

'Hand in Glove' and the Development of The Smiths' Sound

The Smiths are one of the most commercially successful and influential bands to emerge from the British post-punk movement in the 1980s. Along with elements such as lyrics, harmony, and musical form, a key component of The Smiths' distinctive musical style involves their sound and, in particular, their sound as represented on studio recordings. Drawing upon the work and insights of scholars such as Albin Zak, Allan F. Moore and Ruth Dockwray, this paper details the complex recording history of the band's first single 'Hand in Glove' in an attempt to trace the development of The Smiths' unique recorded sound.

The Smiths are one of the most commercially successful and influential bands to emerge from the British post-punk movement in the 1980s. Despite never having a number one single in the UK and never even cracking the Top 50 singles or album charts in the US, the band quickly acquired a devoted (some would say rabid) fan base following supportive reviews within the British press.¹ Early performances by the band on the John Peel and David Jensen radio shows on BBC Radio 1 in 1983 were enormously important for the band in reaching a larger audience.² Between the release of their first single ('Hand in Glove') in May 1983 until The Smiths disbanded in 1987 following the release of their fourth full-length album *Strangeways, Here We Come*, the band's popularity continued to grow, spurred on by their dynamic and energetic live shows and their exposure on college radio. The release of *The Sound of The Smiths* in 2008 by Rhino Records is the third greatest hits compilation to be released since 1992, a fact that points to the band's continued appeal amongst older and newer fans (and, of course, the commercial opportunities that present themselves – or are exploited – given such a devoted fan base).

Journalists, critics, and, more recently, academics often focus on the lyrics of lead singer and songwriter Morrissey as a key element of the band's appeal. Intelligent, witty, critical, sometimes risqué, and typically sarcastic, Morrissey's lyrics stand in stark contrast to those typically heard in many songs by 'New Romantic' bands that dominated the UK charts during the 1980s, bands such as Culture Club, Human League, Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark (OMD), and many others. Morrissey's lyrics address (or, given the often ambiguous nature of his lyrics, suggest) a diverse range of topics uncommon to pop and rock traditions including pedophilia ('The Hand That Rocks the Cradle'), the serial murder of children ('Suffer Little Children'), unequal relationships of power (tinged with homoeroticism in 'Handsome Devil' and 'This Charming Man'), vegetarianism vis-à-vis animal cruelty ('Meat Is Murder'), regicide ('The Queen Is Dead'), and suicide pacts ('There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'). Compared to the puppy-love pop of Culture Club's 'I'll Tumble 4 Ya', the blatant sexism of Duran Duran's 'Girls on Film' or 'Hungry Like the Wolf', or the overly-earnest (bordering on pathetic) and clichéd sincerity of Spandau Ballet's 'True' or OMD's 'If You

1 The Smiths' second album, *Meat is Murder*, reached the top spot on the UK album charts in 1985.

2 Some of the performances from BBC Radio 1 are included on the *Hatful of Hollow* compilation released in 1983. Given the fact that the band was signed to an independent label – Rough Trade – that had only modest distribution capabilities, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the press and radio in introducing The Smiths to a larger audience.

Leave', it is easy to see why Morrissey's lyrics were – and continue to be – a source of interest for critics, fans, and scholars.³

In his recent essay on The Smiths, Jonathan Hiam argues that the 'strongest interpretations of The Smiths' music undoubtedly are those that treat both the lyrics and the music as equal, playing one off the other as a means by which to tease out a genuine musical poetics.⁴ Hiam's detailed analytical readings of 'Shoplifters of the World Unite', 'I Want the One I Can't Have', and 'Stretch Out and Wait' demonstrate how musical elements such as lyrics, harmony, timbre, and form often support (and sometimes subvert) one another as part of a song's meaning. This complex and dynamic interplay between the various musical elements of these and other songs by The Smiths deepens our understanding of the role played by ambiguity – a description often attached to Morrissey's lyrics – by extending it to the entire songwriting process that, in turn, can be understood as the primary compositional concern of The Smiths and a defining feature of their musical poetics.

Along with elements such as lyrics, harmony, and musical form, I believe that a key component of The Smiths' musical poetics involves their sound and, in particular, their sound as represented on recordings. Hiam hints at this aspect of the band's poetics, suggesting that any consideration of 'The Smiths' role in popular music ... must fully consider the completeness of their total musical *sound*, a consideration that begs a closer examination of how their songs work on the one hand as pure superficial sound and on the other as musical-textual objects.⁵ However, by 'sound' I do not (just) mean sonic characteristics such as the heavy amount of reverb often heard on Morrissey's vocals, the textures created by Johnny Marr's wall of multitracked guitar parts, or the many effects used on these guitar parts, effects such as delay, chorus, and tremolo. While these and other effects and timbres are important – and they will play a significant role in the discussion that follows – I am more interested in how these sounds were crafted and balanced in the service of the record, the object that was presented to listeners through the radio or on turntables (and cassette and compact disc players) and that served as a point of reference that signified the 'sound of The Smiths' for fans and critics.

