to evolve as blues artists. A recorded conversation between the two would give insight into Hendrix's reverence for Clapton, "It's so lovely now. I kissed Eric Clapton, I kissed him right on the lips. I kissed the fairest soul-brother in England"¹³. Clapton had been a sort of true champion of blues music in the sense that he was directly influenced by the likes of B.B King, Albert King, and Big Bill Broonzy. Hendrix, however equally as influenced by the names mentioned, quickly went off the beaten path of the way blues music was played and sung on the guitar¹⁴. Much of this could be attributed to the newly invented guitar technology which was at Hendrix's disposal at the time of his career as a recording and performing artist. Pieces of gear like the Fuzz Face made by Jim Dunlop and the Wah-Wah pedal patented by Vox made it possible for Hendrix to explore a new tonal variety with the electric guitar. This, paired with a high-volume, high-wattage Marshall amplifier, would allow Hendrix to achieve a shrieking feedback from his guitar's pickups and change the pitch with a whammy bar. Clapton, being more traditional on the instrument at this point, had already been playing in what would at this point be considered a formal style of blues playing¹⁵. Hendrix's philosophy was far beyond what

¹² *Seven Ages of Rock*

¹³ Lilli Fini Zanuck. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*. Passion Pictures, 2017.

¹⁴ Ian S. Port. *The Birth of Loud: Leo Fender, Les Paul, and the Guitar-Pioneering Rivalry that Shaped Rock n' Roll*. Scribner Publishing, 2019, page 259.

¹⁵ Kellett, page 117.

English bluesmen had given thought to and gave more insight into how Hendrix was able to produce the sounds he did. From the same recorded conversation between him and Clapton he states, “You see, music and life itself go together so closely...it’s sort of like a parallel that turns it’s own. Music is nothing but imagination sent out from somebody’s soul, man... sent out from somebody’s real heart that they can only express through notes”¹⁶. The recording ends with Clapton stating the only thing he could give to Jimi was time in order for him to refine his style even more.

The prominence of Hendrix seemingly being accepted into what had become a white man's game in England raises the issue of race regarding blues music at this time. With Hendrix in particular there seems to be a dichotomy as to his influence in both white and black communities. Between him and Clapton there is much to study in terms of how the two shared similar influences, dress-style, and language and how this could be seen as appropriation by today’s standards on both sides. Clapton’s meeting of Hendrix certainly entertained the question of what makes a true blues artist in both sound and look. Although Hendrix was black he quickly adopted the psychedelic dress of his British peers and performed in a way that was unlike other acts at the time. Clapton too was directly influenced by the permed hairstyles of Hendrix and Bob Dylan, pointing to a period of a sort of identity crisis for Clapton during the Cream years as a performing artist. There’s more speculation as to whether Hendrix sought to transcend barriers of race through his music and overall appearance or whether he meant to champion blues music the same way Clapton had been¹⁷. An interesting point made by Ulrich Adelt in his book on the matter reads, “Quite a few accounts see him [Hendrix] as transcending race but at the same time reifying racial stereotypes to the point of minstrelsy and thereby displaying the complex racial

¹⁶ Zanuck. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

¹⁷ Kellett, 91.

attitudes of the time” (68). On the flip side to this black blues artist Muddy Waters expressed both his adoration and skepticism of white British men playing that type of music:

I think the white kids really love that beautiful sound with that deep tone. But then again them white kids singing the blues and what not, they can play all the blues- they can play more blues than I can ever dream of playing but you know they’ll never be able to vocal like me, you know that. I’m singing out in that church I got that big tone, I guess that’s why white kids you know come and see me so often.¹⁸

Waters would end this interview by stating that white kids could certainly learn to play and appreciate blues music, but in terms of understanding the hardship of black Americans it would not be achievable.

This type of view also opens the discussion to how blues music touched a white audience, and why they were able to relate to it. Eric Clapton in particular has spoken on this for many years in various interviews and personal statements. Growing up as an only child raised by his grandparents, Clapton spent much of his youth listening to the radio and hearing the likes of Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf, not being aware of the fact that they were African American. From this he was able to begin his journey on the guitar, copying what he heard from blues artists for hours on end. In a 1989 interview Clapton says:

But as I grew more aware of what the differences were I had to just accept that I was using that identification as a way of strengthening my music. All of that aside I still feel that there is something akin - because why else would I have responded to the blues and R&B when I was so young and other music didn’t reach me that way, there must’ve been some shared experience there even if it was purely an emotional one and not political.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Zanuck. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

¹⁹ INA Archive, French National Institute of Audiovisual.

Other artists of the same generation and class structure as Clapton would speak on their bond with blues music from such a young age as well. Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones was also deeply taken by blues music he heard through both the radio and through his early record buying experiences in the 50s. Richards states, “When I first heard *The Best of Muddy Waters*, it was the most powerful music I’d ever heard. The most expressive. And I had listened to Mozart and, you know, I had listened to Beethoven. This is on a par with the best music in the world.”²⁰ The very early Rolling Stones performances would see more uptempo renditions of Muddy Waters songs, mostly to appeal to younger audiences but also with the fact in mind that they were not capable of performing the material the same way as Waters. By virtue of this Richards comments on how this altered the music scene in both England and the United States, “We’ve never wanted to make pop music. Our puritanical mission was to turn other people on to the blues. At the same time, we realized that we turned American back on to its own music, which was, like, far beyond the agenda”²¹.

Although the group’s members did not grow up in the American south they would take to the road at a young age, some without the blessing of their parents, and tour both England and all of America. The tour took place in 1964 and the United States was still battling the segregation that dominated the American south. The band was not completely aware of the situation in the Southern states and Richards recounts their first experiences with the issue, “You’d pull in to a joint, a whole bus of us, black and white, all mixed...Anyway, you’d pull over and dying for a pee. So I’d join in with the brothers, and then they’d laugh at me and point above the door, and it said ‘Colored Only’”²². Richards also notes how the band bonded with black people at the time

²⁰ Morgan Neville. *Keith Richards: Under the Influence*. Tremolo Productions, 2015.

²¹ Morgan Neville. *Keith Richards: Under the Influence*.

²² Morgan Neville. *Keith Richards: Under the Influence*.

as they were outsiders as well and didn't give African Americans a hard time as was more than common place in the early sixties in the south.

All these aforementioned experiences with blues music and how it relates to both British and American culture offer more insight into how cultural transfer played a huge role in developing the sound of popular music in the mid-sixties. For a black musician in England, like Hendrix, the question of identity came out of trying to outdo his white peers as they had begun to adapt a black American art form. For the British musicians, travelling to America as still young men proved effective in their understanding of how a segregated nation produced music that spoke on torment and injustice.

Chapter II

In America during the mid-to-late 1960s the pop culture and music scene had been changing just as Britain had undergone a metamorphosis due to the influx of blues in popular music. As the changing sound in music in Britain was thriving off of loud and rambunctious renditions of blues standards and changes, popular folk act Bob Dylan was experiencing a newfound backlash against his use of electric guitars and amplifiers to play both folk and rock music. Starting a tour in the summer of 1965 Dylan had the idea of changing up his sound by using electric guitars in conjunction with his acoustic folk set. Later being formed under the name The Band, Dylan employed the musicianship of Robbie Robertson, Garth Hudson, Richard

Manuel and Rick Danko to back him as his band during his 1966 world tour. Dylan would typically begin a set by playing his acoustic guitar without the band and then transition into an electric set which was quickly dismissed by those who came to hear solely acoustic folk music. Dylan would be booed at nearly every concert by those who were his fans when he started as a folk artist. By the summer of 1966, a rundown Dylan returned to his then home in Woodstock, New York with the idea of touring being a sore spot for him. Later that summer Dylan would sustain injuries in a motorcycle accident which enabled him to stop touring and leave the “rat race” as he describes it. Once recovering Dylan and the members of his live band would convene in Woodstock at a house later made famous by The Band’s first record, simply called ‘Big Pink’. The basement of the house would be used to record a slew of rough demo tapes of Dylan’s new songs and covers, and where the Band would record their first record *Music from Big Pink*.

