

**Lifecycles:**  
**Writings on the Movement of Music**  
**in Time and Economy**  
*By Henry Warwick 2002*

*"...a movement is accomplished in six stages, and the seventh brings return..."*  
-Pink Floyd, 1967

**Greetings My Dear and Gentle Reader.**

To you I owe my most humble and earnest apologies for having been so delinquent in my SPARK columns. Apologies are no excuse, so as a palliative to your most righteous indignation at my absence permit me a few moments to digress upon just what exactly I've been doing for the past few months. This will be a fairly long and dense SPARK. But hold with me for the next several weeks, and pay close attention - the rewards here are great.

1. I was laid off from Napster, 6 weeks after September 11<sup>th</sup>. (My time at Napster would make a fascinating SPARK. Unfortunately, I signed so many Non Disclosure Agreements - I can't really talk about any of it.)

After 9.11, I (and I imagine much of the USA) fell into a serious funk. I felt that whatever I could write in SPARK would be of such little consequence that I felt silence was the only reasonable conclusion. I especially felt disturbed by it all, as I had completed a video in June 2001 called "Cricket Point" which anticipated the events of 9.11. When I watched the morning news on 9.11 and saw large twin jet planes fly into buildings in a way that was emotionally identical to my video (where 7X7 twin jets fly and crossfade into office buildings followed by radical scenes of destruction while the squalling feedback of

my song "Cricket" howls in the background), I was, well, devastated. I felt completely vindicated and utterly horrified at the prescience of my work. I wanted to scream "I TOLD YOU THAT SOMEDAY THIS WAS COMING!!! IT WAS INEVITABLE, YOU FOOLS!!!" At the same time, I realized that it would do no good.

People won't get out of their SUVs, people won't turn the damned lights off, and people won't pay one lick of attention until they are **forced** to consider the implications and consequences of their actions. My hope was that such illumination would be market / legislation driven – that we, as a society, could educate ourselves on our wastefulness, and as a species, become aware of our destructiveness driven by our overpopulation and the technology used to maintain this enormous population. After 9.11 and the reaction on that event, I have a number of misgivings and qualms over such hopes. I still hope them, but I am afraid that the blinding hollow plastic tunnel of our corporate media (liberal, conservative or otherwise) is in such a state of reaction that I fear such hopes may be futile for the next decade.

2. In January, I started Grad School. Yes, dear friends, I have concluded that my only hope regarding long-term employment is in the field of higher education. To engage such a career path, I must acquire a "terminal degree", and in my field that's an MFA. However, with mortgage and child, I must work. Therefore, I could not apply to Berkeley, or SF State, or Mills or any of the other local colleges and Universities, as they would require that I attend day classes, and that is clearly not a responsible option in my present circumstance. I had to find a Graduate School that would offer an MFA in what I do - inter and multidisciplinary art making – and not have requirements that I attend day classes. Through the Internet, I found there are a number of schools that would do this. Most of them are less than worthless. A few are dead brilliant. I looked into a few of them, and concluded that given my interests and background, Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, would do nicely.

I sent them a totally insane and utterly KICK ASS portfolio (a SPARK column unto itself) and was accepted. Now the Genius of the Goddard System is its limited residency. For a week and a half, you go to this idyllic setting in the middle of rural Vermont to confer with advisors and classmates about one's work and plans for that semester. There is usually a massive party at the end of the session. This suited me fine.

I was not prepared for the "dorm room" I was assigned. It seemed the interior designer was Mickey The Crackhead. I had forgotten how dire school dorms can be, and mine was most dire. Once I got over my jetlag and got into the swing of things, the state of the filthy hole I affectionately called "My Little Crackhouse" receded into the background.

Suffice to say; I think Goddard has a fine program that fits my needs exactly. In this program, I will give myself the time and space to more tightly integrate my art practice. To that end:

3. I am writing this column and the next several all at once. It is a development of the lecture/rant I gave at the Refrains Conference on Electronic Music in Vancouver, BC, in late September. In that event, I briefly went over the basics of my theory of Lifecycles.

Since then, I have determined this theory worthy of a book, once I extend it to other areas and performed

due diligence upon detailing the results of my research. But for you, my dear, patient, and gentle reader, I have cooked up a special version for the web. It will detail my ideas enough so that you can get the general "gist" of my perceptions. For greater detail, you will have to wait for the book to come out...

Please note: this is **MERELY** a reduced pass at a very large animal. What I am describing can be assigned to Jazz and HipHop as well, as well as most any other style of popular music. The book I will write will specifically address Jazz, Rock and HipHop. This version **ONLY** looks at Rock and Roll, simply because I know Rock best, and have done the most research on it. The final work would do the following:

Analyze the lifecycles of musical styles ROCK and JAZZ, showing how they operated according to the parameters I herein describe, and then look at HipHop as a predictive case. I don't know the history of HipHop that well, but I know many people involved with HipHop, and will call upon their expertise and experience. General research will be fairly simple, as it is younger and comparatively well documented, as opposed to Jazz, where the originators are dead and suffer posthumously under the yoke of halos the Entertainment Industry has bestowed upon their rotting bones and 78s.

## **Introduction**

I have divided the presentation of this work in several parts for your reading convenience. I have been working on this (in fits and starts) for the better part of 20 years, and only recently have things fallen clearly into place for me to actually develop a conclusion I feel is accurate and warranted. This project began as a research paper for a Political Theory class when I was attending Rutgers University in the early 1980s. My research and advisors at that time led me toward the likes of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Lukacs. The paper went nowhere- I never turned it in and failed the class. I could have finished it, but it would have been "wrong", and I'd rather take the "F" than write something I couldn't stand behind. Over the years the idea sat in my mind and refused to leave. As it took up more and more space, it surrounded itself with more and more relevant and related material, ever searching for a suitable and correct conclusion.

One of the most important books to this work, and formed a major and original foundation for the paper and this presentation, was the book "Hip Capitalism" by Suzanne Krieger from the early 1970s. In the early 1990s, I found out that she was teaching (relatively) nearby in the University of California at Santa Cruz. I emailed her some of the ideas I had regarding the ideas behind this paper and asked for her help. Primarily, I needed a copy of "Hip Capitalism". The only copy I had ever seen was moldering some 3000 miles away in the Rutgers University Library. In hindsight, I unfortunately bungled the email- it was largely incoherent and Ms Krieger had the good sense to politely decline her assistance in this project. This was somewhat expected- a strange elliptical email about an older work that arrives out of the blue is not likely to get the most optimal response. What was tragic, however, was that she indicated she could not help me find "Hip Capitalism." Given the book was close to 30 years old, I doubted she had boxes of them in her closet, but I was hoping she might know where I might find a copy. She thanked me for my interest in her work, and she is most welcome.

Without the book on hand, I had to rely on 20 year old and extremely vague notes I had taken during my research phase for the original paper, and all the attendant distortions of personal memory. I felt very uneasy about the direction of the project, and finally abandoned the effort.

Another book valued in the making of this conjecture is "File Under Popular" by Chris Cutler. I had the very good fortune to talk with him about the ideas for this work, which at that point had been rusting in my brain for

many years, and that afternoon he provided much useful insight and criticism. From there, the project was re-energized a bit. I also realized that it had a lot of major gaps, and most significantly, it needed a proper conclusion – I realized that Ms Krieger’s analysis was incomplete, through no fault of her own. Her analysis was limited to the historical window of the research she performed on the co-option of a specific radio station in San Francisco, KMPX / KSAN. My purview is one of finding patterns in musical style development in history, a more developed and macrocosmic application of the structures she found in the microcosmic workings of a radio station in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

If the reader really wants to know "roughly where I’m coming from", I recommend the following books:

- *Hip Capitalism* by Susan Krieger
- *File Under Popular* by Chris Cutler
- *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* by Walter Benjamin
- *Simulations* by Jean Baudrillard
- *Legitimation Crisis* by Jurgen Habermas
- *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin
- *Noise: the political economy of music* by Jacques Attali
- *Cannibals and Kings* by Marvin Harris
- *History and Class Consciousness* by Georg Lukacs
- *Man and His Symbols* by Carl Jung
- *The Hidden Dimension* by Edward T Hall

I would also recommend a video, *The Selling of Cool* from PBS Frontline, by Douglas Rushkoff, and Rosalind Krauss’s brilliant article from one of the earliest editions of *October* - “Notes on the Index”.

Some of them are long out of print, and some are just plain obscure, so you might have a great deal of trouble finding them. I know I did.

Those books will give you a vague and general idea of where this all came from, and can provide a general road map of where this is all going, and from whence it came.

### **Dedications and Thanks**

I would like to thank my wife, Beth Scannell, for being such a sweetly patient person to one as trying as myself. Without her love and support, none of this would have been possible. I’d like to thank Ms Krieger for lighting the match, and Chris Cutler for fanning the flames. And thanks to the Marxists for being so utterly right on target and so horribly Horribly HORRIBLY wrong in practice – and doing all of it at the same time. I thank international corporate capitalism for permitting the middle class barely enough time to enjoy music and read this. I thank the Deconstructionists for showing us how to have fun with big ideas and how **not** to go about developing a coherent philosophy.