Unlike the intricate and dynamic lyrical/musical interactions that are already perceptible in the band's earliest releases (notably 'Hand in Glove' and 'This Charming Man'), the sound of The Smiths took some time to emerge. The single 'Hand in Glove' offers an interesting case study by which to examine the development of The Smiths' distinctive sound as heard on record. 'Hand in Glove' is an impressive debut by any standard but even more impressive when one considers that the band – with no prior experience – recorded and produced this single on their own. As will be described below, however, this song, along with others that would be included on the band's debut album and various singles releases, were recorded (and re-recorded) on multiple occasions in multiple studios with different producers and engineers over the course of a year. The results of these recordings (some of which have not been officially released) offer a glimpse into the various ways the band and their producers not only conceived of 'Hand in Glove' in terms of its sonic qualities as represented on record but also the sound of the band as a whole, a sound that comes into focus shortly before the release of their second full-length album, *Meat Is Murder*.

3 See Julian Stringer, 'The Smiths: Repressed (But Remarkably Dressed)', *Popular Music* 11/1 (1992), 15-26; Nadine Hubbs, 'Music of the "Fourth Gender": Morrissey and the Sexual Politics of Melodic Contour', in *Bodies of Writing, Bodies of Performance*, ed. Thomas Foster, Carol Siegel, and Ellen E. Berry (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 266-296. See also the essays in *Why Pamper Life's Complexities? Essays on The Smiths*, ed. Sean Campbell and Colin Coulter, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

4 Jonathan Hiam, 'This Way and That Way: Towards a Musical Poetics of The Smiths', in *Why Pamper Life's Complexities?*, 122.

5 Hiam, 'This Way and That Way', 122. Emphasis in original.

Before examining the many recordings of ‘Hand in Glove’ and their role in the formation of the sound of The Smiths, a few words regarding methodology are necessary. The following section will describe the ways in which I will discuss the band’s recorded sound, a discussion that owes a great deal to the insights relating to the recording and mixing process described in Albin Zak’s *The Poetics of Rock*.⁶ A brief overview of the many recording sessions that took place prior to the release of the band’s first full-length album, *The Smiths*, will provide a historical context for the technical points relating to the development of the band’s recorded sound in the remainder of the paper.

The Smiths’ Sound and Early Chronology (February - November 1983)

In his book *The Poetics of Rock*, Albin Zak emphasizes *recordings* – and not necessarily *songs* – as a rich site of investigation for scholars of pop and rock music. Zak suggests numerous analytical and interpretive pathways that open up when we shift our attention from the many individual musical parameters that are present in songs (harmony, melody, rhythm, etc.) to the ways in which these parameters are combined, manipulated, and transformed in the process of becoming a record. According to Zak,

Records ... encompass musical utterances and sonic relationships ... whose particularity is immutable and thus essential to the work’s identity. A record is, above all, a richly textured surface, which we apprehend only as a sensory, temporal, and complete experience. All of its parts must be present in order to grasp it. As soon as we section off some part of it – the lyrics, the chord changes – we are no longer dealing with the record. Such reductions may be useful for a particular analytic project, but their limitations must be kept in mind. In order to engage with records as they are, we must focus on the elements of which they are actually formed.⁷

The elements to which we attend when listening to a recording are many: the performance(s), the arrangement, the sound of the (often times fabricated) space in which it was recorded (reverberation, echo, delay and ambience), along with various sound effects, especially those that effect dynamics and/or gain (equalization and boosters, distortion and overdrive), effects that modulate pitch (vibrato, chorus, flangers, and phasers), and those that effect time (notably delay and echo). All of these elements (and others not mentioned) are brought together in the mix. Following Zak, ‘the mix defines the nature of the sound world in which the music is taking place’ by bringing together all of the elements that occurred during the record-making process.⁸ The mix is what gives a particular recording its character, its particular sound. It is only during the mixing stage where producers and recording artists ‘combine elements and shape their interactions to arrive at a desired result’ and create a distinct aural image that is captured and fixed by the recording.⁹ The sound of The Smiths described in the remainder of this essay expands upon Hiam’s insights regarding The Smiths musical poetics by considering the early history and development of the band’s sound as represented by their recordings according to Zak’s insights on the poetics of recorded sound.

Modeled upon the vertical and horizontal placement of instruments and vocal parts within a ‘sound-box’ as described by Allan F. Moore, Figure 1 is a visual representation of the multi-dimensional sound image of the standard mix heard on the majority of recordings released by The Smiths.¹⁰ The ‘headphone head’ centrally located at the

6 Albin Zak, *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

7 Zak, *The Poetics of Rock*, 42, 43-44.

8 Zak, *The Poetics of Rock*, 141.

9 *Ibid.*, 141.