Up to this point the way music was being recorded was changing constantly and becoming more complicated after records like *Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* featured tape manipulation and over dubbing to create psychedelic music. What Dylan and The Band were beginning to record was much more based in roots folk and country music that would later be categorized as Americana. What separates this moment in music history is the fact that they were not reacting to anything in particular, in regard to their environment or the culture around them, but simply trying to innovate the music that was closest to them.²³ This paired with the isolation of living in upstate New York, at a time when many contemporaries were situated in either New York City or Los Angeles, corresponded with music that sounded grounded in its sonic qualities and essence. With the addition of Levon Helm to The Band’s members, both the drums and mandolin would be played in a traditional sense lending itself more to the roots-based

²³ Kellett, 159.

music being made by the group. Of course, one of the most noteworthy aspects of The Band would be their name which was given to them by those around them when touring with Dylan, as everyone referred to them simply as ‘the band’. At the time many groups both in England and America began taking on both psychedelic clothing and names. Groups like Pink Floyd, Iron Butterfly, Soft Machine, The Velvet Underground, and The Doors all featured names which were hip in some way to the psychedelic nature of popular music of the time. The Band’s simple but direct name would lend a hand in major recording and performing artists reassessing their own music and what music should sound like in the future. Richard Manuel, the group’s piano player and vocalist, recounts how the group came to the conclusion to call themselves The Band, “And it was right in the middle of that whole psychedelia, ‘Chocolate Subway’, ‘Marshmallow Overcoat’, those kinds of names, you know. And we started out with The Crackers, we tried to call ourselves The Hawkies. And everyone kind of backed off from that, it was too straight. So we decided just to call ourselves The Band!”²⁴

Psychedelic music up to 1968 had been most popular but had started to become oversaturated and commercialized in a way that would lead to major groups like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Cream reevaluating their own image and sound. In an interview from the mid-1970s Clapton would open up about his views on the way the group sounded, “That Cream thing was all, like, just aggressive music” (*Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*). After hearing The Band’s first record Clapton would begin to seriously contemplate what kind of music he wanted to play, even in the sphere of blues music. The stripped down and tempered nature of The Band’s music would lead to Clapton fully deciding to leave Cream and pursue other musical avenues, as the group was already planning to disband in 1968. For only the year of 1969

²⁴ Martin Scorsese. *The Last Waltz*. FM Productions, 1978.

Clapton would form and perform with his new group Blind Faith, featuring singer and keyboardist Steve Winwood, bassist Ric Grech, and fellow Cream drummer Ginger Baker. The main motivation for yet another musical avenue was to allow Clapton to write and perform music that was unlike the heavy rock style of Cream. Blues music was still his driving passion, but American folk and R&B would take on the main inspiration for songs like 'Can't Find My Way Home' and 'Presence of the Lord', whose lyrics were intended for the wife of then Beatle George Harrison. The newfound freedom of musical exploration would see Clapton pouring his soul into writing lyrics which would convey the feelings of lament and regret.

The Beatles too would be searching for a new musical avenue to travel down towards the end of 1967. The instant and notorious success of *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* would establish The Beatles as the top pioneers of British music and music in general. It not only proved that one record could inspire so many artists at the time, but what it meant for a band to follow up a large success. Already being a year removed from touring around the world the group was still looking for a retreat from the bustling city of London, and the still-growing fame they were becoming too familiar with. George Harrison recounts his last experience taking psychedelic drugs and the way the psychedelic scene looked to him towards the end of that era:

I went to Haight-Ashbury, expecting it to be this brilliant place. I thought it was gonna be all these groovy kinda gypsy kinda people with little shops making works of art and paintings and carvings. But instead it turned out to be just a lot of bums. And many of them, they were just very young kids who'd come from all over America and dropped

acid and gone to this mecca of LSD. We'd walk down the street and I was like, being treated, like, the messiah or something.²⁵

This experience for Harrison proved to change his outlook on the idea of psychedelic popular culture and how it was beginning to damage the zeitgeist of young people trying to experiment with sex and drugs in a profound way. After that summer of 1967 it was clear the group needed a new path for their well-being as musicians and individuals. Their innate interest in India and the classical music of the country would lead them to go on a trip to practice transcendental meditation, which they had begun studying under the Indian spiritual entrepreneur known as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The trip would prove to be effective as the group began interacting with one another and exchanging musical ideas in a productive way²⁶. The weight of following up *Pepper's* would result in the band taking a left turn and trying to produce music which was far less complicated and stripped down to create a more traditional sounding batch of tracks. Hammering home this point even more was the cover of the record which would be dubbed *The White Album* as it featured only the group's name in the bottom right corner behind an all-white background. As the group was at the helm of the pop music ship it was only fitting that other groups would be heavily influenced by the group's decision to make "real" music again and try to get over the fad that was psychedelia and the music it produced. This period for The Beatles also established what it meant to be a band and to collaborate with fellow members, an idea that would prove to be important for many up-and-coming British bands.

Another stark reality that crept into the popular music of the late sixties was the Vietnam war, which would create some of the most powerful protest songs and critiques of the horrible

²⁵ Martin Scorsese. *George Harrison: Living in the Material World*. Grove Street Productions, 2011.

²⁶ Tom O'Dell. *How the Beatles Changed the World*. VisionFilms, 2017.

conflict. Just as blues music spoke of the struggles of black Americans, suddenly young people of the sixties saw conflict at home and abroad daily. Acts that had previously made songs about peace and love sought to expose the violence so regularly experienced. Jimi Hendrix would use his fame and guitar playing prowess to create a focus on gun violence and war in both America and overseas. Most notably his 1969 Woodstock festival performance would see Hendrix alter the tone of the American national anthem, using his guitar to emulate the sounds of sirens and falling bombs. Inevitably Americans would find cause to criticize the performance as it muddied the patriotic nature of the song, but Hendrix would respond on the Dick Cavett Show by saying, “That’s not unorthodox, no no no, I thought it was beautiful... but there you go”²⁷. The next year Hendrix would also begin performing an improvisational jam entitled “Machine Gun” where again he would utilize the high volume of his guitar to create a heavy chugging gun sound. From his *Live at Filmore East, 1970* album Hendrix would open the song by dedicating it to those fighting both at home in the protests in America and the soldiers who were fighting in Vietnam.²⁸

Just as the Vietnam war was front and center on the radio and television, other events would make the news on a domestic level in America that would greatly influence the newer ‘Americana’ groups. On May 4, 1970 four students were shot and killed at Kent State University in Ohio during a protest against the involvement of America in Vietnam and Cambodia. When the news of the massacre hit the news media the members of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young were so taken aback by the violence that a song was written almost immediately by Neil Young personally. The song would be recorded by the group immediately in only a handful of takes and

²⁷ The Dick Cavett Show. “Jimi Hendrix on Performing The National Anthem at Woodstock”. *Youtube*, uploaded by The Dick Cavett Show April 22, 2019.

²⁸ Jimi Hendrix. *Band of Gypsies (50th Anniversary Edition/Live at the Filmore East, 1970)*. Capitol Records, UMG, 2020.

released within two weeks of the event. David Crosby of the group recounts how Young wrote the song, “He started writing the song and when it was done I called Nash I think and said ‘get the studio, get any studio, get it now...we’re on our way’”. And we cut it and it was out in a week”²⁹. The immediacy and power behind the song proved to educate the youth of America on the atrocities being committed both at home and overseas. It also marked a definite end to the colorful ‘flower power’ movement that had been so popular in the United States in the late sixties; the tides had changed drastically, and music was changing with it.