I'd like to thank all the musicians in the world for spending so much time in trying to bring the Muse into this world. Whether devotees of Polyhymnia, Euterpe, or ancient Aoede, we workers in song are the very stuff of which this volume, this column, and this website is all about. Don't stop your work. Our redemption as a species depends on it. Most of all – remember that what you are doing (MUSIC) is not a commodity. It existed before markets and will exist after markets. It existed before science, and will exist after science. And you were there then, and you will be there then, no matter how temporal or evanescent your work.

Most especially, I'd like to thank most, but not all, of the executives in the Media Conglomerates (that largely own the Music Industry) for being the single most amazing collection of traitorous thieving slime balls, petty charlatans, greedy con artists and thoroughly squalid and contemptibly criminal vermin mother nature has ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of this good sweet earth. Your actions, contracts, and perfidious history speak louder than anything I could possibly write, and I am certain that as historical actors, you will be remembered with neither kindness nor mercy. I would like to think that future generations will merrily piss on your graves, but I sincerely doubt they'll bother wasting their time or precious bodily fluids on such a worthless lot as you all, who are so utterly beneath contempt for your crimes against creativity, culture, and the human spirit.

For those executives who really do understand the workings of the Muse and feel compelled to help bring her voice into the world in the form of music as performed by honest and earnest composers and musicians, and who develop contracts with composers and musicians based on reason, fairness, generosity, and enlightened mutual interest – you are the rare ones and are blessed. I encourage you to continue your efforts in reforming the corrupted rotting carcass of the music industry. Yours is an unenviable task.

And finally, I'd like to thank the future generations yet to be born. Everything we do, we do for and to you. Please remember that not all of us alive at this time were part of the problem, and that some of us were working toward an enlightened solution.

Henry Warwick, San Francisco, 2002

## Part Zero: General Statements

The Basics

*Good, yes! You've done well*

*Here is a small prize-*

*The History of the World.*

- Gang of Four 1979

I have found that stating the obvious can bear some useful results.

1. We live in a commodity capitalist society, based in the exchange of value (cash or credit) for the objects we use, which are presented as commodities. The system of exchange will prefer to mediate the exchange of value for goods by rules of commodity market economics. Every material aspect, and many immaterial aspects, of human existence are thusly reified as commodities. Packaged, marketed, and sold – none of it of significance in itself. Largely interchangeable, the needs artificial, and of no permanent or even semi-permanent facture or use, the modern commodity is necessarily disposable and its lifecycle quantifiable and understandable.

This lifecycle of the economy of the commodity follows a pattern:

- I. Initiation
- II. Legitimation
- III. Professionalization
- IV. Renewal
- V. Intensification
- VI. Dissipation

2. Investment changes the rate and quality of development of a given phase.

3. That this structure is mapable and scalable onto other cultural artifacts in the society, even those things that aren't physical commodities themselves, such as styles or qualities of commodities.

4. That this structure is largely, but not necessarily completely, universal in commodity capitalism. It's all historically so new that there are significant exceptions, but I hope to show that the exceptions can usually be seen as proving the rule.

Rather than go through each thesis as theory, and argue it out in the field of rhetoric, I will show through historical demonstration and description how this process works. I believe that this process is terribly important for anyone involved with cultural production to understand, as it can provide a framework for understanding the character of a cultural commodity at a given time, and provide some guidance for making predictions.

The historical example I will use to demonstrate this life cycle will be the movement of music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, specifically the spectacular commercial success of Rock Music. I am firmly convinced that the life cycle pointed to previously is abundantly apparent in the history of Rock Music. It can (and will and should) be applied to Jazz and Hip Hop, and as the record of Rock Music is so vastly more complete, meticulously documented, and close at hand than Jazz and is further along in its process than HipHop, Rock thusly serves as a superior example for this presentation.

With such a well known example it will be easier to illustrate the various stages of the Lifecycle. As I detail each of them in a SPARK column, I will use some artists as Avatars that epitomize a given stage, or as Harbingers of the next, or both at once. It is not that a given artist I look at is rigorously an Avatar or Harbinger or both, but more that they are so, for the sake of this present discussion. Also, I will tend to use more "well known" artists, as

1. They are "well known" for the successful sale and distribution of their music, which is a point central to commodity cultural "success".

2. As "famous" artists, their mythologies are better known and can therefore communicate and illustrate my points more quickly and easily.

Societies have to have a mechanism by which new and disruptive trends are brought into a non-disruptive state. Sometimes the disruptor is removed from society, sometimes society changes to accommodate the disruptor. Usually, in terms of cultural styles, the disruptive style is co-opted and mainstreamed. This co-optive process that defines the Lifecycle of the disruptor in a commodity culture, is knowable and occurs in certain stages. It is the stages of the Lifecycle that I will here briefly outline.

### **1. Initiation.**

Initiation is where the product/style first arises, and differentiates itself from its antecedents. It is where a coterie of interested parties forms a group of appreciation, "fans", and thusly differentiated themselves from people who appreciate antecedent or competing product / styles. Crucial to this phase is the naming of the style/product. This permits it currency in the market of other like objects, and the formation of an objective identity. The critical establishment or the distribution networks usually perform the naming process. The artists themselves less frequently name novel methods of working.

With a sufficient and sufficiently affluent demographic, interest is garnered outside the status group of aficionados. Eventually the production of the style acquires enough of a business status such that the named style is commonly identified and identifiable, even in groups whose familiarity with it or similar styles may be cursory at best. With increased attention and demographical support, the style/product is seen as a reasonable focus of investment, which leads to Stage 2 in the Life Cycle.

### **2. Legitimation.**

At this phase, the style/product is seen as a legitimate source of investment from above by people who aren't ordinarily attracted by the style/product, and for investment from below by people who are anxious to support a legitimate enterprise of a newly established style/product. Being part of a clique that is "in the know" or "hip" or "cool" acts as a reinforcement mechanism for those involved with the style/product's promotion. With promotion comes an influx of interest, participation, and money. The money feeds the promotion machine, which, in turn, generates more interest, participation, and money.

The money attracts other participants, actors, and aficionados in and of the product/style, reinforcing the legitimacy of investment in it. With the arrival of such participants and actors comes increased competition and a

stylistic explosion as the style expands to serve a more diverse demographic. This brings about the next stage, Professionalization.

### **3. Professionalization.**

The increased competition requires participants to be professional and competent at their work. The increased competition also means that the style/product will have to branch out into every possible market niche, so as to satisfy a growing customer base. An important component of this phase is the increasing importance of the critical establishment in the development, ranking, and analysis of the participants and actors in a given genre. The critical establishment is important, as its preferences will tend to propel the promotional preferences of the style as it informs the consuming demographic of the very style it undertakes to critique.

Eventually, the demographic, the critical establishment, and capital investment come to analyze and retrench/develop positions in the style/product. This leads to a new phase that indicates a maturity of the product in the market, and the effects of competition from within and without. This is called the Renewal Phase.

### **4. Renewal**

The Renewal phase is characterized by a mature style/product that reassesses its position in the market. Market analysis becomes critical to the style, as its sub-genres and sub-sub-genres mature into their own styles/products, and parallel markets provide avenues of growth and co-option. Each of these sub-genres and child-style/products follows the same life cycle process that the parent style/product experienced.

The Renewal phase eventuates in a state of Intensification – sclerotic and explosive.

### **5. Intensification**

This phase integrates all the previous phases and consciously develops its own markets in the style/product with ever-finer precision in product positioning and development. Trends and even mere whiffs of trends are examined, exploited, and quickly marketed. No stone is left unturned; no sliver of the demographic is ignored, all relative to their investment capacity and profit potential. This is the most brutal phase – the designs and basic nature of the professionalized marketplace in the style/product are most opaque and obvious. Consolidations that began in the Renewal phase are more manifest than ever. Eventually, with every possible market niche developed to exhaustion, the extent of artificial trends stalling due to saturation and inculcated cynicism in the demographic, its stylistic index saturated, the scale of the competition (from within and without) is such that the style/product stifles itself and relegates itself into a larger componentized market structure, and fades away as its demographic ages and dies off or loses interest. This leads to the next and final stage- Dissolution.

### **6. Dissolution**

With Dissolution, the investing demographic shrinks or is so splintered by competition that the style/product either disappears or is set into a long holding pattern, where sub-genres disappear and are re-consolidated into the parent/style product, and the style/product itself slowly disappears as its demographic dies off. Capital moves elsewhere – with results similar to a star's death-

The style/product dies out quickly and completely, like a supernova collapsing into a blackhole, or,

It dies quickly and brilliantly, but without extreme fanfare, and is relegated to a shelf in history, like a nova spinning into oblivion as a neutron star, or,

It slowly blows itself apart, like a planetary nebula, and is left with a tube up its nose in a state of suspended animation for a tiny group of interested parties, slowly burning itself out in time, like a white dwarf, or, Some combination of the above.

That is a basic description of some of the salient features of each stage of the Life Cycle Process. Next SPARK, I will go through the first phase, and discuss the Initiation Phase of Rock.