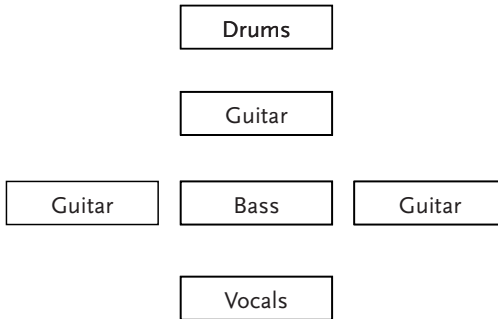
10 See Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, second edition, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001. Moore describes the

bottom of this Figure (and those that follow) should be understood as the perspective by which we interpret the location and prominence of the various instruments heard in the mix for any given recording. Imagining that we are looking at the back of headphone head, instruments can be separated – panned – to the left or right (like the guitar parts shown on Figure 1) or can be heard down the center of the stereo mix (represented by the vocals, bass guitar, more additional guitar parts, and the drums in Figure 1). In addition to panning, individual instruments may appear closer or deeper within a mix. The perception of depth within a mix is represented by how near or far instruments are in relation to headphone head. In Figure 1, those instruments closer to headphone head are more prominent within the mix while those that are farther away are less prominent within the mix.

Figure 1

Standard mix representing the sound of The Smiths – narrow stereo image with vocals and bass prominent.

(Deeper in mix)



(Closer in Mix)



Summarizing the information represented in Figure 1, we can infer that a 'standard' mix for The Smiths consists of a very narrow stereo image (with guitar parts panned slightly to the

sound-box as a 'virtual textural space envisaged as an empty cube of finite dimensions' where instruments in a particular recording are perceived vertically (in regards to depth) and horizontally (in regards to stereo placement) at various locations in the mix (Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 121). The analytical and historical implications of this model are explored further in Allan F. Moore and Ruth Dockwray, 'The Establishment of the Virtual Performance Space in Rock', *Twentieth-Century Music* 5/2 (2009), 63-85. See also Ruth Dockwray and Allan F. Moore, 'Configuring the Sound-Box, 1965-1972', *Popular Music*, 29/2 (2009), 181-197. In his earlier publication, Moore explains his use of the label "'sound-box" rather than the "mix" to indicate that [his] analysis privileges the listening, rather than the production, process.' (Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 121.) I believe that we *hear* mixes in a manner that is analogous to how we *see* paintings and, therefore, I will refer to mixes in the remainder of this article.

left and to the right) with the majority of instruments placed in the center of the stereo field. This is not unlike a standard mix for many recording artists and bands where the vocals, drums, and bass guitar are centrally located within the mix. A prime feature of The Smiths' mix – and one that contributes greatly to the sound of The Smiths on record – involves the prominence of the bass guitar in relation to the vocals and the other guitar parts. In the majority of recordings released by The Smiths, Andy Rourke's bass guitar is prominent within the overall mix. Unlike many standard mixes where the bass guitar is heard behind the vocals and guitar parts, Rourke's bass guitar parts reside at nearly the same level of depth as Morrissey's lead vocals and Marr's guitar parts. In terms of the depth of a standard Smiths' mix, we can hear a prominent layer consisting of the lead vocals and bass guitar (heard in the center) and Marr's panned guitar parts. Behind this first layer, a standard mix includes additional guitar parts and, sometimes, other instrumental timbres (harmonica, for instance). As we move deeper into the mix, we find that Mike Joyce's drumset resides at the deepest level within the standard mix associated with The Smiths.

The standardized representation of the sound of The Smiths presented in Figure 1 is the result of comparing the mixes of the commercial studio recordings released by The Smiths between 1983 until they disbanded in 1987, a five-year period that saw the release of four full-length albums, three compilations, and nearly twenty singles.¹¹ Although Figure 1 represents what I will be calling the standard Smiths' mix, it is interesting to note that the aural image consistently heard on the mixes of many recordings by The Smiths took over a year to develop and underwent many subtle (and not-so-subtle) changes and modifications. My investigation into the sound of The Smiths on record began with an initial impression of a standardized mix present on recordings released in 1985 (beginning with the album *Meat Is Murder*) through 1987 (including their final singles and *Strangeways, Here We Come*). In contrast to those recordings released between 1985 and 1987, the majority of earlier recordings released by the band (those released between 1983 and 1984) often differ significantly in terms of production techniques and mixing decisions. A notable exception to this disparity in sound is the band's first single, 'Hand in Glove', which comes very close to the standardized mix represented in Figure 1. In an interview with Geoff Twigg in *Guitarist* magazine from 1985, Johnny Marr confirms my impression on the changing and variable quality of the band's sound prior to 1985, admitting that 'the one record we've produced was "Hand in Glove" which sounds very atmospheric; we've never been able to reproduce that.'¹²