The music world itself was beginning to feel the hangover of psychedelic culture and the hippy fog that swept over England and the United States. The use of mind-altering and mood-altering drugs like LSD, mushrooms, Mescaline, and others that were being used in an almost careless manner would seize hold on some of the brightest stars of the time. Two examples would be that of Brian Wilson from the American pop group The Beach Boys and the increasingly influential Syd Barrett of the then new British psych-rock band Pink Floyd. By 1968 both felt the life-long effects of taking psychedelic drugs and the damage it can do to the mind and body. Wilson would see LSD and mental health issues making it impossible for him to perform in the mid to late sixties and would stay in California only writing and arranging the bands albums starting with *Pet Sounds* in 1966, now considered one of the greatest albums ever made. Although the success of the records made during this period for Wilson were considered great, it would take years for him to recover in a way that would allow him to perform the songs he wrote. Barrett on the other hand would not see the same recovery, and his absence from the band would haunt Pink Floyd for decades.

²⁹ *VH1 Legends: Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young*. Gay Rosenthal Productions, 2000.

By 1967 the emerging Pink Floyd were seeing success in England as a psychedelic rock band, helmed by their erratic leader, Syd Barrett. The members of the band met in their days in art college in the early sixties and would continue into various art schools while performing in the more underground clubs that hosted experimental rock. They began to achieve notoriety as Barrett's songs allowed for long evolving jams, and incorporating stage lights that achieved the look of colorful plasma. In the spring of 1967 Floyd would sign with EMI records and would begin recording their first album *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* in Abbey Road studio at the same time The Beatles were recording *Sergeant Pepper's*. The record incorporated all of Barrett's ideas that had lyrics coming from fairytales and fables, and instrumentals being created from tape loops and distorted guitars. The record would prove to be a success and the band would embark on playing more shows, some televised for various British music programs. As Barrett was taking more drugs and experiencing a higher level of fame his attitude towards the music industry quickly turned sour. Roger Waters of the group remembers Barrett's fit before going on *Top of the Pops*:

The second week that we went in Syd was very disgruntled and he says, "Why should I have to do this? John Lennon doesn't have to do this." And I was looking at him going, 'The fuck are you talking about? This is it, this is what we've worked all these years to achieve is this, this is the sort of pinnacle of success and you don't want to do it? You're mad!' Well of course he was mad, but I mean that wasn't the point, it was just, um, it was a really clear indication – I mean I was shocked.³⁰

Barrett's behavior was already erratic but after he started getting more and more success and being recognized it was clear he was not handling it well. The members would later reveal

³⁰ Chris Rodley. *The Pink Floyd Story: Which One is Pink?* BBC, 2007.

that he was most likely prone to schizophrenia and the drugs only worked to compound his mental illness. After a long week of taking LSD constantly Barrett would never be the same again, the band being tipped off by his dull stare and the lack of awareness. They would attempt to keep Barrett around as a member bringing him to performances and possibly thinking he would do what Brian Wilson was doing with The Beach Boys, only writing for the group and being taken away from the spotlight. After the group decided to recruit childhood friend and guitarist David Gilmour it became clear that Syd's condition was far beyond anything they were prepared to handle. Performing as a five-piece group for a limited amount of time and Gilmour recounts that time by saying:

We did I think five gigs with both Syd and I in the band together. Syd sort of, like, he seemed to cheer up a little bit when I was there, um, I guess maybe it took some pressure off him and I sort of learned up the parts like the records and played them and sometimes Syd sang a bit and sometimes he didn't. But it was obviously not going to be – it became very obvious that it wasn't going to continue for very long like that.³¹

After the fifth gig with both Gilmour and Barrett the group simply decided to stop picking up Barrett for performances and rehearsals, as his presence in the band was beginning to hold them back from their ambitions. Barrett would become the main muse for the band as the following records throughout the 1970s would feature songs and themes about the ex-members mental health and whereabouts.

The culture in the music scene in both the United States and Britain was beginning to be marked by heavy drug use of psychedelics and other mind-altering substances. It was both a catalyst in the innovation of newer popular music for the time, but also a massive hinderance as

³¹ *Pink Floyd: The Story*. BBC, 1994.

those who would have gone on to bigger projects were snuffed out by the drugs that offered a sense of creativity and freedom.

Chapter III

The late sixties into the early seventies would see the effect of the newfound “Americana” sound seep into the influence of British music as it progressed into the aptly named genre ‘progressive rock’. The newer bands of the time would see records come out in 1969 like Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Yes, and King Crimson as a brief example. Just as the American bands sought to achieve a more natural sound away from the psychedelic, these British bands wanted to achieve a similar sound in the realm of British music and lore. Much of this would be contributed to the setting of the writing and recording process, in which groups moved away from London and dispersed into the English countryside living and making music together under the same roof away from the chaos of the city.³²

One of 1969’s biggest and most influential records was without a doubt the first Led Zeppelin record entitled simply, *Led Zeppelin*. The band consisting of vocalist Robert Plant, guitarist Jimmy Page, bassist and keyboardist John Paul Jones, and drummer John Bonham

³² Kellett, 155.

quickly became known as the one of the most hard hitting and raunchy bands of their time. *Led Zeppelin* as a record showcased the band members amazing virtuosity while also pointing to the delicate influence of American and British folk with songs like ‘Black Mountain Side’ and a cover of a Joan Baez song “Babe I’m Gonna Leave You”. Their second record, *Led Zeppelin II*, would cover a similar range as well. By 1970 the group was already one of the biggest after touring all over England and America and quickly changing the sound of British, blues-based rock bands. Like any band after extensive touring for over a year the group was ready for a break and were also eager to write new songs. Page and Plant would take their vacation in the Welsh countryside at a cottage called ‘Bron-Yr-Aur’ where a few songs for *Led Zeppelin III* were written, focusing more on British and Irish folk tunings and melodies as inspiration for songwriting. In the spring of 1970, it was time for the group to record and again they chose a more secluded and relaxing experience to do so³³. A house by the name of Headley Grange in Hampshire would be used to live and work in to record songs for *Led Zeppelin III* and their subsequent unnamed but highly referred to *Led Zeppelin IV* (1971) album. As Jimmy Page had previously worked as a studio musician his knowledge of production and sound engineering would prove vital in creating the atmosphere that is so rich on these two records. The house itself featured a tall staircase that left a lot of open-air acoustics in the building, and Page recounts how Bonham’s drums were set up in the hallway, “And when Bonzo came out he started playing it and it was this huge expense. You’re getting the drums reflecting off of the walls, ya know, this wonderful ambience to the drums *begins clapping* yeah you can hear the reflective surfaces, it’s really live and ambient”³⁴. This large and expansive drum sound is most notable on the track “When the Levee Breaks” in which the opening drum tracks are soaked in reverb from the

³³ Kellett, 158.

³⁴ Davis Guggenheim. *It Might Get Loud*. Thomas Tull Productions, 2009.

openness of the staircase. Getting away from the city and using the English countryside for inspiration, Zeppelin were able to further their creative efforts and establish their identity as more than a virtuosic rock band.

The music itself, especially on the fourth album, was beginning to get more complicated and more arranged compared to their previous works and the works of other rock bands.