### **Phase I: Initiation - Rock and Roll!!!**

*Shake, Rattle, and Roll!*  
- Elvis Presley, 1954

Rock and Roll Music's Initiation phase occurred during the catastrophic Renewal phase of the previously dominant style- Jazz. The playing style of Rock and Roll was a bluesy hybrid of different styles - a late development of the blues - rhythm and blues (which itself later transmogrified into simpler and less controversial "R&B" as it collided with greater influences from black Gospel Music). This was a particularly upbeat blues with a strong back beat- fun and danceable- music for mating rituals. The other stylistic parents of Rock and Roll were an influence of country music (as seen in early Elvis recordings) and pop vocal music, as found with the likes of Dean Martin. Rock and Roll also had a technological parentage, one largely novel to itself, the Electric Guitar, and one inherited from jazz, the trap kit. Other technological innovations critical to the development of Rock and Roll was the perfection of the record player, the development of the juke box, and the inclusion of radios in passenger cars.

The Trap Kit was invented at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and was a technological innovation that was critical to the development of both Jazz and Rock and Roll. Prior to the development of the Trap Kit, drums were not as dominant a force in popular music. One could play timpani in an orchestra, or a snare or giant bass drum in a marching band configuration, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, one usually played the drums standing up, if drums were played at all. A seated drummer has feet free for other duties. The seated drummer was a creation of the Kick Drum (in 1908 by Ludwig) aided shortly thereafter in the 1920s, with the invention of the High Hat cymbals. This development of the trap kit was a critical moment, as it changed the composition of popular music ensembles. Seated with a kick drum, a percussionist could make an incredible amount of racket, and the propulsive dance beats that emanated from the Trap Kit emulated the power of the new modern industrial era, resonating with its unrelenting demand of repetition and emancipation from the strictures of Victorian cultural values. This put the beat more central to both the composition and performance of popular music. The effect was stunning and compelling — one drummer could easily fill a hall with a battery of beats.

The next question was- who can play with such an instrument? Who can withstand the thrashing? Mandolins, violins, flutes, recorders, and other more intimate instruments were instantly drowned out by the roar of the drums and the white noise of the cymbal crashes. With proper amplification yet to be invented and decades yet from popular availability, the job fell to the horn section to carry the melody, the bass viol to fill the bottom end, with the middle to be painted with another percussion instrument, the piano, and occasional wispy accents from a brightly strummed guitar. *All this, just to be heard over the drums.*

Amplification, which started with the development of telephony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, didn't really get underway until the 1920s, and amplifiers were expensive, heavy, and relatively weak by today's standards. In the late 1930s and through the 1940s, amplification technology grew tremendously, an electronic specter at the end of the big band era, and the first death knell for Jazz. This new and powerful amplification permitted the development of two instruments crucial to the development of rock and roll- the singer and the electric guitar.

Singers had existed since people had voices, but with the arrival of orchestras in Western Music and the development of Opera, singers had to use various techniques to properly project their voice over the power of an orchestra. Over the centuries, the development of several techniques designed to optimize the audibility of the voice- diaphragmatic singing and consistent vibrato, for example, became recognizable signifiers of classical technique, and was transferred to vocalists in ensembles who also had to compete with instruments. This enabled singers to "really belt it out" and be heard over a band, even a band with a trap kit, if the drummer held back a bit. Amplification changed all that. Louis Armstrong, Bing Crosby, Billie Holliday- none of them had particularly strong voices- it was their intimate presence before the microphone that permitted their careers to exist, and set the stage for rock and roll vocalists. As the amplification permitted ever greater intimacy in performances, a small or gentle voice can be a powerful vehicle, and detailed nuanced inflections in a voice became as powerful a tool in a singer's toolkit as diaphragmatic projection and vibrato was in a previous and very recent era. Also, this emphasis on intimacy and nuance in vocal performance made it possible to celebrate voices that previously would have been dismissed.

The development of the electric guitar goes back to the 1920s, but it didn't really come to the fore until the 1940s with the playing of Charlie Christian and Django Rheinhardt in a Jazz context, and even more importantly, the technological innovations by Les Paul and Leo Fender with their developments of the solid-body electric guitar in the late 1940s. Prior to the development of the solid-body, the electric guitar was basically a regular wide-bodied acoustic guitar with a microphone stuck under the strings. Its primary function was percussive, not melodic. It was boldly strummed as a harmonizing accent to the beat and melody. There were a few notable geniuses of this early "electric hollow body" guitar, as noted earlier - Christian and Rheinhardt among a few others - but for the most part, the guitar (much less an electric one) was not an important instrument in an era of big bands as loud brass instruments and the trap kit dominated the weak and expensive amplifiers of the time.

In the 1940s big bands would often have over a dozen players blasting away on their horns. With the electric guitar, the band could shrink to an ensemble, and eventually to a quartet of electric guitar, electric bass guitar, drums, and a vocalist who could play some rhythm guitar- the atavistic remnant of the bygone pre-amplification age.

The development of better amplification and the solid body guitar had a remarkable result. It was no longer necessary to have a crowd of horn players to compete with the trap kit. One or two guitars with amplifiers were more than capable of filling a hall with sound. Hollow body electric guitars soon shrank in depth from 75 — 100mm to 50 or less. The innovations in guitar playing spearheaded by the blues vocabulary of players of the 1920s and 1930s and the jazz players of the 1940s provided a new vocabulary of musical expression for this new ensemble of players — rhythm and blues - which is what happens when you put an uptempo aggressive drummer in a blues band of electric guitars and amplified vocals.

Shortly after Fender and Les Paul's developments of the solid body electric guitar came the electric bass guitar, an instrument even more inextricably linked to rock and roll and all that came after. Materially, and

technologically, the stage was now set for a new hybrid popular music. As usual, the fundamental inspiration came from black American culture. I'll get to that in a few moments.

Music must have a distribution system. During the Depression of the 1930s and early 1940s, record sales languished, and the radio became the greatest method of distributing music and promoting record sales. Radio sets dropped precipitously in price in the late 1920s, and when the economy collapsed in 1930, the bands that sold the best and were the most popular were the ones that received the greatest airplay, a fundamental structure in music promotion and distribution prevalent to this very day. Musical record technology developed very little during this time. The dominant record type was the 78rpm record. In the 1930s, 33rpm records were developed, but were used almost exclusively by radio stations, as the turntables for these records were few and expensive.

In the late 1940s, several different formats came to the fore — the 16rpm record, the seven-inch 45rpm record, the 33rpm LP, and other hybrids (like the 12inch 45rpm, or the seven inch 33rpm, etc) were developed. After a bit of wrangling in the corporate cultures, primarily between RCA Victor and Columbia Records, licensing issues were resolved, and everyone was able to proceed forward and make records in any format that were playable on anyone's turntable. This permitted the development of the jukebox.

A complex contraption, the jukebox allowed young people to hear their favorite records in settings where they could congregate for mating rituals. It was in this milieu that Rock and Roll appeared. Another critically important development for the popularization of Rock and Roll was the common availability of the automobile thanks to the relatively enlightened Fordist and Keynesian economic policies of the American Government and the Government's Corporate Owners and Sponsors.

Another important influence of the passenger car was it permitted mingling of people from great distances. Prior to the car, one was limited by how far one could walk or ride a horse drawn carriage, which usually only doubled one's distance. Cars provided increased mobility on an order of magnitude over the horse. By the early 1950s, it was common for older teens of the burgeoning American middle class (and therefore, predominantly white) to have their own car. The radio in the car fed them the music they wanted to hear (Rock and Roll) on the way to the soda shop where they could dance to even more Rock and Roll. Or, they could take the car for a drive to some secluded place, where they could "give up all control on that vinyl tuck and roll" - listening to the Wolfman of Del Rio broadcasting 50,000 watts from Mexico, bouncing off the ionosphere overmuch of the American West — or Alan Freed from Cleveland — or other DJ from New York, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and elsewhere — all playing that "demon rock and roll music".

Thusly wholly associated with teen mating rituals, Rock and Roll was further condemned for its influence over youth and despised for its fundamental stylistic parentage. This music, Rhythm and Blues, was wholly identified with the black community, but was attracting increasing attention from white audiences. This separation of black and white identified musics, which persists to this day, was a sad by-product of the post Reconstruction apartheid that hung like a hideous leaden yoke on the neck of American Culture.

Drawing on music present in Rhythm and Blues, especially with artists like Little Richard, a white DJ in Cleveland, Alan Freed, brought Rhythm and Blues into broader acceptance by calling it "Rock and Roll." So named, the category found a larger racially mixed demographic and quickly grew, catapulting some of its practitioners into super-stardom. One of them would become emblematic of the Initiation Phase: Elvis Presley.

A white man singing black music with a tinge of country music and molded as a pop vocalist in a country where drinking fountains were racially segregated found an immediate audience in one of the most unique demographic flukes in the history of western culture- the post world war 2 Baby Boom, specifically the American Baby Boom. These adolescents had more disposable income than any other generation of young people in history, and they invested their allowances on the procurement of commodities that reflected their interests as rebellious youth- music frowned upon by their racist elders and parents. Music that was rambunctious, danceable, and lyrically tied to their raging hormones. This music was not politically sophisticated. This was music of the mating ritual. The same raging hormones that propelled the jazz beat in the 20s and swing in the 30s and 40s drove Rock and Roll sweaty fevered beat. Of course, their parents, brought up on the complexities of Jazz and Big Band music looked down on Rock and Roll, much the same way their parents, brought up on Tin Pan Alley, Ragtime, Barbershop quartets, and Classical Music looked at Jazz and Big Band, and the same way Rock and Roll parents today look down at Hip Hop and Rap Music.