The band's variable sound on record between 1983 and 1984 can be attributed to the number of recording sessions and multiple producers with whom the band worked during this time. Table 1 details the many recording sessions in which the band participated prior to the release of their first full-length album, *The Smiths*, in February 1984.¹³ In February 1983, the band recorded and produced their debut single 'Hand in Glove' in Strawberry Studios in Stockport, outside of Manchester. The release of 'Hand in Glove' in May combined with the band's live performances aroused the interest of legendary BBC Radio 1 DJ John Peel that led to a recording session on May 18 for Peel's radio show, a session recorded and produced by Roger Pusey. Another recording session for BBC Radio 1 – this

11 Of course, not all songs by The Smiths correspond exactly to what is described in Figure 1. Listening to the all of the commercially released tracks by the band (and numerous non-commercial recordings), however, Figure 1 does capture the standard (or generalized) mix heard on the majority of tracks recorded by the band, the 'diagonal mix' as described in Moore and Dockwray, 'Configuring the Sound-Box', 186.

12 Geoff Twigg, 'Interview with Johnny Marr', *Guitarist* (February 1, 1985), 9. Available online at: <http://www.smithsonguitar.com/2008/12/guitarist-volume-1-number-9-february.html> (Accessed November 2012).

13 The following chronology is described in greater detail in Simon Goddard, *The Smiths: Songs That Saved Your Life*, revised and expanded edition. London: Ryan & Hearn, 2006. See especially Appendix 1 beginning on page 316.

time for the David Jensen Show – took place on June 26 and was produced by Dale Griffin and engineered by Martin Cooley. In July, the band entered Elephant Studios in London to record tracks for their first full-length album (tentatively titled *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle*) with Troy Tate producing. Around the time the band recorded more sessions for the David Jensen and John Peel radio shows (August and September, respectively), the band and their record label, Rough Trade, decided to abandon the recording sessions done with Tate and re-record all of the tracks with a new producer, John Porter. Sessions with Porter extended from September through November and took place in four studios spread out over London and Manchester. The recording sessions that took place under Porter would eventually be released as the band's debut album with one exception: the version of 'Hand in Glove' that appears on *The Smiths* is the original single recording (produced by The Smiths) remixed by Porter in an attempt to match the overall sound of the rest of the album. Beginning with the sessions for *Meat Is Murder*, the band assumed all production and mixing duties for their records, something they had not done since their debut single, 'Hand in Glove'.

Given the band's early experiences with multiple producers and engineers, it is no surprise that the band's sound took so long to develop. However, by comparing the multiple recorded versions of 'Hand in Glove' that appeared between 1983 and 1984, it is possible to identify specific production and mixing techniques that were embraced by the band as well as those that were rejected. Therefore, when considering the different production and mixing decisions heard on multiple recordings of 'Hand in Glove' (decisions that reflect specific aesthetic positions held by various producers as well as the emerging aesthetic of the band in regards to their sound on record), one can follow the development of the band's sound over an extended period of time, a sound that eventually crystallizes as the standardized sound of The Smiths represented in Figure 1.

Recording 'Hand in Glove'

The Smiths booked Strawberry Studios in Stockport for a single-day session in late February 1983. Although the band had never been in a recording studio before, they were determined to use this session to record and mix a radio-ready single that could be used to attract interested record labels.¹⁴ The track recorded that day, 'Hand in Glove', was released as a single on May 13, 1983 by Rough Trade records with production duties credited to The Smiths.

Formally, 'Hand in Glove' is built upon two contrasting musical textures. The first texture is a two-measure figure featuring an arpeggiated chord that takes advantage of the open strings of the guitar, an excellent example of the 'jingle-jangle' sound often associated with Johnny Marr's guitar style. The second texture is a two-measure figure of strummed chords played by an acoustic guitar and doubled by an overdriven electric guitar played in a clipped, staccato manner. Lyrically, Morrissey's vocal part consists of a series of eight-measure verses sung over this second texture. The first texture appears as the introduction and during the song's fade-out and also appears following verses three and six, providing formal contrast. Regarding instrumentation, 'Hand in Glove' includes Morrissey's main vocals (drenched in reverb), vocal overdubs (consisting primarily of vocalise 'ohhs' heard most clearly between verses six and seven), an overdriven electric guitar, acoustic guitar, harmonica, bass guitar, and drumset.

For music fans and critics, 'Hand in Glove' – a guitar-based track that featured a harmonica – must have come as something of a shock when compared to the synthesizer-laden pop

14 In 1982, the band recorded two tracks – 'The Hand That Rocks the Cradle' and 'Suffer Little Children' – at Decibel Studios, Manchester in August and three tracks – 'What Difference Does It Make?', 'Handsome Devil', and 'Miserable Lie' – at Drone Studios, Manchester in December. The latter was a demonstration recording for EMI.