‘Stairway to Heaven’ would become one of the groups more famous and infamous tracks as it became extremely popular despite its unorthodox makeup. It featured a seven-minute run time and went against more conventional techniques as it sped up in tempo and did not include drums until half-way through the song. Page explains the way he did this by saying, “One of the cardinal rules when I was a studio musician was that you didn’t speed up. And I was keen to do something which had an acceleration to it, not only from the musical point of view but from the lyricist so that the whole thing would start to gain a momentum as it went through, so it wasn’t just a monotone piece”³⁵. The ambition and musicianship were not particularly well received by the mainstream music journalists of the time, the fourth Led Zeppelin record getting a very short review in ‘Rolling Stone’ and not being hailed as a great record as it later would be after the band’s retirement. Zeppelin would continue to stretch themselves as a band and musicians throughout the seventies, constantly reinventing themselves record to record.

As Zeppelin was becoming one of the biggest and most commercial performing acts, newer bands like Genesis would not see the same stages as Zeppelin but would develop their own tight following of their music. A few years younger than the members of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and others of that period the members of Genesis would be a part of a generation inspired by those groups without being in the music industry yet. Their first record was a

³⁵ BBC News. *Jimmy Page: How Stairway to Heaven was written* – BBC News. Youtube, uploaded by BBC news Oct 10, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDo4CA13LbY&ab_channel=BBCNews.

commercial failure, entitled *From Genesis to Revelation*, and was recorded while the group's members of Tony Banks, Mike Rutherford, Peter Gabriel, and then guitarist Anthony Philips were still at Charterhouse School in Surrey. Originally trying to be a British folk group the songs sounded very generic and lacked any kind of authentic sound. To record their third record *Nursery Cryme* they employed drummer Phil Collins and guitarist Steve Hackett which would prove most effective in achieving the progressive rock sound they desired. The lyrics too proved to be a departure from simple love songs of previous bands works and featured more literature savvy lyrics as the group had had a few years of higher schooling before going on the road. This shift from British folk into progressive rock marked a turn in British music identity, as the serious level of musicianship for these groups took on a more important role. The more eclectic styles of music and lyric writing, along with satirical British accents to mock British high society, would see reflections on growing out of a Dickensian sensibility that some artists grew up around.

The band certainly was not topping the UK or US charts for any length of time but the performances they put on were starting to get noticed more and more as lead singer Peter Gabriel experimented with various dresses and costumes for their shows. His most notable costumes and styles consisted of wearing a giant flower around his face, wearing bat wings on the back of his head, and painting his face all white and shaving only one patch of his head at the top of his hairline. Their fourth record entitled *Foxtrot* depicted a woman's body with the head of a fox, an image that would be recreated through costume and worn by Gabriel as well. Most notable about the album was that the entire second side of the record consisted of one song called 'Supper's Ready', a 22-minute epic which lent itself to Gabriel changing costumes a handful of times when they would play it live. Gabriel explains how the rest of the band was resistant to his dressing up,

“There was a ton of arguments about it, and I thought fuck it I’m just gonna do it. Because we were always doing this band democracy stuff and actually it wasn’t a real democracy because some people were more powerful than others and the more bloody minded of us tended to get their way more often, as it is in every band the world over”³⁶. Although the performing spectacles brought on by Gabriel was not to the liking of the group, they realized it also brought them more attention on magazines and music reviews, thus drawing more crowds to their live shows.

The following studio album *Selling England By The Pound* (1973) would become their most accessible up until that point and feature a top 30 hit. The subject matter is most important as it is engaged with the themes of reflecting on commercialism and the working class of England. The record incorporates a true blend of British folk and progressive rock music to create a modern sounding ballad-type record. The opening track entitled “Dancing with the Moonlit Knight” begins by Gabriel singing acapella, “Can you tell me where my country lies?” referring to the country of England, referring both to where it sat on political and commercial issues as well as where it stretched the truth. The lyrical content and arrangement of the music resembles a more baroque sounding atmosphere before exploding into distorted organ and guitar lines. Gabriel explains his process writing the opening track, “I was trying to get a folk reference and if you like, try to protect and preserve some of the ‘Englishness’. So, it was in the opening part particularly trying to capture something that had more references to Henry VIII than it did to American song music, and then with the lyric it was in a sense about the commercialization of English culture”³⁷. The realizations of commercial and luxury culture were the main highlight

³⁶ *Foxtrot Reissues Interviews, 2007. Youtube*, uploaded by Ethan Callender Dec 22, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DinP93nW8Q&ab_channel=EthanCallender.

³⁷ *Selling England By The Pound Reissue Interviews, 2007. Youtube*, uploaded by Ethan Callender Dec 22, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPZ2MrXhEpk&ab_channel=EthanCallender.

until the very end of the record where there are lines that again display a sort of double meaning and criticism. The record ends on a song only 2 minutes in length entitled “Aisle of Plenty” which includes the line, “Thankful for her fine fair discount, Tess cooperates” the double meaning in the last two words which could be read as Tesco, a British merchandise and grocery retailer. The very end of the song features overlaid spoken word by Gabriel with him repeating lines of food and prices like, “English ribs of beef cut down to 47 pence a pound” and “Anchor butter down to 11p for a half” again focusing on the commercial and retail nature that the country was heading towards both in England and the United States.

The same year of 1973 would see Pink Floyd still trying to find their own sound in the wake of the absence of Syd Barrett. The early seventies would produce albums like *Atom Heart Mother*, *Ummagumma*, and *Meddle* that experimented with spacey chord progressions and orchestral arrangements as a way to create epic sounding tracks. The overall commercial success was fairly limited as it pertained to these records and in 1972 when the group came off of a long tour it came time to work on their most coherent and noteworthy album *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. The overall theme of the record revolves around life, death, and all that occurs in the time between. The first two tracks center around the pressures of touring and the constant state of movement one is on during a tour, hence the track “On The Run” which utilizes a sequencer to create a looped set of notes that were modified with various synthesizers. Roger Waters of the band explains his thoughts on the track, “It’s about travel and about fear of death through flying really, which I suffered from quite a lot early on in our career. I think most people who fly as much as we did go through cycles where you get scared of it and then you reconcile yourself”³⁸. The album also points to the inherent quality of British music and its musicians with the line,

³⁸ Matthew Longfellow. *Pink Floyd: The Making of The Dark Side of the Moon*. Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2003.

“Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way” referring to their lack of sharing emotions on an interpersonal level, and certainly not wanting to show any sort of weakness as they moved up the ladder. The track “Money” would focus on the commercialization of everything around them, just as *Selling England* had. As the group was becoming increasingly more successful they became more aware of the way the music industry worked and the way it viewed musicians in terms of people turning a profit for a larger entity. This would be explored further on the band’s next record *Wish You Were Here* which would be released in 1975.

Wish You Were Here is a complete split between the delusion of record executives, who were more concerned with getting a profitable final product, and of the lack of Syd Barrett in their lives. After the immediate success of *Dark Side* the band entered into the era of arena rock, playing to larger and larger audiences and turning more of a profit as a result. The track ‘Have a Cigar’ would dive into the bands perception of record executives at the time with lyrics reading, “The band is just fantastic, that is really what I think, Oh, by the way, which one’s Pink?” referring of course to the band’s name and the way record executives were not looking to make relationships with bands but only trying to create large amounts of profit with the bands under their label. The sessions would also prove to be emotional and enlightening as David Gilmour recounts the day an unrecognizable Syd Barrett wandered into the studio they were working in, “And surprisingly no one’s saying, ‘who’s that person, what’s he doing wandering around all our gear in the studio?’ And then him coming into the control room and standing around and how remarkable, how long it was before anyone actually woke up”³⁹. After the group realized that the stranger was indeed their old friend and band member Syd Barrett, they collectively became emotional. Barrett looked unrecognizable compared to his cheery and slender appearance in the

³⁹ John Edington. *Pink Floyd: The Story of Wish You Were Here*. Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2011.

mid to late sixties as he had gained a significant amount of weight and had shaved off his hair and eyebrows. Barrett was a direct product of the negative effects of the drug culture of the late sixties, and his disturbing appearance would further influence the band towards the end of the decade.