As rebellious as it was, it wasn't merely the rebellion of Rock and Roll that made it distinctive — it was Rock's dependence on new electronic Technology and the interests created by the enormous wealth of the Baby Boom demographic that brought Rock and Roll into focus. Within a few years, the music industry would understand what Rock and Roll truly represented, and it took one Superstar to bring that point into complete awareness.

Elvis Presley was that superstar — he brought black Rhythm and Blues into a white suburban focus through a tweaked lens of country music and pop, and made millions for himself and the music industry in the process. His incredible success was an unambiguous signal to the industry that the style of Rock and Roll was a viable product, and could hold its own in the music market. Elvis's music, in terms of style and presentation, was completely of the Initiation Phase, but his success made him the harbinger of the next phase- Legitimation.

## **Phase II: Legitimation - Bigger than God**

*Can't buy me love, no...*

- Beatles 1964

As enormous a success Elvis was in the 1950s, it was all to pale in comparison to the onslaught that was to follow in the 1960s. Elvis's success hadn't gone unnoticed, and soon dozens of rock and roll stars and wannabe stars burst onto the scene. In the 1950s, Rock and Roll was viewed with no small skepticism by the more reactionary elements of American Culture, and roundly deplored by the music critical establishment as well. It was seen as oversexed music devised by a despised class (blacks) to corrupt white youth, and purveyed by corrupt DJs - a provocative and explicit music for rebellious children - formally debased and of no musical consequence or value.

On the other hand, business interests, specifically the music publishing and recording industry, saw Rock and Roll in a somewhat different light, as its demographic potential was completely inescapable. To help placate the more reactionary elements of the American Cultural Establishment, more "wholesome" (i.e. white and conservative) purveyors of the genre had to be found to sell the new sound to middle class suburban white America. And stars were found- Pat Boone, Little Peggy March, The Fleetwoods, and others fit right in to the mold, and squeaky clean purveyors, like Dick Clarke, were found to replace the "corrupt" likes of Alan Freed and provide a sanitized Rock and Roll product to white America's Children. It should also be noted that even

with this level of investment and interest in the style, Rock and Roll was still just one style among several in the popular music spectrum, all of them competing for dominance.

The Beatles changed all that.

Cut from working class cloth not very different from Elvis, the Beatles were prone to wearing black leather jackets and blue jeans in their early years as they played off the "rebel" image projected into popular youth culture by the likes of Marlon Brando and James Dean. They toured Europe playing covers of Rhythm and Blues and black American Rock and Rollers (like Chuck Berry and Chubby Checker) and a smattering of original songs. This worked for a short time in the late 1950s, but the Beatles wanted more, and so did their new manager, Brian Epstein. He understood that for the Beatles to truly triumph, they had to break into the American Market, and the way to do that was with a brilliant mass media PR campaign, and a complete change in their presentation. America, a country beset with racial strife, a resurgence in repressive values reminiscent of Victorianism, and an exploding population of fantastically wealthy white kids bent on having a *really good time*, was ripe for the pickings.

Epstein knew the Beatles could never succeed as the greasy rock and rollers they had been hitherto been presenting themselves. James Dean was dead, Marlon Brando had gone on to other roles, and Elvis was property of the US Army. Some of their musical heroes, The Big Bopper and Buddy Holly, were also dead. The corporate distributors had found "cleaner" players and faces in the late Initiation Phase, and to make it big in the States, The Beatles had to "clean up" and re-package themselves. They grew their hair longer, but had it cut in modernist minimalist mop top cuts. They put their motorcycle jackets away, and put on trendy collarless suits a more fashionable friend had designed. And the songs they sang were less racy than the Rhythm and Blues they loved - they wrote songs that were more innocent pop than anything else. They didn't want you to shake a tail feather - they just wanted to hold your hand. With infectious harmonies and jangling electric guitars, the prefabricated foursome demonstrated to white America that Rock and Roll was OK, even "European" - thusly carrying an odd sophistication bestowed by the mantle of European Culture. This also signaled to the music industry that Rock and Roll was truly Legitimate, Dominant, and able to be Really Big Business. International Business.

This legitimacy brought Rock and Roll into tighter focus, and this focus was the withering gaze of corporate capitalism. It didn't take a marketing genius to see that middle class white Americans outnumbered black Americans 9 to 1 and out purchased them 20 to 1. Rock and Roll with a British accent, even in thick Liverpudlian, was exotic and fresh, and permitted white American teenagers (the teenager itself a recently devised concept) the mental and emotional checkpoints to be more involved with Rock and Roll music, which still carried the stigma of its origins. This stigma provided attraction to the rebellious youth, but the rebellion was blunted from the start by its frank focus on the archetypal adolescent issue of the Mating Ritual. Through the Beatles, as through Elvis before, white America could adopt/chop/and change black American music into its own. Elvis's success was of such magnitude that Rock and Roll, especially a White Rock and Roll, was a clear and viable platform for mass marketed success. In this way, Elvis set the stage for the Beatles, and the Beatles set the stage for what followed them. Elvis's success as the Initiation archetype of Rock and Roll was the precursor of the Beatles, the archetype of the Legitimation phase. It was the sophistication of the Beatles that set the stage for the next phase, Professionalization.

As commodities live in the world of signifiers, so too, they live in the world of symbols and archetypes. Humans, as social organisms, want to have some connection to other people, especially the other people who make the objects they use. We yearn for relationship, we yearn for contact with others of our kind. And people we see as "successful" hold a special attraction. But humans have an individually fixed capacity for information assimilation and an individually fixed amount of time in which to assimilate it. Therefore, we reduce much of what we do to a manipulation of symbols and archetypes as much as possible. We can't take in the producer of the commodity object- it is an alienated product of commodity capitalism- we have no connection to the people at the pressing plant. We do have a kind of relationship with the people who produce the music that is on the record itself — they record it, we buy it. We are curious about them, so we inquire about them and are met with Public Relations material, which must suffice — we can't LIVE with them, they are not our neighbors, and so therefore we must satisfy ourselves with whatever material we can collect about them.

In the process, the artist is abstracted into mythology, symbol, and archetype- first they are someone of note or interest, then they are heroes, and then they pass to God status, depending on the level of popularity and abstraction. There are Big Heroes, there are small heroes. With persistence, effort, and luck, small heroes become Big Heroes, and Big Heroes compete for God status. This is all achieved through the monetization and commodification and distribution of every data point in the mythology of the Artist. Those artists who are most capable of manipulating their media image and public presentations will garner greater attraction or targeted attraction in a given market. Commodity capitalism will cheerfully sell every instance of the myth's communications. In this way, the "Hero" is rendered product — reified for consumption, as every instance and aspect of the Hero's myth is monetized and packaged. Artists with more generic appeal (as opposed to artists with more focused appeal) will tend to attract greater investment. Generic appeal is historical and temporary.

Just in order to participate in the market, the myth process and its attendant reifications are presented as a fait accompli — from the musician's "One Sheet" and 8x10 glossy photo presentations to distribution networks and other corporate organizations, to an Artist's Statement of Purpose in the gallery/museum/grant writing way of labor. Each of these is a conflation of life, in all of its messy complexity, into a narrow distilled object, subject to market forces and monetary interest, and all of it grossly distortive and mythological. Weaving their fictions through and with the archetypes, abstractions, and symbols, the style lives in and among these archetypes, abstractions, and symbols, as itself becomes an abstraction, symbol, and hypertype in the labyrinth of the language function of the human brain and exchange of symbols between brains.

These myth building exercises and objects reinforce themselves — myth feeds myth — and lead to further commodifications and monetizations. For example, early in their career, the Beatles were sold as being "single and available" even though John Lennon was married. Frequently, Mrs. Lennon was told by Beatles handlers to stay back in the shadows- a single John sells better than a married John.

All the Beatles were quickly mythologised. John was the smart and witty one. Paul was the pretty one with the nice voice. George was the quiet and spiritual one, and Ringo was the homely but funny and sweet one. These representations were easier to sell than the complex and contradictory people they represented. Lunch boxes, cartoons, trading cards, photos, posters, key chains, wigs, T-Shirts and boots — the list of Beatles paraphernalia was nearly endless, and almost all of it is presently rotting away in landfill projects around the world. But between the factory and the landfill, the object changed hands between producer and consumer, and money was made. Each dollar of profit made in the selling of the Beatles mythology, lent that much more Legitimacy to the uber-commodity of Rock and Roll, soon distilled into Rock.

The legitimacy of the Rock enterprise bestowed by the investment in the Beatles by millions of consumers of Beatle product, engendered a massive increase in the investment in the Rock project. Everyone wanted the "Next Beatles." This was sometimes carried to comic result — the progressive rock outfit "Faust" got their record contract in the late 1960s by being sold to the record company as "The German Beatles". The company was less than amused when the tapes were delivered... The level of investment was amazing and steep, which is typical of the late Legitimation phase. After a few attempts with other record companies, the psychedelic / progressive band The United States of America was signed to Columbia because they "were really good, we showed up on time, and weren't strung out on drugs." (according to Dorothy Moskowitz).

With literally hundreds of bands getting "signed" onto major labels, thousands more applied themselves to the investment system, and this created competition. Now, people had to be THE BEST rockers. And rock had to be THE BEST style of music. The competence of musicians on their instruments had to be excellent and innovative, but the style had to now branch out and fill every marketing niche possible. It is with the ascendance of the Beatles that they, like Elvis before them, were harbingers of the next phase: Professionalization. Thanks to the level of investment in the Legitimation phase, the Professionalization phase was not long in coming.