Table 1

Recording sessions prior to the release of The Smiths (20 February 1984).

Date	Location	Song(s)	Producer(s)
February 1983	Strawberry Studios, Stockport	'Hand in Glove'	The Smiths
18 May 1983	Maida Vale Studios (BBC), London	'What Difference Does It Make?', 'Handsome Devil', 'Reel Around the Fountain'	Recordings for first performance on the John Peel Show, produced by Roger Pusey (broadcast 31 May 1983)
26 June 1983	Maida Vale Studios (BBC), London	'These Things Take Time', 'You've Got Everything Now'	Recordings for first performance on the David Jensen Show, produced by Dale Griffin and engineered by Martin Colley (broadcast 4 July 1983)
July-August 1983	Elephant Studios, London	Sessions for first record (<i>The Hand That Rocks The Cradle</i>)	Troy Tate
25 August 1983	Maida Vale Studios (BBC), London	'Accept Yourself', 'I Don't Owe You Anything', 'Pretty Girls Make Graves', 'Reel Around the Fountain'	Recordings for second performance on the David Jensen Show, produced by John Porter and engineered by Mike Robinson (broadcast on 5 September 1983)
14 September 1983	Maida Vale Studios (BBC), London	'This Night Has Opened My Eyes', 'Still Ill', 'This Charming Man', 'Back to the Old House'	Recordings for second performance on John Peel Show, produced by Roger Pusey (broadcast 21 September 1983)
September 1983	Matrix Studios, London	Re-recordings/sessions for 'This Charming Man', 'Accept Yourself', 'Still Ill', 'Wonderful Woman'	John Porter
October 1983	Strawberry Studios, Stockport, and Pluto Studios, Manchester	Re-recordings/sessions for 'This Charming Man' (Strawberry Studios), 'The Hand That Rocks the Cradle', 'I Don't Owe You Anything', 'These Things Take Time', 'Reel Around the Fountain', 'Back to the Old House', 'Pretty Girls Make Graves', 'Miserable Lie', 'You've Got Everything Now', 'Suffer Little Children', 'What Difference Does It Make?' (Pluto Studios)	John Porter
November 1983	Eden Studios, London	Re-recordings/sessions for 'I Don't Owe You Anything', 'Reel Around the Fountain', 'You've Got Everything Now', 'Suffer Little Children', 'What Difference Does It Make?'	John Porter

hits that dominated the UK singles charts at the time. The singles chart from the week of May 21, 1983 (one week after the release of 'Hand in Glove') included The Human League's '(Keep Feeling) Fascination' (number 6), Heaven 17's 'Temptation' (number 2), and Spandau Ballet's 'True' (number 1). At the same time, the 'sound' of the record was unlike anything currently on the charts at that time. The sound of 'New Romantic' bands such as The Human League, The Thompson Twins, Spandau Ballet, and Culture Club was often very clean with little or no distortion. In the hands of New Romantic bands, the synthesizer was used to create new sounds or to simulate instruments (as with the use of electronic, or synthesized, drums in place of the standard acoustic drumset). Guitars – if they were used at all – were often relegated to an accompanying role and were rarely

featured as a solo instrument. Ultimately, the instrumental support for many songs by New Romantic acts functioned as a backdrop for the vocal performance.

With 'Hand in Glove', The Smiths inverted the dominant recording and production tendencies of the time. Not only did The Smiths create a track that emphasized an overdriven guitar, they also mixed the record in such a way that the lead vocals are submerged in the mix. Morrissey's vocal performance in the earliest release of 'Hand in Glove' often sounds like it is competing with (and at times, is threatened to be overtaken by) Andy Rourke's active bass guitar part. The mixing decisions made by the band forces listeners to listen deep into the mix to understand Morrissey's words.

Figure 2 is a representation of the 'Hand in Glove' single mixed and produced by The Smiths in February 1983.¹⁵ As shown in this figure, Marr's overdriven electric guitar part is panned to the left while the acoustic guitar is panned to the right, a common practice that clears the space in the center of the stereo field, a space often reserved for the lead vocals. As the track fades in, the center of the stereo field is dominated by the bass guitar part, the harmonica, and the drums (the crash cymbal played on beat one and the low tom-tom parts heard later in the track are panned slightly to the right) with the fade-in concluding around 0:12. When the vocals enter at 0:19, we might expect the volume on the guitar parts to drop, especially the bass guitar, to make room for the vocals. Instead, the volume in all of the instrumental parts appears to intensify at this moment, most notably the bass guitar that assumes a nearly equal position in the depth of the track as that of the lead vocals. Describing the mix of 'Hand in Glove', it is possible to describe a moderately wide stereo image with a shallow depth. The listener experiences the mix of 'Hand in Glove' in a way that can best be described as 'concave', an almost claustrophobic listening experience where the two guitar parts are prominent yet are separated on either side while the vocals and bass guitar appear slightly deeper within the mix (with the drums slightly behind the bass guitar and vocals). This mix remains constant throughout the remainder of the track; there are no changes and there is no flashy panning, only the fade-in and final fade-out.