As these more progressive rock bands were taking their influence from other places Eric Clapton would continue to solely base his music and lyrical content off of the traditional blues form. Betrayal and heartbreak played a major role in his life from a young age and this came to a head in 1970 when he fell madly in love with George Harrison's wife Pattie Boyd. This compounded with his innate feel for blues music would produce an album of love and longing entitled *Layla: And Other Assorted Love Songs* with nearly every song being made about his love for Boyd. Clapton and Harrison had become friends since the earlier days of The Beatles and The Yardbirds in which the two musicians developed a bond. In early 1970 Harrison was removed from The Beatles and began work on recording his first solo album titled *All Things Must Pass* and employed Clapton and a plethora of other musicians to play on it as well. The musicians that worked on that album would also be employed by Clapton to work on his second album as a solo artist since being removed from both Cream and Blind Faith. Pianist and organist Bobby Whitlock, drummer Jim Gordon, bassist Carl Radle, and later the slide guitar virtuoso Duane Allman of *The Allman Brothers* would assist Clapton in creating a modern blues album as it pertained to his experience. In the summer of 1970 Clapton traveled to Miami, Florida to record with American studio engineer Tom Dowd, who had worked on The Allman Brothers' first two records. The early recording process of the record was halted by a lack of energy and preparedness with the new material.⁴⁰ Clapton explains the process of creating the record early

⁴⁰ Lilli Fini Zanuck. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

on saying, “About two weeks into the sessions we hit a brick wall. We got stuck, rather badly stuck. I had written part of a song in England, for Pattie. It had this sort of story overlaid on it about a little Persian book, *Laila and Majnun*. And I couldn’t finish it. ‘What will you do when you get lonely?’.

To take a step away from the recording and writing process Dowd and Clapton ventured to a nearby Allman Brothers concert, where Clapton would become inspired heavily by seeing Duane Allman play electric slide guitar. Dowd having a connection with Allman encouraged him to play on the record and discuss ideas with Clapton. Allman remembers the encounter by saying, “So I shot down there, man, and Eric says ‘Bring your amp in, hook your stuff up man, and we’ll play, we’ll make us an album’, and I said okay man if that’s what you want, then that’s what we’ll do. And then we did it”⁴¹. After Allman’s entrance into the band and recording process there was a surge of productivity and his guitar playing greatly influenced the sound of the record, slide guitar being used to emulate wailing and crying. The band understood Clapton’s situation and heartache and the recordings lend themselves to this emotion. Once returning to England Clapton would play the album for Boyd, who immediately recognized the songs being about her. Clapton’s bold attempts at winning her over were snuffed out and he explains the heartbreak by saying, “It didn’t work. It was all for nothing. It was like a... rejection”⁴². Compounded by this was the sudden and tragic death of Jimi Hendrix, whose song ‘Little Wing’ Clapton had covered and included on his album. This tragedy of losing both his friend and love interest proved to be crippling as he decided to exit the music industry for about three years to

⁴¹ Zanuck, Lili Fini. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

⁴² Zanuck, Lili Fini. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

live in seclusion and indulge in heroin. In an interview from November of 1970 interviewer Howard Smith asked Clapton about his desire to leave and he responded by saying:

I don't think I could ever stop playing, I think I could vanish at any time – I could just stop making appearances at any time. I think I could, ya know, financially if I was secure enough to be able to not have to go on the road which I'm not at the moment – ya know I need to go out to make money, to exist. If I didn't need to do that, as long as I had someone around me to play with, ya know, I'd probably just stay at home all the time.⁴³

Another point of controversy was the fact the album was recorded under the artist title of Derek and the Dominoes, an attempt at trying to find a new identity away from the spotlight he had endured. This proved to make it more difficult for the record to sell, as most people were not aware of the change in name. His depression was becoming evident on a surface level at this point, and he would even end an interview with a British journalist by stating, “I don't like life, and I'm not going to live very long”⁴⁴. The tragedy of both his personal life and his ambitions to move away from the mainstream music scene point to how the industry was becoming a vacuum for certain artists in which they could not escape the issue of profit and commercial values.

The age of commercialism and the ever-present melancholy of the now coming of age groups that began in the early sixties was seen in various other examples. The Beach Boys for one were beginning to see both the fallout of drug use and the culture surrounding it as well as the failure to produce the hits they made in the first half of the sixties. As previously mentioned, lead songwriter of the group Brian Wilson had experienced severe trauma because of drug consumption matched with a predisposition to mental illness, and by the early seventies Wilson

⁴³ Zanuck, Lili Fini. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

⁴⁴ Zanuck, Lili Fini. *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*.

was struggling to produce music of the same caliber. The commercial success of songs about surfing and girls just was not an appreciated novelty as the grim setting of the Vietnam war and other domestic horrors were ever present.

For their 1971 record *Surf's Up* the Beach Boys sought to reflect upon their current state of affairs, removed from the classic sunny sounds of songs like 'California Girls' and 'Surfin' USA'. The record starts off with a song entitled 'Don't Go Near the Water' which talks about the changing state of the world and how their outlook was tinged by a bleak realization of the uncertainty present in the early seventies. An attempt at fitting into the youth culture of the time produced the song 'Student Demonstration Time' which sounds to be a lazy attempt at making a protest song in the vein of 'Ohio'. Squeaky clean attempts at being present and heard through one's music in this period was difficult, and the group was not an early adopter of challenging their audience the same way The Beatles or The Rolling Stones had done. The end of the record points to themes of exhaustion and being spent after years of working in the same environment, reflected also in the image on the face of the album. The sculpture titled 'End of the Trail' by James Earle Fraser was used for the cover and depicts a Native American man slumped over a horse, alluding to fatigue and injury. The track 'A Day In The Life Of A Tree' features lines that read, "trees like me weren't meant to live' and 'but now my branches suffer/and my leaves don't bear the glow they did so long ago', written by Brian Wilson and bluntly procured to put into words his innate sense of hopelessness. The penultimate track 'Till I Die' also written by Wilson features a seemingly pleasant array of sung harmonies but also has lyrics that read, 'I'm a leaf on a windy day/pretty soon I'll be blown away/how long will the wind blow?'. The ever-present onslaught of commercialism in music was beginning to affect even the brightest minds, and

artists were beginning more and more to equate their happiness to success within the music industry.

Chapter IV

By the mid-70s rock music was changing and began branching off into many different avenues. The hard rock style produced by Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath would churn out more groups, mostly from England, that would be classified as 'heavy metal'. Featuring faster guitar licks, screeching vocals, and relentless rhythm, heavy metal would push rock music into an over saturated type of rock. Guitar playing was starting to see the trend of speed being associated with talent and prowess on the instrument and in music. By the mid-seventies Led Zeppelin would become infamous for playing three hour shows while on tour and leaving large sections for instrumental jams where Jimmy Page would solo over blues changes and John Bonham would pump out dynamic drum solos. This excess in rock music also brought about new stylistic changes in both dress and stage presentation. It became a common place for groups to wear outlandish and fantastical costumes. Jimmy Page would be seen wearing hand-made bolero jackets with roses and dragons on them, and long silk bell bottoms featuring zodiac symbols. David Bowie by the early seventies had already adopted his first persona named Ziggy Stardust, which would later be replaced by Alladin Sane and so on. The emphasis on visual presentation, again, spoke to the need for artists to express themselves and separate themselves through the exploration of identity and escaping traditions set up by those who were in the spotlight only years before.