### **Phase III: Professionalization - More, Better, Faster**

*I'm just a singer in a rock and roll band!*

- Moody Blues 1972

*The fate of all mankind, I fear, is in the hands of fools.*

- King Crimson 1969

Professionalization was a logical consequence of Legitimation, and the rate of Professionalization was the result of the investment in Legitimation. The Professionalization phase of Rock music was what made Rock and Roll "Rock", and like the music itself, the Professionalization phase exploded out of the Legitimation phase.

The harbinger of the Professionalization phase in Rock music was the avatar of the Legitimation Phase - the Beatles. Just as they demonstrated the legitimacy of Rock and Roll, so too, they demonstrated a few of the main aspects of the Professionalization phase — stylistic diversity, technical excellence and proficiency, and compliance with corporate structure. The stylistic diversity is easily demonstrable- from the pretty pop of "Help", to the abstract musique concrete of "Revolution #9", the Beatles demonstrated their enormous talent in songwriting with the proficiency of their compositions and prodigious output. The same developments were seen in the style — from Holly to Hendrix, from the Fleetwoods to Frampton, the Professionalization of Rock Music was an unambiguous response to the increased competition in the Rock Music market and the stylistic inflation experienced at the behest of its varied and wealthy demographic.

Indeed, one of the cardinal aspects of the Professionalization phase is its stylistic diversity. Because of the level of investment, the diversification was rapid — so rapid that the sub-genres didn't have time to flourish into their own proper genres. Rock music devolved from Rock and Roll, and as it reached into other stylistic references the age of "hyphen" Rock or simply, "Rock" began. The Roll in Rock was left to denote music of the Initiation and Legitimation Phase. In a curiously inverted twist, Rock and Roll thusly became a genre of itself. With

(hyphen) Rock, Rock's stylistic diversification became indexical and thusly all pervasive. Rock is a product of its own Professionalization phase.

Each category of Rock soon diversified so as to exploit every possible taste and preference, resulting in the filling of every niche. At the same time, musical virtuosity and technical proficiency competed to dizzying heights, reaching a zenith in the early to mid 1970s with groups like Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, Renaissance, Henry Cow, National Health, Soft Machine, Pink Floyd, Curved Air, and others. With playing abilities second to none, frequently classically trained, and production standards and capabilities orders of magnitude beyond what had obtained a mere 5 — 10 years earlier, the new "Progressive" Rock musician set new standards for musicianship in Rock Music playing. As Rock diversified and increasingly became the domain of white musicians playing to white audiences, the parallel developments of music in American black culture were forming their own path through the pattern of Commodity Lifecycles.

As the almost completely white Rock music dominated American culture by virtue of its demographic, the Baby Boom, black American music was also deeply affected, and resulted in largely parallel developments of musical styles by and for black America. This also followed the Lifecycle Process of Rock, albeit at a different pace and scale, due to the exigencies of the relative size and status of its constituent demographic and level of investment. By the time Rock appeared in the Professionalization phase of the late 60s and early 70s, black Americans had developed and Professionalized their own styles, resulting in Motown, Soul, Funk, and (later) Disco.

America, racially polarized as ever, internalized and acculturated its apartheid. As apartheid was officially abandoned in the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, racial distinction was transduced into cultural diversity. Whites had (hyphen) Rock, blacks had Funk, Soul, R&B, etc. Oddly, this was not accomplished from the top down, but rose naturally from the social contradictions that obtained and the purchasing decisions of the relevant consumer audiences.

As with Jazz, in the Professionalization phase of Rock, much of it had developed into something essentially undanceable. Just as people sat around nodding their heads to the complexities of Parker and Monk, so too, Rock audiences were nodding their heads to the complexities of King Crimson, Genesis, Yes, Emerson Lake and Palmer, Pink Floyd and other progressive rockers on the one end, and the likes of Carly Simon, Jackson Browne, Elton John and others — all described by their musical categories. The Professionalization and Renewal of Jazz had gone horribly horribly wrong for Jazz, and resulted in people fleeing Jazz with the development of interest in Rhythm and Blues and a stronger pop music market of amplified vocalists. The result was a catastrophic loss of listenership for Jazz. In 1946, Jazz was more than a mere majority of record sales- it was more like there was a Jazz Record Market with other styles crowded to the periphery in single digits each. By 1956, a mere ten years later, Jazz had shrunk to single digits, with pop vocalists, rock and roll, country, and rhythm and blues, racking up the vast majority of sales.

The resistance to the Professionalization trend in Rock music took several forms, the most famous being Punk Rock and Disco, both products of the indexical expansion of Rock Music's Professionalized stylistic explosion. Punk and Disco were two polar opposite styles, and had little in common with each other, either in terms of their targeted audiences (aging first wave boomers partying their butts off to Disco, and second wave boomers coming of age and filled with disgust and anger at the society of their parents and the bloated hypocritical hippie drivel of their older peers all wildly overstated in Punk) except a disdain for the bloated professionals of Rock music on the Punk and, and its lack of dance ability and usefulness to a newer generation seeking their music for mating

rituals. And it was from a direction of anti-intellectualism that Punk Rock developed in the British Working/Unemployed Classes of the mid 1970s, heavily influenced by proto-punk rockers like the New York sound of the Velvet Underground, The New York Dolls, and various garage bands from the sixties like the Seeds and the Trashmen, with a healthy blast from the early Who and Kinks, that Punk took its reactionary musical cues.

With the stylistic agonistics of Disco and Punk and ProgRock aside, the demographic was still growing for rock music, and the Index was there to provide ever-greater Rock stylistic expansion, and by the mid 1970s, the stylistic index of Rock was largely complete:

- Folk Rock,
- Country Rock,
- Jazz Rock,
- Classical Rock,
- Progressive Rock,
- Punk Rock,
- Psychedelic Rock,
- Raga Rock,
- Pub Rock,
- Heavy Metal,
- Heavy Rock,
- Hard Rock,
- Glam Rock,
- Soft Rock,
- Art Rock,
- Rock and Roll,
- DooWop,

The list went on and on and on and on.

Each represented a taste that needed satiation, an interest to be fulfilled, and a dollar to be made. At the point in the mid 1970s, it became clear that some of these interests were more profitable than others as they had a larger demographic. Raga Rock died quickly with Nehru jackets, but Soft Rock drones on to the present day. With the arrival of Disco and Punk, Dancing Fun and Blind Angry Teenage Rage had also been brought into the picture as marketable items. With that the consolidations began - there was great money to be made in mainstream rock, and the more efficient providers and more competent marketing schemes were transforming the market and the stylistic developments of the music, not to mention the imaginary soundtracks by which people measured and qualified their lives.

It was this level of consciousness in the mid 1970s that gave the world Punk, Disco, and Kiss that forced the music industry, now a huge concern and a vital part of American Culture as never before, into a Renewal period of consolidation and reappraisal. An example of this process reflected in creative output would be the career of Roxy Music, which began at the height of the Professionalization phase and vanished in the Intensification Phase.

Their first record started with ReMake ReModel, a standard rock and roll tune done very differently, with elliptical lyrics, synth bleeps, and a raging loud guitar. Three records later, the bass player from King Crimson, John Wetton, was providing his world class playing skills for Roxy, with Eddie Jobson from Curved Air on keyboards and violin. They, with Bill Bruford (formerly of Yes and King Crimson) and Alan Holdsworth on guitar formed UK, a progressive rock act with a mainstream hard rock sensibility. Wetton went on to form Asia, a very popular group of the 1980s, while Bruford went back to the complexities of King Crimson. During this same period, Roxy Music began making less abrasive rock music, as they and their demographic aged over the decade or so of their productions. During the Renewal Phase, Love Is The Drug, by Roxy Music, was a dance hit, and as their audience left the disco and settled into subdued lives, so too, Roxy Music made softer and softer music, and was met with increasing popularity. At the height of their popularity, they split up, at the flowering of the Intensification Phase. This was likely an unintentional parallelism- the various members of Roxy couldn't have predicted the economic and lifestyle moves in their audience, nor could they have predicted the shifts in the demographic- Roxy Music just made Rock Music, and by intuitively following their own interests in their music that reflected concrete changes in their own lives, and adjusting the sound of their music accordingly, they were able to speak to others in their generation in a way that sold a lot of records.

It was the music industry's marketer and analysts looking objectively at the latest developments in the Professionalization phase (mimicked by Roxy's shift in tone) that brought about the next phase in Rock, the Renewal Phase.

#### **Phase IV: Renewal - As You Like It**

*M.O.R. is good.*

*M.O.R. is safe.*

*M.O.R. is you.*

- Godley and Creme, 1978

*When there's no future, how can there be sin?*

- Sex Pistols, 1977

*Video killed the radio star.*

- Bruce Wooley, 1979

Markets follow demographics, and in the mid 1970s, the demographic of the Baby Boom was aging. The first wave was now in its 30s, and the second wave in its teens and twenties. As the Boom aged, so too did the music market that provided the soundtrack to the imaginary film that ran through their heads they called 'Their Lives'. The first wave of Boomers, the kids of 1946 - 1954, defined (and thanks to the size of that population burst, continue to define) many aspects of American culture. As the Boom ages further it will continue to define many aspects of American culture, and thanks to America's imperial grasp, many parts of world culture as well. In the mid 1970s, the Rock music market began a series of consolidations as the managers, musicians, distributors, and consumers of the music industry re-assessed their respective positions relative to each other and the music itself.