In July 1983 the band entered Elephant Studios in London to record tracks for their first full-length album, tentatively titled *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*. At the suggestion of Rough Trade owner Geoff Travis, Troy Tate – former guitarist with Julian Cope's band Teardrop Explodes and who had also scored a minor hit with 'I Don't Know What Love Is Anymore' released on Rough Trade – was recruited to produce the album. As the sessions wrapped at Elephant Studios in early August 1983, a number of questions and concerns about the quality of the unreleased album circulated amongst some band members and people affiliated with Rough Trade, notably Travis. In September, the band, the label, and Tate agreed that the sessions would not be released and that all of the tracks would be re-recorded and produced by John Porter.¹⁶

Only two tracks recorded under Tate were officially released: 'Jeane' was released as the b-side to the 'This Charming Man' single (1983) and 'Pretty Girls Make Graves' appeared as the b-side to the single 'I Started Something I Couldn't Finish'. However, unmastered mixes of the abandoned sessions for the first album recorded under Tate have circulated in the bootleg community for some time under various titles, including *The Troy Hand That Rocks the Cradle* or *The Troy Tate Sessions*.¹⁷ These unreleased recordings provide a valuable glimpse into the early recording history of the band and the formation of the band's sound both in terms of instrumentation and production and mixing choices.

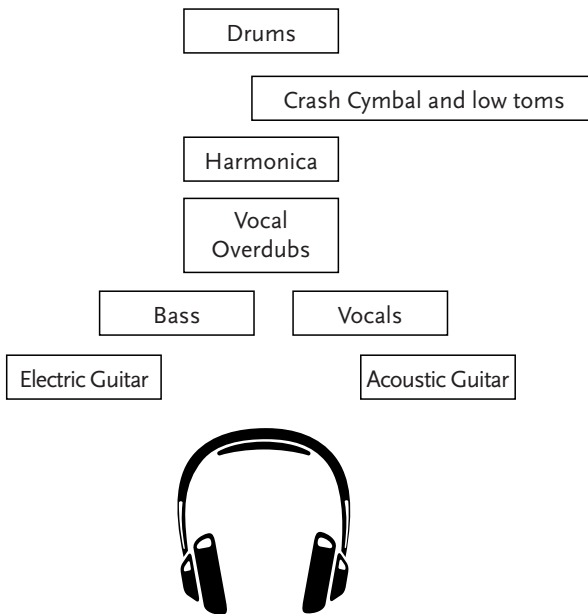
15 Prior to their disbanding in 1987, the original single version of 'Hand in Glove' appeared on *Hatful of Hollow* (1984) and the US-released compilation album *Louder Than Bombs* (1987).

16 See Goddard, *The Smiths*, 46-53 for a detailed discussion on the failed sessions under Troy Tate.

17 There are differences between various bootleg versions of the Troy Tate sessions, including song coverage and, most notably, song versions including various mixes.

Figure 2

Mix of “Hand in Glove” (original single release) – wide stereo image, shallow depth.



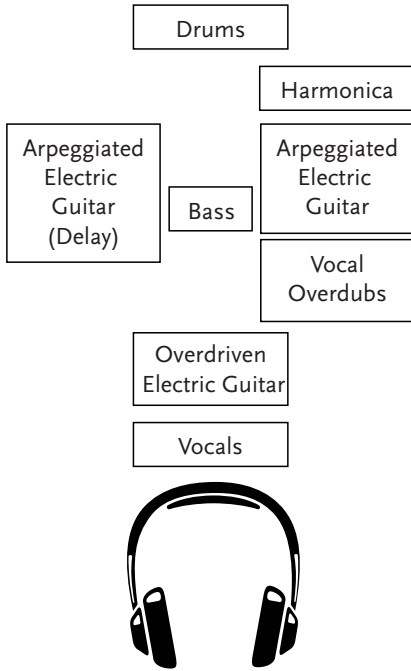
When considering the extant version of ‘Hand in Glove’ from the Tate sessions, it must be kept in mind that this and other recordings from these same sessions that commonly circulate within the bootleg community are rough, early mixes and do not necessarily reflect the final, mastered versions of the tracks as conceived by the band and Tate.¹⁸

The extended introduction that opens the original release of the ‘Hand in Glove’ single is replaced by a brief four-measure introduction in the Troy Tate version. Also, the strummed chords played by the acoustic guitar in the earlier release are replaced by an overdriven electric guitar while the arpeggiated figures are performed by an electric guitar with a clean setting with a short delay effect applied. The harmonica does not appear until after the final vocal verse unlike the original release where it is heard in the introduction. Two slightly different mixes of ‘Hand in Glove’ from the Troy Tate sessions are available on bootleg recordings. Figure 3 represents one mix (heard on, among others *The Troy Hand Rocks the Cradle*). In this mix, referred to as Mix A, the guitars occupy the same depth within the mix at the beginning of the track. The bass guitar and the strummed chords played by an overdriven electric guitar occupy the center of the stereo field while the arpeggios of the clean guitar are panned slightly to the right (a delay effect applied to this guitar part is panned slightly to the left). The drums also appear in the center of the mix behind the guitars. Unlike the original recording, there is no panning applied to the crash cymbal or the low toms.