The precursor to the punk movement could be seen in this 'glam rock' era which David Bowie certainly fell under in his early alter-ego days. A direct accomplice to this was the band

The Velvet Underground led by enigmatic frontman Lou Reed. Reed and the group sought to get away from the psychedelic era just as the Beatles had but through a more avant-garde approach, their music having a harder edge to it than most at that time. Their approach to songwriting and stage presentation would certainly be a leading influence on the punk movement that sought to get to what was real in the culture around them. In 1967 their album *The Velvet Underground & Nico* would become synonymous with having the famous Andy Warhol print of a pop-art style banana on its cover. The music on this record had a raw feel in both the instrumentation and the recording of it, most notably the song 'Heroin' which Reed wrote from his experience with the drug. The intensity of the track could be attributed to the pacing of the song and how it gets progressively faster as Reed describes the feeling of injecting the drug, and the crescendo of a distorted violin being played more and more harshly. The song and the record would be in a way blacklisted in society as the subject matter was far more adult and raw compared to anything else being released, despite the fact that most music was being written about and or recorded on drugs. Reed speaks on the track 'Heroin' saying:

I write a song called 'Heroin' and you woulda thought that I murdered the pope or something. It should've been, now we can get a lot of people who have talent for writing and everything into rock and roll, and we'll all write about really adult stuff. That's what I wanted to do, was, like, write rock and roll that you could listen to as you got older and it wouldn't lose anything, it would be timeless, ya know, in the subject matter and the literacy and the lyrics.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Blank on Blank. *Lou Reed on Guns & Ammo*. Youtube, uploaded by Blank on Blank Feb 17, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcd9BS2Ty_M&ab_channel=BlankonBlank.

Reed would also explain how he did not like The Beatles music, and thought mainstream rock groups attempts at being ‘arty’ for the time all failed at being genuine or intimate through their music.

Just as psychedelic music was phased out through the new movement of Americana and British folk rock, punk rock would be the musical and political revolution against glamorous and excessive hard rock. The political and economic shortcomings of Britain in the early and mid-seventies would be a catalyst in developing the likes of The Clash and The Sex Pistols⁴⁶. The core members of The Clash were Joe Strummer, Paul Simonon and Mick Jones. The punk movement in youth culture was similar to the psychedelic movement of the sixties in the sense the style of dress, speaking, and overall lifestyle was adopted to avoid conformity and make a statement against the politicians who ran their countries. The members of the Clash brought politics into music in a stark way by incorporating left-leaning sentiment and anti-monarch/aristocratic messages in their music and interviews. The musical revolt they brought about too in regards to heavy rock and metal was described by guitarist Joe Strummer when asked about the Sex Pistols’ hatred of hippies and psychedelic culture, “Yeah it’s like, I think that’s where the complexities came in, ya know. We better buy our Moog synthesizer or we’ll get called out”⁴⁷. The over complicated music previously described of Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and Genesis would be completely overshadowed by a newer youth culture that wanted to be seen in music and society with hard-hitting simple songs that talked about rioting against the politicians who perpetuated war and economic hardship. With a Jamaican/Rastafarian style of beat and heavy down strokes on the guitar The Clash’s music would reach this audience with

⁴⁶ Evan Smith, and Matthew Worley. “Introduction: The British Left and Ireland in the Twentieth Century.” *Contemporary British History*, vol. 32, no. 4, Routledge, 2018, pp. 437-47.

⁴⁷ *The Clash Interview*. *Youtube*, uploaded by Kryddtorget Dec 19, 2009.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cwu9MiJC86E&ab_channel=Kryddtorget

songs like ‘London’s Burning’ and ‘Hate & War’ from their first record which was self-titled *The Clash*. Their breakout record would be released in 1979, entitled *London Calling*.

Noteworthy tracks on the record have lyrics that point to the heavy array of police throughout England at the time, and the backlash against authority in the rising right-wing nature of the country. The track ‘London Calling’ also has lyrics that point to the changing youth culture and the phasing out of old trends with lines like, ‘London calling, don’t look to us/Phony Beatlemania has bitten the dust’ directly referring to the outdated popular music Britain was known for in the previous decade. The track ‘The Guns of Brixton’ fleshes out the idea of being wary of the police and police brutality with lyrics that read, ‘When the law break in/How you gonna go?/Shot down on the pavement or waiting on death row.’

The new punk attitude which was being adopted in England could be seen by one of the more infamous groups, The Sex Pistols, who would bring punk rock sensibilities onto mainstream talk-show platforms. In a famous interview on the ‘Today Show’ with interviewer Bill Grundy the band could be seen drinking beer and cursing on television, which at the time was considered blasphemous. The interview would be cut short after the band began retaliating against Grundy’s condescending tone by calling him various slurs like, “You dirty bastard” and “You dirty fucker/rotter”. The members recount the experience by saying, “He was terrified, he was shitting himself. He was death white, ya know, going well fucking better get out of here quick”⁴⁸.

Across the pond the punk scene would include the same motifs of anti-war and rally against the ‘suits’ that dominated the political and economic spheres. On the east coast in America The Ramones would dominate the punk scene starting in the mid-seventies. Although

⁴⁸ Julien Temple, *The Filth and the Fury*. FilmFour Distributors, 2000.

not biologically related the members Johnny, Joey, Tommy, and Dee Dee would all take up the last name Ramone to go along with their cohesive image. The style of dress worn by them on stage was simple, consisting of ripped jeans and regular t-shirts, a direct contrast against the glam rock played by David Bowie, Marc Bolan of T Rex and Kiss. The simplicity of their songs was even more evident compared to their British counterparts, and the speed at which they played would see some songs being finished in just a minute and a half. Despite this simplicity their music was full of sarcastic and politically driven messages in songs like 'Havana Affair' which talks about the CIA's involvement in Latin America. Other songs were crass for the sake of it like 'Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue' which talks about the appeal of drug use to a bored youth community.

If punk rock were a coin, the other side of it for the time would have been disco. Musically and sonically very different from punk, disco became the vehicle for other disenfranchised groups to express themselves and experience the end of the 1970s. Disco would be created with the function of the music being dance oriented. Stemming from the funk and R&B music of the early seventies disco would incorporate similar modes of rhythm guitar and drumbeats that ensured a sturdy backbone to the songs. One of the most commercially successful and pioneering groups of the genre would be the Bee Gees made up of brothers Barry, Robin, and Maurice Gibb. In the late sixties the group had started under the guise of a psychedelic pop band, similar in look and sound to acts like the Animals and the Yardbirds. In the first half of the seventies the group had undergone a lull in success and creativity as an act. However, in 1974 Eric Clapton released a solo record entitled *461 Ocean Boulevard* referring to his residence in Miami, Florida where he wrote music and tried to wean off of heavy drug use. Clapton and the Bee Gees had been in contact as they had produced under the same record label and Barry Gibb

explains the advice given to them, “We had a conversation with Eric about making a comeback. Eric said, “Well, I’ve just made this album called ‘461 Ocean Boulevard’ in Miami. Why don’t you guys make an album in America instead of always making an album in England, and maybe the change of environment will do something for you”⁴⁹. In 1975 the group would travel to Miami and stay at the same address as Clapton had, experiencing a completely different climate both socially and in the weather.

The relaxed and sunny disposition of Miami allowed the group to begin a rebirth of their career and pioneer a new sound in music. In 1975 the group released *Main Course* which would introduce their new sound in songs like ‘Jive Talkin’ and ‘Nights on Broadway’ which incorporated groovy drumbeats and synthesizers to create fluid bass sounds put through filters. The songs spoke of the culture they were surrounded by in America and the more upbeat dance scene that had been developing there in the previous years. Nicky Siano, a disc jockey for Studio 54 and other clubs in New York City explains the nature of the dance scene at the time, “This billion-dollar industry was being built way before the Bee Gees. A lot of people don’t realize disco started in the gay and the Black community. People don’t understand what it was like back then for gay people. There was a law in New York that did not allow people of the same sex to dance together in a place that had a liquor license. And then the law changed and that allowed me to open my club. A new era of dance music started in gay underground clubs... that was the explosion of the disco sound.” (*The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart*).