In terms of the management, distribution and marketing of the music, this re-assessment took the form of a sclerotic defining of markets and the balkanization of style and methods of music working that make those styles. These stylistic boundaries served to amplify the differences between these genres, permitting the artists in

these categories to target and more effectively reach specific audiences who could be assured of a product that met their needs. While Punk Rock brought the angry youth of the world into the orbit of Rock, singers like Jackson Browne and Dan Fogelberg were successfully catering to their older hippie audiences. Radio stations no longer played what the DJ wanted to, and most of them had given up that power to programming directors and the indie distributors who provide and pay the station to play their music. As the first wave of boomers aged into the same suburban parents their parents brought them up to be, the musical interests that were once so vital and emblematic of their generation were kicked farther into the background of their lives which were now swamped with young families, jobs, and mortgages. What was once a fascination with the latest sound became a thirst for the anesthetic aesthetic of self-absorbed nostalgia and the relentless repackaging of 'their music' in ever increasingly blander arrangements and configurations. M.O.R. (Middle Of the Road) A.O.R. (Album Oriented Rock) were the logical results - not styles in themselves, but marketing strategies masquerading as styles, and soon marketed as Lifestyles. Furthermore, this Renewed system of Rock proved its structural robustness by having a built-in self-critical establishment. With each style in competition with the other, each is held in relativistic equality, and each has its own devoted audience and devoted practitioners. Punk Rockers and Country Rockers could find each other equally revolting. The Punk Rockers could see the Country Rockers (and everyone else except themselves for the most part) as a bunch of reactionary suburban sellouts and traitors to the spirit of Rock and Roll, and the Country Rockers could see the Punk Rockers as a bunch of pretentious snotty faced art damaged urban upstart idiots with questionable tastes in clothing and jewelry. And they could both be right about each other.

Another aspect of the Renewal phase in the management of the Rock music market was the consolidations that occurred in the music industry. As the style of Rock evolved, so to did the industry that created it. Each label carried its own stable of artists, and these stables were valuable properties. Smaller independent labels were purchased and then incorporated into larger music companies, presaging the kinds of corporate maneuvering that was to be one of the more prominent features of the Intensification Phase. These consolidations helped solidify the career trajectories of artists: rehearse, make a demo, play concerts, get noticed, get signed to a label. The creation of these Mega-labels permitted a kind of 'minor leagues' system of rock music recruitment. As everyone couldn't be signed to a Major Label, more could be signed to a Minor Label, less pejoratively known as an Independent Label. Many of these independent labels (indie labels) worked closely with major labels, functioning as talent brokers. The indie Rock Group, REM, was signed to a small label as a small band in Georgia with a solid following through the indie label. A Major Label found them interesting and set about purchasing REM from their indie label contract. It is to the Indie Label's credit that they were able to gouge the major label for as much money as they could for the benefit of REM and themselves. After signing to the major label, REM quickly became superstars thanks to the marketing and distribution budget of the major label.

It is in the Renewal Phase that the consolidated music management industry most fully developed the 'indie' distributor system (this has nothing to do with 'Indie' labels. The lack of better terms for these things is a testament to the paucity of imagination that exists at the major labels). This system is basically an institutionalized form of the very Payola that destroyed the career of Alan Freed, the deceased alcoholic godfather/midwife of Rock and Roll so many years earlier. This system operates like this:

Rather than pay DJs to play certain songs, which would be a violation of the law, the labels pay indie distributors to plug their product to the programming directors of radio stations. The programming directors are totally overwhelmed by the volume of product. Even in a relatively narrow cast market of say, a pre-fabricated category

like 'soft rock', there are literally hundreds and hundreds of releases every year, and no programming director has the time or staff to listen to it all. The indie distributor clarifies the situation and simplifies his job a great deal. The label pays the indie to plug a record, the indie finds the right station, and bingo- the record gets airplay. With airplay come more record sales, and the money spent on the indie is recouped several, and sometimes many, times over. In this way, the entire question of corruption is obviated and transformed through its complete institutionalization through 'service provision'. The development of this distribution system into its present naked force-feeding of the radio network system is a trait of the Intensification phase, discussed later.

Another major aspect, and the culmination, of the Renewal phase (and harbinger of the Intensification Phase) was the Renewal of the Product itself. This took two forms - one the development of the music video industry, and the other, the development of the Compact Disc.

There have been 'music videos' for decades- ever since the development of the 'talkies' in the movie industry, there have been musical shorts, usually played before a main feature. I personally remember seeing a film of Les Paul and Mary Ford's song of 'I'm Sitting on Top of the World' while visiting friends in the UK in July 1988. Mary was wearing a blue checked country dress, and was sitting on a hay bale in faux farm scenery, singing to herself in multipart harmony with Les Paul's double-speed guitars merrily skipping in hyper drive behind her voice. The videola was another innovation in the 1950s that presaged MTV. The novelty of MTV was that it was all music videos, all the time. Soon, it became a requirement for a song to release an accompanying video on MTV. The development of music videos soon followed its own rapid maturation, from Legitimation with MTV to the multimillion-dollar professional extravaganzas of Michael Jackson, to the Renewal and re-appraisal of the MTV industry in the early 1990s, to its present level of Intensification. In some cases, the video became one of the more salient features of the song- the video of *Close to the (Edit)* by the Art of Noise was a case in point. They already had a hit with *Beatbox- Close to the (Edit)* was propelled by the arresting image of the band hacking a grand piano to flinders. Madonna's videos were always provocative and instrumental to the sales success of the music. Michael Jackson's videos were amazingly expensive, and were thoroughgoing filmmaking enterprises that set new standards for Professionalization in the MTV industry. It was in the world of MTV that Intensification took deep root. We'll get to that later.

The development of the compact disc was a critically important part of the Renewal process, and was the final moment in the Renewal process. This was a frightfully important shift- from analogue to digital representation of sound- that its impact cannot be understated, although, for the sake of present brevity I will try. Digital media was an instant hit with those involved with the production of records. The clarity of the recordings were unparalleled. The convenience of their operation surpassed that of the compact cassette tape. They cost LESS than an LP to make, used less resources, were easier and cheaper to ship, and the prices charged for them were much higher than that of a vinyl LP record. Once the CD was thoroughly assimilated into the production/distribution chain and achieved complete market saturation, profits soared thanks to the synergies of the CD's inherent material advantages over vinyl LPs.

Digital media has a number of advantages, and some of these advantages come with significant disadvantages. One of these (dis) advantages is the ability for digital media to be instantly copied and distributed. However, when the 'Red Book' music CD was first developed in the early to mid 1980s, this was not an issue- if a computer had a megabyte of RAM and ran over 8mHz, it was an expensive machine. Gigabyte hard drives were impossibly expensive, and CD burners were huge, slow, and terrifically expensive- only a major corporation or company dedicated to CD production could possibly afford such monstrosities. But the seeds were there- and the

advantages and disadvantages of the digital media were to become a hallmark of the Intensification Phase, just as it was the final moment of the Renewal Phase.

While the styles of Punk and Disco were very much part of the fulfillment of the Professionalization Phase - they were styles filling the index - they were also something more, something greater and indicated that the Renewal Phase, as the phase where Rock had become 'conscious' of itself and had to incorporate self criticism, had reached a critical impasse, and this made Disco and Punk the poster children and most obvious signifiers of the Renewal Phase. Even though they were, stylistically and by their nature, part of the formal and indexical completion of the Professionalization Phase, and coming as they did in the mid 1970s, they were a mental turning away from the promise of the Professionalization phase's greatest dreams, and a turning toward comfort and renewable markets. Rock Blinked. The watchwords of Renewal were 'Re-appraisal', 'Reconsideration', 'Market - Analysis', 'Consolidation', 'Efficiency'.

Remake. Remodel. Completion of the Index.

Everything that came afterward was a furtherance of the processes inherent in the Renewal Phase. The next Phase, the end of which is fast approaching for Rock, is where these processes are amplified, and in their quantity acquire an entirely new quality- the phase of Intensification.

### **Phase V: Intensification - Everybody Gets What They Want, in Spades.**

*Here we are now - entertain us!*

- Nirvana, 1992

*Everyone's been cast for a part in our play.*

- Severed Heads, 1998

In many ways, the Intensification Phase is very much like the Renewal Phase- it's an analytical situation, one of cool appraisal. However, the difference is one of scale and quantity, and in the Intensification Phase, the quantity takes on a quality all of its own. Example: drop a flea, a human, and an elephant from 3000 times their respective heights onto a slab of concrete. The flea would hop away, the human would die, and the elephant would basically explode. The flea lives, the elephant disintegrates - scale matters. And scale is critical to the Intensification Phase of Rock Music, and, in many ways, the Music Industry itself. It is the phase that presently obtains, but will not obtain much longer. We live in a world of intensified media (The Mass Music Industry, Rock and Roll, and broadcast Television are all roughly the same age, and have grown together through the same phases, albeit, not all at the same rate- for instance, standard broadcast TV is rolling into its Dissolution Phase as digital TV is being born, in the face of unquestionable cable ascendancy and internet access) and this media system is all encompassing to the dissemination of cultural ideas (both autochthonic and prefabricated) and distribution of cultural commodities (of most any variety). The development of computer networks and peer to peer (P2P) distribution systems seemed, at first, to have posed great challenges to the powers in the music industry, and the more reactionary among them have been the most litigious in trying to prevent P2P from arriving in any way that is disruptive to the status quo designs and desires of the RIAA and the media conglomerates.