18 Unfortunately, the mastered version of the first album as conceived by Tate and the band has yet to appear. A mastered version of ‘Reel Around the Fountain’ from the Troy Tate sessions that appears on the two-LP set *The Smiths: Demos & Outtakes* gives some idea as to how other songs produced by Tate might have sounded on the final, mastered version of the band’s debut album.

Figure 3

'Hand in Glove' (Mix A) from Troy Tate Sessions – narrow stereo mix with an emphasis on the vocals and electric guitar.

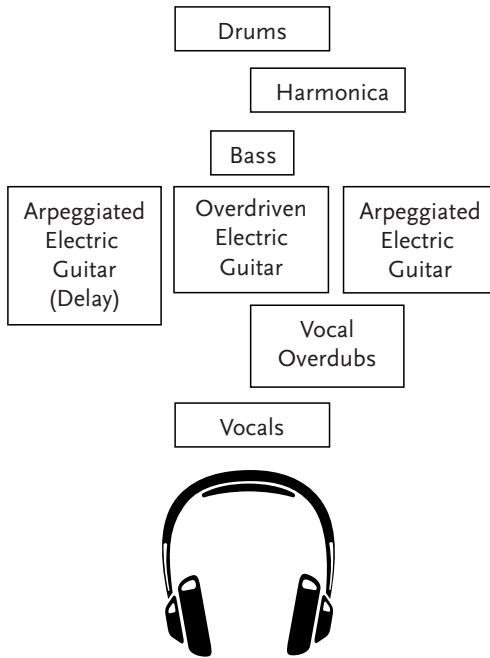


At 0:07, the volume level of all of the guitars decreases to make space for the lead vocals. Instead of panning the instruments to open space for Morrissey's vocal performance, it seems that Tate and the band decided to lower the volume and thereby retain the heavy, dense mix where the majority of instruments appear in the center of the stereo field. Furthermore, the bass guitar drops deeper within the mix during this decrease in volume and thereby shifting the focus to Morrissey's vocals and the electric guitar parts, an experience that is quite different from the original release (represented in Figure 2) where Morrissey's vocal part and bass compete with one another for prominence within the final mix. This drop in volume also has the unfortunate effect that the arpeggiated guitar figure can barely be heard in subsequent appearances. Instead, the clean guitar parts are almost covered up by Morrissey's vocalise overdubs. Compared to the original mix heard on the 'Hand in Glove' single, this mix is much narrower with very little panning and where contrast is created by changes in volume (something that doesn't happen in the original single release). It appears that the drop in volume was applied to all of the instrumental parts as soon as the vocals enter and the levels were not readjusted at what would be considered obvious structural points with the song, notably the instrumental break between verses three and four and later between verses six and seven. The change in volume is most noticeable during the instrumental coda where the harmonica is buried deep in the mix. Ultimately, this mix loses much of its dynamic intensity and fails to fulfill the aggressive and forceful feel promised by the energetic opening.

Figure 4 represents an alternate mix (Mix B) from these same sessions and can be heard on the *Troy Tate Sessions* bootleg. The stereo placement of the instruments in this mix is exactly the same as described above in relation to Figure 3. The volume of the instrumental parts in this mix, however, does not decrease when the vocals enter. Instead, the volume is consistently high throughout, especially in the electric guitar and vocal parts. The bass and drums are deeper in the mix and, like the other mix from the same

Figure 4

'Hand in Glove' (Mix B) from Troy Tate Sessions – narrow stereo mix with an emphasis on the vocals and electric guitar; two levels of prominence (bass/drums; guitar and vocals) due to differences in volume.



session, the harmonica is barely audible during the coda. The result is a performance that captures the intensity initially promised by the mix described above. The present mix seems to strive for a sort of punk rock aesthetic where the guitars are emphasized at the expense of achieving any sort of balance with the bass guitar. In the absence of any contrast in terms of volume or stereo placement, the listener perceives two levels of depth within this mix: the first, most prominent, level includes the vocals and guitars and, behind this level, the drums and bass guitar.