The most notable release from the Bee Gees would be the soundtrack they helped make for the film *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) starring John Travolta. The album would go on to sell millions and feature mega-hit singles like ‘Stayin’ Alive’ and ‘How Deep is Your Love’.

⁴⁹ Frank Marshall. *The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart?* DiamondDocs, Polygram Records, 2020.

‘Stayin’ Alive’ was notable with its upbeat sound in the music and the way it was sung but having lyrics that talked about the paranoia and dismay of the United States in the late seventies. Despite the innate success of these records there was a large countermovement to disco helmed by radio disc jockey Steve Dahl. Dahl became infamous for preaching the slogan ‘Disco Sucks’ on his radio show and encouraging his listeners to destroy disco records whenever possible. Operating out of Chicago Dahl organized an event at Comiskey Park where the White Sox baseball team played, in order for rock fans to bring disco records to be burned in center field. On account of house music pioneer Vince Lawrence, who was working at Comiskey Park as a teenager, the types of records being brought in were not all exclusive to the disco genre. Lawrence states, “We’re letting people in. I pointed out to my chief usher, ‘That record, that record, that record, that record, that record, those aren’t disco records. Those are just R&B records.’ And the thing that I noticed more than anything, was just mostly black records”⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Marshall, Frank. *The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart*. Diamond Docs, Polygram Records, 2020.

Chapter V

The end of the 1970s would see topics of reflection, regret, and aggression presented by some of the more preexisting and commercially successful groups. A group that perfectly exemplified all these feelings would be Pink Floyd, after their success with *Wish You Were Here*. As punk had taken hold of the youth culture of England in a burgeoning right-wing government, the more established rock bands like Pink Floyd, Genesis, The Who, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, and Yes were starting to be seen as older and out of touch by the younger generations of music consumers. A journal from German historian Zeno Ackermann explores this concept by saying:

While the reconfiguration of rock as art/progressive rock was meant to affirm the transcendent meaningfulness and the independent creative power of popular music, it actually brought out into the open the glaring contradictions between such claims and the (capitalist) frameworks of music production, marketing, and consumption. Like punk, then, “prog” was both an affirmative and a terminal movement. This is the Catch 22 that Pink Floyd seem to have accepted and executed with *The Wall*.⁵¹

The members of the Sex Pistols were seen at the time wearing shirts slandering Pink Floyd in particular. This stark opposition created did not startle the group however as after a yearlong hiatus in 1976 from performances and touring the members convened to begin work on their next musical endeavor: *Animals* (1977). The pressure and conflict that they saw in society

⁵¹ Rocking the Culture Industry/Performing Breakdown: Pink Floyd’s *The Wall* and the Termination of the Postwar Era.” *Popular Music & Society* 35, no. 1 (February 2012): 1–23.

around them assisted in the ultimate theme that would become the focus of the album. Each song would feature the name of a farm animal; Sheep representing the follower or conformer in society, Dogs representing the industrial work-focused group, and Pigs representing the law enforcers and political figures of their time. Derived from the famous Orwell novel *Animal Farm*, Roger Waters wanted to write an album that was more political in nature and challenged the edgy nature of punk rock. Although the writing and recording of the album was a relatively productive and seamless process, the subsequent tour would prove to be profoundly strenuous on Waters in particular.

During the summer of 1977 on their American tour the band would frequently be interrupted by jeering audiences, some fans even setting off live fireworks during performances. Many bootlegs from this part of the tour include frustrated rants from Waters after being interrupted at different parts in their set, one night even spitting on a member of the audience after being taunted at. In some regards the tour was commercially profitable and allowed the band to experiment with the art of the stage show. Playing in front of a large screen that played animations and films that correlated to the songs, the spectacle of their live shows were more inclusive for the thousands of fans that filled large stadiums. Despite all of this Waters felt disillusioned from their audiences and came up with the ultimate theme of their next album, *The Wall* (1979). The core idea came from the fact that Waters wanted to build a physical wall between him and the audience because he felt a massive separation form after their US tour for *Animals*. The idea would also lend itself to the massive stage sets that would encompass the subsequent tour for the record. For Waters the youth culture that had helped get him to a point of stardom, the same group was beginning to feel disdain towards rich rock stars who tried to preach about larger social issues. This dynamic showed a parallel between the culture in the

United States and Britain as the politics of the burgeoning far-right and far-left movements in both countries produced a backlash to any authority who told youth culture how to speak, dress, and behave.⁵²

After the tumultuous tour for *Animals* the band became separated due to other solo projects and press. Waters became hyper-focused on creating the next record and as a result produced a full rough demo. Gilmour of the group recalls listening to it for the first time saying, “Roger had done a demo of the whole thing, and it was excruciating to listen to but you could tell instantly that there was a great idea in there”⁵³. Excruciating because the nature of the album was more raw and melancholic than anything the band had done previously. Themes of abandonment, isolation, and disregard for authority were littered throughout what would become a double length record. Waters made a key decision to bring in producer Bob Ezrin who would prove most helpful in fleshing out the concept and story of the massive record. Ezrin assisted the group by writing out the record into a screenplay, as Waters was keen on developing the story into a feature-length film as well. Although the completion of writing the record before recording was ultimately helpful for the group, the democracy of the band crumbled due to the fact that Roger helmed all of the writing credits and direction for the album. The general story of the record follows a rock star named Pink, who begins isolating himself from society and imagines himself as a neo-Nazi dictator who performs rock shows as a tyrant. The character is candidly based on Waters himself who decided to look at his own childhood trauma, as his father was killed during World War II while fighting against Nazi Germany. Songs at the start of the record like “In the Flesh?” and “The Thin Ice” discuss Waters' upbringing with his emotionally

⁵¹ Sebastian Berg. *Intellectual Radicalism after 1989: Crisis and Re-Orientations in the British and the American Left*. Transcript-Verlag, 2016, doi:10.14361/9783839434185. Page, 314.

⁵³ *Pink Floyd: The Story*. BBC.

suffocating mother. The middle of the record is most concerned with the main character building his wall, seeing his traumatic memories as ‘bricks’. Major characters in the story like the teacher that torments the main character as a child through his British primary school days help to provide the basis for the trauma in the story. Waters reflects on the discipline enacted by his own teachers by saying:

It was those days when a lot of grammar schools liked to pretend that they were really public schools. So we played rugby and not soccer and there was a CCF, and there was a lot of ruling by shame really and there was a lot of quite nasty sarcastic people at the school who try and control the boys by putting them down.⁵⁴

This mixed with the other overbearing character of the mother, who tries to overprotect her child after the death of the father sets the scene for a protagonist whose personal reality begins to crumble.