Yes, at this writing, there are alternatives to Napster, such as Morpheus and audioGalaxy, but I predict their demise by June 2002. Their dependence on a central server for version tracking, advertising routing, and download tracking will prove to be their demise. Yes, both of their systems are based on the Gnutella engine, and are therefore much more decentralized than Napster, but their adaptations of Gnutella are enough that, I believe, the forces of reaction will likely take them down very soon, seeing how Napster has been completely emasculated into yet another music rental service. Some say, 'It doesn't matter, the MP3 genie's out of the bottle! It'll just drift somewhere else!' The problem with that position is its utter irrelevance. The RIAA and Entertainment Conglomerates care less and less about that, and are being aided and abetted by Microsoft. The RIAA and Entertainment Conglomerates are paying more attention to the '95% rule', which says that if you have a hackable system, 95% of the people who use the system will not have the interest or skillset to hack it. With appropriate rear-guard actions of litigating against the likes of Napster and any Gnutella-like service that has a central tracking server system to keep the fringes at bay, they can depend on 95% of the people being good little consumers and cheerfully accept whatever crap they choose to put in the Intensified Music pipeline (in response to the consumer trends and choices of said 95%). In this way, the Conglomerates maintain their profit margins, and have a built in radical critique of their actions, so they can more closely operate and serve the needs (however manufactured and artificial) demographic/economic support that permits their consumerist economic model to persist. As long as most of the people who are playing the game play by their rules, they are happy. If some are bending things and it gets noticeable, they'll litigate. And the few percent who are bound and determined to fight them- They Don't Care. It doesn't affect their profit margins or models too badly, and gives them a built in critique and marketing analysis / trend spotting tool. Just like a healthy dose of Marxism makes for a better capitalist.

This is all possible in our present Intensification Phase as it is a world of simulations. Everything in the environment always already exists in simulation - it is all there for the purpose of reproduction and mass distribution. Thus, the story of Napster is one of the crowning moments of the Intensification Phase of the Rock Music Market and in time, I believe, will be seen as a harbinger of its impending Dissolution.

As stylistic innovation has been indexical for the past 25 years, the interest is no longer in forwarding the language of rock music - punk rock's demand of three chords and inner commitment evacuated any such effort. This was aided and abetted by a critical establishment hostile to any progressive movements in rock music, and who frequently derided such movements as pretentious and antithetical to their understanding of what constitutes 'good' rock music. This reactionary turn prevented the catastrophic demise of rock music in an emulation of the immolation Jazz experienced in the 1950s. However, what these critics fail to understand, (and given that we're talking Rock Music Critics, by and large, we're not usually talking about a cohesive group of intellectuals as much as we're addressing mouthpieces of one department in the entertainment industry - like film 'critics') is their position as the gatekeepers and prison guards of the dominant music cultural discussion system; so even as they decry the oppressive forces in music and tear down 'sell outs' they don't see how their petty carping truly doesn't matter - as it was all a pre-fab sell out from the get-go, and their discussion at this point is just another part of the cultural marketing machinery. A much more productive inquiry and critical stance for popular music criticism would be to abandon the reactionary Manichean us vs. them position that has hitherto obtained in the popular music critical system - where uncompromising progression and experimentation are ignored or derided at one end, and popularity is seen as an integral defect and indication of co-option on the other. Neither position is productive, and neither points to the concerns of the larger markets or the needs of a public drowning in musical product and seeking an intelligent perspective and worthwhile guidance. It would be much more useful

to examine artists and their works for what they are, and to have a more affirmative / analytical stance that is critical insofar as it looks to the premises of the work and judges its success by the merits integral to the work itself and the context the work creates within the oeuvre of the artist's history and the culture at large.

But, I digress - the failures of the rock music critical establishment are many and too obvious to continue evaluating. Suffice to say, stylistic development in rock has largely ground to a halt as it circles its wagons and prepares for the long night of Dissolution. This saturation is also part of the Intensification phase - indeed, a large part of Intensification is the struggle to find profitable niches of commodity distribution in an increasingly saturated market. Hence the development of 'artificial' markets and niches. Examples of this had roots in the Legitimation phase and the packaging of Beatlemania. The difference now is that Beatlemania is past, and its lessons are laid bare for all to see. Such marketing strategies are premised on a large and naïve demographic - the youngest people are usually the most manipulated. This breeds cynicism, but only after one has been 'had'. Therefore, younger and younger groups of people are continually exploited with and by prefabricated heroes. This explains the continual success of youth oriented stars - from David Cassidy to Britney Spears. The demographic is always already too young to understand the manipulation, and is sucked in every time through the intensified and completely saturated media environment. Everybody gets what they want - *in spades*. The record companies rake it in, and a certain few artists make huge quantities of money, while the rest spend their lives working dreary day jobs when they're not crammed in an old van hustling from one smoky pub where no one listens to them to the next smoky pub where no one listens to them.

P2P will not beat this system. Increasingly complex digital copy protection systems (with forerunners like Macrovision) will prevent the vast majority of listeners from duplicating the digital data (formerly known as recorded music), and as long as some huge percentage is law abiding (say, 95%) the record companies and rights holders will clear massive profits. Hence, P2P and music rental systems will only serve to sharpen the system as the marketing data gained from download logs indicates with enormous precision ever smaller but targetable niches for the Intensified Market to service and exploit. In this way, P2P plays directly into the hands of the Intensification of Rock music and its domination by the entertainment industry, just as it announces Rock's immanent Dissolution.

The Intensification Phase came about quickly after the development of the CD, MTV, and the relaxation of anti-trust opposition in the government, courtesy of the Reagan / Bush I administrations, and the craven compliant congresses they dealt with. It was at this time that the stage was set for the megamergers in the entertainment industry. As these mergers occurred, music labels, once giant corporations unto themselves, fell prey to media conglomerates who saw music as one more branch of their media empires.

The development of MTV was important this way. As I noted previously, music films had been around for quite some time, going back to the videola in the 1950s. I personally remember seeing a film of Les Paul and Mary Ford's song of 'I'm Sitting on Top of the World' while visiting friends in the UK in July 1988. Mary was wearing a blue checked country dress, and was sitting on a hay bale in faux farm scenery, singing to herself in multipart harmony with Les Paul's double-speed guitars merrily skipping into hyper drive behind her voice. I thought- my God, this is hokey! But then I realized this was probably shot in 1954 or so, and must have seemed otherworldly to viewers then.

So, too, MTV seemed like it had landed from some strange planet. Just as MTV appeared at the height of the Renewal Phase of Rock (New Wave), it was the harbinger of the Intensification Phase. The invention of the CD

was the final nail in the coffin of the Renewal Phase. With the CD and MTV, the stage was set for a new round of consumerist accumulation, where MTV would manufacture the need through its manipulation of young minds with disposable income to procure the new digital format. Older audiences were soon brought into fold through VH1, as MTV entered its Professionalization phase. MTV renewed itself with an analysis of its viewers, resulting in a reduction of music videos in favor of teen / young adult entertainment. As MTV became ever more tightly integrated with the Media Conglomerates, it became an important tool in the intensification phase of Rock. Groups like Nirvana and the grunge scene thought that being sincere meant something. What they failed to realize is that in the world of simulations, (as David Bowie proved in the 1970s) sincerity is just another pose. Nirvana et al were eaten for breakfast by the conglomerates. In the Intensification Phase, the niche fulfillment process of the Professionalization phase is itself professionalized - niches are artificially, if not self-consciously, derived from the index. Each niche is held as a valid position, and is promoted relative to its demographic potential. Nothing shocks. Shocking material is seen as its own genre and niche. Every signifier of resistance is rendered a commodity. Stockbrokers bought copies of 'Kapital' by Marx, to learn and guide their system through the shoals of opposition, and the publishers of Marx thusly profit. Anarchistic punk rock becomes another business. That the business leaders don't wear suits and ties is of no consequence. The blue jeans of resistance in the 60s are now the emblems of corporate conformity.

At the height of the Renewal Phase, a number of groups made a living making music with left wing lyrics - examples: Gang of Four, Red Crayola, Au Pairs, Heaven 17, among others. This became another niche in the index. Their 'tradition' of resistance in music had its predecessors and will have its descendants. The contradictions in this situation are obvious, deep, and problematic.

1. For such artists to reach a large audience, they must engage in mass distribution of signifier objects, which are presented as commodities.
2. If their message reaches a large enough audience, problems of scale and continuity intrude on the message and the messengers, i.e., they become part of the problem.
3. The critiques presented by these artists are then assimilated to varying degrees by the very institutions and people the artists most oppose. This is done in order to make for a more seductive and convincing marketing system.

In each of these scenarios, the winner is the commodity culture as it is so closely tied to the economic substructure as social and reproductive forces blunt and quiet the disruptive forces.