The revisiting of Water’s childhood in a post-war Britain, at a time in the seventies where the “feel-good” nostalgia of the late sixties was a distant memory, point to how modern politics was seeping into his life more than before. Water’s seeing himself as an authority figure was motivation enough to closely examine the new identity of the musician, and whether rock stars playing for thousands of people every night was a productive mode of interacting with fans and consumers of music. It also proved to be a time for Water’s to reflect on his old friend and bandmate Syd Barrett, and how in prior years he was unable to relate to his mental health, but now with mental and physical breakdowns becoming a regular happening there grew a deeper understanding behind Barrett’s delusions with the music business. As the record features a song entitled “The Show Must Go On” it is evident that the nature of touring was not interested in the

⁵⁴ Storm Thorgerson. *Restrospective: Looking Back at the Wall*. Tinblue Productions, 1999.

wellbeing of the artist, but merely the servicing of the machine that provided paychecks and filled seats.⁵⁵

The serious and bleak tone set by *The Wall* was an effective vehicle of demonstrating the consequences of a famous lifestyle in music, both in the record itself and the results of the production of it also. An artist who was perpetually creating art from a satirical reading of culture and music was Frank Zappa, whose 1979 record *Joe's Garage: Acts I, II & III* explores the subject of the pitfalls of a life in music, and how the music industry can be seen as an authoritarian force. Writing about the music industry and the people running or being exploited by it is in itself a harsh study, as Zappa sought to bring real world issues into a musical and comical expression. Starting out as a commercial artist in the mid-sixties with his group The Mothers of Invention, Zappa was constantly taking jabs at the music industry and the types of music being produced and consumed by a mainstream audience. In 1968 the group released the record *We're Only In It For The Money* for which the cover directly parodied that of *Sargent Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, as a trend for that time saw many groups trying to make a record that looked and sounded like it. The Mother's record was given permission to release by Paul McCartney himself, as Zappa was worried about the legal repercussions of releasing his record. Zappa's personal philosophy was on display in interviews and his records without much restraint as censorship was something he sought to get rid of in the entertainment industry. His work in the late sixties would poke fun at or critique the hippy movement as he was not a consumer of any psycho-active drugs and found the themes of love focused in their songs to be of little artistic substance. Author Sarah Schmalenberger writes about Zappa's opinions on love songs writing:

⁵⁵ Ray D. Waddell., et al. *This Business of concert Promotion and Touring: A Practical Guide to Creating, Selling, Organizing, and Staging Concerts*. Billboard Books, 2007. Pages, 29-38.

Zappa's cynicism about love songs pilloried a music industry that acquiesced to the mind-set of mass-culture tastes. While other artists flooded the airwaves with vacuous sentimentality, Frank Zappa responded in especially rich oppositional tones by saying, as he sang in 1966, "Go Cry on Somebody Else's Shoulder"⁵⁶.

Songs like these and "Broken Hearts Are for Assholes" (*Sheik Yerbooti*, 1979) perfectly capture Zappa's general disdain for the types of music that was featured on radio and in music videos. His creative efforts in 1979 in particular painted the stereotypes of music culture with broad strokes and using crude humor as a vehicle to chronicle the typical trajectory for people who work in music. *Joe's Garage* chronicles the character of Joe who goes from playing music at his home with friends into his life as a famous musician who ultimately falls from stardom. A larger theme of the record focuses on the dangers of authoritarian government as the narrator, the 'central scrutinizer', describes how music is seen as dangerous and evil to society. To the central scrutinizer a life in music revolves around heavy drug use and unorthodox sexual practices. The first song titled "The Central Scrutinizer" gives a wary message by saying, "I bring you now a special presentation to show what can happen if you choose a career in music...". The first act of the record deals with unfaithful romantic partners and the groupie culture that was so prevalent in the 70s, with songs like "Catholic Girls" and "Crew Slut" that talk about Joe's girlfriend. The consequences of this behavior are described crudely in the track "Why Does It Hurt When I Pee?" after Joe develops a sexually transmitted disease after intercourse with a fan who works at Jack in the Box burgers. The central scrutinizer chimes in after the track "Scrutinizer Postlude" by saying, "As you can see girls, music, disease, heartbreak, they all go together."

⁵⁶ "Dirty Love": *Frank Zappa and the Antithetical Love Song*, *Rock Music Studies*, 5:1, 20-28.

The darker themes of the record point to the growing wave of cult-like leaders in tracks like “A Token of My Extreme” in which Joe meets the head of ‘The First Church of Appliantology’ by the name of L. Ron Hoover (a reference to the founder of scientology L. Ron Hubbard) and ends up paying him to interact with the household appliances modified to perform sexual acts. After accidentally breaking a sex robot Joe is sent to prison as he has no money to offer L. Ron Hoover and sits in jail imagining guitar notes in his head. Upon his release Joe goes back to his house from the beginning of the record and imagines one last guitar solo on the track “Watermelon in Easter Hay”, and then gives up music. The album closes on the central scrutinizer describing how Joe gets a job putting frosting on the tops of muffins and says, “As you can see, music can get you pretty fucked up. Take a tip from Joe, do like he did. Hock your imaginary guitar and get a good job. Joe did, and he’s a happy guy now” (“Little Green Rosetta”).

Produced by Zappa himself he had the freedom to indulge in any content he saw fit for the record, without being held down by major labels and executives who most likely would not have approved of the content on the album. As mentioned previously censorship would play a major role in Zappa’s career, as it interfered with how he made records and the integrity of music production⁵⁷. In 1985 the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) was established as a way to incite more parental control over music albums, ultimately resulting in the placement of parental advisory stickers on the front of records to indicate material deemed unsuitable for young adults to consume without a parent’s permission. Zappa would appear at state senate hearings to challenge the PMRC as these advisory stickers could be harmful to music artists as it would diminish record sales and radio time. He was also known to make appearances on various

⁵⁷ Ault, Julie., et al. *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*. New York University Press, 1999. Page, 39.

mainstream news television outlets to debate people who advocated for the advisory warnings and strict ratings. Most notoriously on an episode of *Nightline* in 1987 Zappa debated Tipper Gore, the wife of then senator Al Gore who helmed the PMRC as co-founder. Gore's argument was that consumers had too much access to violence and abuse particularly to women in film to which Zappa replied, "Obviously there is a sentiment in the American public that demands to see women being treated in this way. You're talking about a mental health problem, not a problem of labeling an object."

Conclusion

From young British men being influenced by the blues to musicians taking on the political issues of their countries, questions of identity and cultural transfer are highlighted through the artists and groups discussed. The creativity and identity of the artists I wrote about were all reacting to the world around them, on small scale within their own bands and cultures and on a global scale that saw media outlets showing the horrors of war and protest. The harsh realities of the world influencing the music, along with the increased communication with artists from abroad, helped to reshape the identity of American and British musicians. Hendrix and Clapton being a direct example of the blues identity being put on display, with a renowned white blues artist being admired by an African American emerging blues artist overseas, portray the importance of the transatlantic connection in popular music. The subsequent reflective period of the latter half of the decade showed how music changed when artists from either country went back to their roots rather than look across the ocean for inspiration and ideas. As a newer generation took the spotlight in Britain with progressive rock the need to quickly separate and distinguish from the likes of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones became a driving factor

musically and visually for a generation looking to be heard. The common theme of the British experience being explored in the music of this progressive genre separated itself from the American counterpart that went deeper into folk and the more popular established genres.

The end of the seventies saw the convergence of American and Britain cultures in popular music, with punk and disco having strong presences in both countries. Again, too, the newer youth culture that was being inspired by punk adamantly rallied against the musical and cultural prevalence of progressive and stadium rock, with class struggle playing a major role in the art being produced. By 1980 the ever-growing media and production empire of music was both helpful and restrictive for artists who wanted their music to reach a larger audience. Artists who were more willing to conform and be controlled by industry standards had less obstacles in the way of radio play, selling tickets, and receiving funding for record production. The industry's response to an artist like Frank Zappa who wanted to reveal his own feelings about the government and youth culture was met with far more opposition than acceptance and structured criticism. The question also remains whether the youth culture who celebrated and looked up to Zappa were at all interested or inspired by his action against the government and PMRC. The role and identity of the musician at this point in music history is left ambiguous, with some of the most financially stable artists doubting their position in the world of music and politics. In the case of Zappa, who was more of a self-sufficient and self-owned artist, felt doubling down on legal matters was crucial to the identity of an artist, while others were becoming increasingly consumed by making hit records.

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