The Intensified market would prefer to manufacture predictable needs to a predictable consumer who will dutifully procure predictable commodities. Given the inherently chaotic nature of markets, it is difficult to make predictions, hence, the emphasis on pre-packaged goods. Over time, certain markets have come forward as stable (i.e. acceptably variable) points of investment. This is nowhere near a comprehensive list, but it provides a general guide:

1. The youth market, and its turnover and demand for fresh young faces.
2. The resistance market. It will always fight against commodification, co-option, reification, etc., and is therefore eminently predictable, if cagey and wily. Following its movement in innovation and perspective points to new vistas and marketing niches and tools.

3.Nostalgia markets. As most popular music is music for mating rituals, when a population becomes less attached to the search for a mate (either by finding a mate and forming family units, or simply ages out of the hormonal extravaganza of early / young adulthood) their interest in developments in popular music decreases, and often freezes - where certain works remind them of certain and important times in their mating rituals. These times are burned into their memory, and the music of the time is closely attached. This permits the development of 'Oldies' formats for broadcasters to narrowcast their advertising message, as commercial broadcasting content can only be seen as a means to keep one's attention between commercial breaks. All demographics require service, and such station formatting permits advertisers to speak to constituencies that will likely have similar interests that are congruent to the product the advertiser is selling. This first began in the mid 1970s with the Renewal Phase of Rock and the first consolidations of the Rock Music industry and the Radio Broadcasting industry. During the Intensification Phase, this process is expanded. As it expands, its scale changes its quality, and Nostalgic Niches are invented to further the process. The nostalgia niche is bound to grow as populations expand.

4.Multi-cultural expansion of the index. With the globalization of the capitalist economy, cultures from around the world have been added to the index and can generate indices of their own as they develop and professionalize their own internal markets. Balinese / Ethiopian Heavy Metal Drum and Bass anyone?

The Intensification Phase has been the longest for Rock, going on some 20 years. As long as the demographic continues investing in the product at a sufficient rate where the producers and distributors find it attractive, the Intensification can go on for quite some time. Eventually, the demographic supporting Rock will either die off or lose interest, or some degree of both, and Rock will enter its Dissolution Phase.

It is my contention that it has already entered the Dissolution Phase. Unlike Jazz, whose decline to obscurity happened in a matter of a few years, Rock's reduction is proving to be more gradual. It's not going to disappear overnight-it's going to drift into the sunset bathed in a golden light, reflecting the narcissism of its demographic.

## **Phase VI - Dissolution**

It isn't dead, really. It just bloats up in the sun and smells really weird while the buzzards pick at the bones.

*Rock is dead - long live Rock.*

- The Who (1979)

*... (17) and no one will step forward from the shadow saying (18) "the journey forward includes movement into despair" (19) and you will be gathering strength (20) even as you don't understand (21) and certain words like love and ... (22) integrity will be drawn into your spine. (23) and then one day... (24) you will turn off the TV.*

*Precious candles - your light is your own ...*

- Jane Siberry (1995)

*"Death seed, blind man's greed, Poet's starving children bleed  
Nothing he's got he really needs, Twenty first century schizoid man."*

- King Crimson (1969)

It's happening. It's happening now, all around us. The creeping death. The demographic is dying off, and Rock, as a style and a force in commodity culture, is dormant as it sells millions and millions of records. There are

great works being made every day, but it's all being vented into a cultural vacuum, like so much jetsam from a derelict music starship. The dissolution phase started with the building of a mausoleum - the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. There, the bones, clothes, and divine instruments of Rock's saints and prophets are venerated by millions of pilgrims making hajj to the rock and roll Qa'aba. Museums are where great art goes to die in a public spectacle of execution, and the Rock and Roll Hall of fame is no exception. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame was another harbinger of the Dissolution Phase of Rock Music.

Given the enormous popularity Rock music enjoyed, it is unlikely that it will disappear completely for quite some time, and like its grandparents of jazz, blues, and country music, it will have a following for quite a long time. Unlike Jazz, when Rock renewed, it renewed for accessibility at the expense of integrity, and presided over the Dissolution of Jazz. When Jazz intensified and tried to grasp other markets, rock saw it as just another rank and file in the style index, and the Fusion was left to flounder - despised by the Rock critical establishment as pretentious and despised by the Jazz critical establishment as a dull-witted stepchild, the resulting furor threw Jazz into a deeper funk and an even smaller demographic of Dissolution while the Rock juggernaut spun into the high gear of desolation in its Intensification.

Now? There's a lot of jazz being played, but few people listen to it, and even fewer paying to see it. Rock is less popular than it once was, as it is facing a HipHop competition that is well into its renewal phase, but Rock's Intensification was so spectacularly successful, that it is the musical wallpaper for much of contemporary musical experience. For decades, advertising has had its hackles into Rock music - selling everything from Chevy Trucks to Soap Flakes. Rock has intensified itself into every nook and cranny of the American audio spectrum, and while other competing styles have brought the music market into a multipolar power system where, among popular styles, Rock is one among several, Rock is and will be an enormous force to reckon with over the next few decades as its strength wanes and its stylistic signifiers slowly disappear from the musical landscape.

Over time, the dominance of rock will diminish, and it is likely that it will diminish most in the next 20 years. Just as Jazz and Tin Pan Alley's influences can still be seen in music making and songwriting, so too, Rock's influence will be felt for decades to come. As ever, technology sits in an important position in the development of musical styles. Just as Ludwig's development of the trap kit permitted the creation of Jazz, and Leo Fender and Les Paul's innovations in electric guitar and bass permitted rock and roll, so too, modern computer technology is influencing the development of present styles, and will deeply influence the development of future styles. Of course, this will continue to obtain as long as electrical energy is cheap, steady, and plentiful. If energy gets scarce or expensive over an extended period of time, there would likely be a dramatic return to live performances of acoustic instruments. The creative spirit will continue in any context where there are people, materials, and time - the Muse will not be denied.

In the slow death of Dissolution, superior works will be made. In fact, I argue that some of the greatest moments in Jazz or Rock playing have yet to be played as the player has yet to be born. The same is true for Rock music. One can look at the Dissolution process as a death, or as a withdrawal. England has withdrawn from Empire, and handed the reins over to the USA. But England is still a vibrant and decent place to live, and its people live worthwhile, interesting, and colorful lives. The Vikings set sail for home many centuries ago, but Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes find their Nordic world just as vital and rewarding as any. So too, will Rock. Indeed, freed from the responsibilities of stylistic hegemony, unencumbered by the burden of domination, empire, and the

armor of endless defense, Rock can actually breathe more easily. Once the heat is off, the limelights are low, the crowds are gone, "the wine is flat, and the coffee has long gone cold", the real playing can begin...

**Lifecycles – PostScript** (*Where we look into a crystal ball and find it empty.*)

*I've seen the Future baby, it is murder.*

- Leonard Cohen (1992)

*Civilization is burning down! Burning down!*

- Red Crayola (1979)

As we face the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we see a crowded dying planet. For the near term, our numbers will likely grow, but these numbers are not sustainable, and will, by necessity, go down. A lot. If we act as rational thinking beings, we will reduce our numbers consciously by voluntarily limiting our family sizes, and continue to do so until a sustainable number, perhaps 500 million or less, is reached. At that point, the demographics for sustaining the style index will disappear, and commodity culture will give way to a gentler and more profitable condition of automated labor and cathected objects of trade. The interim is likely to be noisy, crowded and brutal, as wars over vanishing resources come to the fore under a multipolar geopolitic of regional political domination laboring under a global capitalist system. The stylistic syncretism that will obtain from the mix of cultures, fueled by economic development and population growth in southern economies will certainly push Rock to the global periphery, especially as the baby boom demographic dies off in the next 40 years. Even so, Rock will cast a long shadow in its absence.

The result for those who follow us in the next several hundred years will be tragic but valuable. Population control will be a major feature of every culture, forever, and will require a continuous level of global awareness that is presently only a nascent movement for some and a nice idea for most. Just as slavery, dictatorship, and cruelty are seen as universal sins unworthy of a civilized nation, so too, reproductive responsibility will need to be seen as a normal order in life. Difficulties will abound, one obvious one being how to maintain profitability with a dwindling population. Also, most of the planet's basic resources will be depleted. The earth will be spent, hot, and empty. People will stumble through the garbage of a plundered world. On the other hand, they will have an enormous cultural heritage digitally preserved. Gigabyte drives will give way to terabyte drives will give way to petabyte drives within decades from this writing. Sorting will be automated and nearly instantaneous. Machines won't become 'intelligent' as we understand it, but they will certainly be a lot 'smarter'. At that point, with 12 billion people on earth, all trying to tell their story, an entire new economy could be built as the people of 2050 struggle to understand their crowded stressful lives and the recently wasteful past of their great grand parents. They will find our music to be loud and quaintly industrial.

The end of commodity culture is not that far off - the population levels required to sustain it won't be there - the 12 billion will necessarily disappear. These are our grandchildren and great grand children who will see this and make the hardest decisions. But they will make these decisions, or die of disease, or starvation, or warfare. In any case, our numbers will go down. Perhaps in 500 years, after some research into ancient music, someone will find Elvis's gyrations and hiccups worthwhile, and the Muse will speak to them and they will make vital new music of their time that will gyrate and hiccup. The kids will love it - and the King Will Live Again, at some other dance, in some other club, in some other language, in some other state, in another green world...