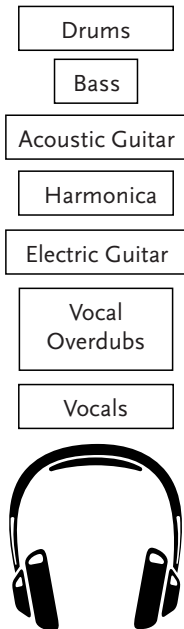
Rather than re-mix the tracks recorded during the Troy Tate sessions, Rough Trade owner Geoff Travis, producer John Porter and the band decided to re-record all of the songs that would eventually be released on the band's debut album, *The Smiths*.¹⁹ The John Porter sessions took place during September through November of 1983 in four different studios: Matrix Studios in London (September), Strawberry and Pluto Studios in Manchester (October), and Eden Studios in London (November). The band did re-record tracks for 'Hand in Glove' during their time with Porter. However, the version that appeared on the debut album was a re-mix of the original single.

19 Shortly after the release of *The Smiths*, Marr talked about the abandoned sessions with Tate, explaining how 'we did some recording beforehand with Troy Tate but it didn't really work out. It meant so much to him, he's thought about it all so much that I felt really bad about saying "no" to some of his suggestions, particularly as I'd got really friendly with him. But it was a weird period for us. We were going into the studio for a lengthy spell for the first time and we were a bit worried about what might happen to our sound' (Quoted in Hugh Felder, 'Scratch 'n' Smiths,' *Sounds* (February 25 1984). Available online at: <http://foreverill.com/interviews/1984/scratch.htm> (Accessed November 2012). Prior to his work on The Smiths' debut album, John Porter played bass guitar on Roxy Music's 1973 release *For Your Pleasure* and produced records for Bryn Haworth and the band Japan.

Instead of the dramatic fade-in heard on the original single release, Porter's remixed version of 'Hand in Glove' begins with an assertive snare drum crack accompanied by a cymbal crash (like the version recorded under Troy Tate) and concludes with a sustained harmony in place of the original fade-out. The absence of the fades is minor compared to Porter's mixing decisions. As seen in Figure 5, all of the instruments are placed in the center of the stereo field. The result is a rather muddy sound where the instrumental parts of the remixed version lack the clarity of the original single's mix. For those fans familiar with the sound of the original single, the placement of the vocals in the mix and, in particular, its relation to the guitar parts results in a recording that bears little resemblance to the earlier single release. In Porter's version, the overdriven electric guitar part assumes a more prominent place in the mix, almost directly behind the lead vocals and because all of the parts are squeezed into the center of the stereo field, the ringing, arpeggiated figures played by this guitar part are now perceived as distorted chords. The strummed chords played by the acoustic guitar are now barely audible in Porter's mix. Perhaps the most noteworthy difference between the original mix and Porter's re-working is that Andy Rourke's bass guitar part is buried deep within the mix. In the original mix, Rourke's bass part functions as a counterpoint to Morrissey's lead vocals and where the two parts seem to engage in a dialogue with one another. In Porter's remix, the bass is 'felt' more than it is actually heard and all of the subtleties and intricacies of the bass part are covered up by the overdriven electric guitar leaving the listener with only a vague impression of chord roots. The result is a mix completely absent of dynamic interest or variety. Furthermore, the narrow stereo field and the emphasis on the guitars and vocals to the detriment of the instrumental parts – particularly the bass guitar – extends beyond Porter's remix of 'Hand in Glove' and characterizes the mix of all of the songs on *The Smiths*. Writing in *New Musical*

Figure 5

John Porter's remixed version of 'Hand in Glove' (on *The Smiths*) – extremely narrow stereo image; emphasis on vocal parts; bass buried in the mix.



Express in 1987, critic Danny Kelly perfectly summarized the sound of The Smiths debut, calling it a disappointment ‘thanks to elephants-ear production (grey and flat).’²⁰

The John Porter-produced tracks of ‘Hand in Glove’ recorded in October 1983 can be heard on a solo single released in April 1984 and sung by Sandie Shaw, the British pop icon of the 1960s adored by both Marr and Morrissey. While Shaw’s version of ‘Hand in Glove’ differs from earlier versions in many ways, significant aspects of the overall sound of this single can, in retrospect, be understood as approaching the sound of The Smiths that would come to characterize the majority of their subsequent releases.

The major-mode introduction to Shaw’s version of ‘Hand in Glove’ immediately distinguishes this recording from earlier releases. It is not until the oscillating C and B-flat chords of the opening – and their vague suggestion of F major – reveal themselves to be VII and VI in D minor that any relation to the original release becomes apparent. This same major-mode section functions similarly to the introduction in the original release, appearing between verses three and four and six and seven. There is a brief return to the major-mode material of the opening following the final verse but this is quickly displaced by the minor-mode music of the verses and a scalar guitar part unique to the coda. Another notable feature of the Shaw recording is its heavy use of guitar overdubs, a feature that would come to define Johnny Marr’s guitar sound with The Smiths. John Porter introduced Marr to the possibilities of overdubbing (and doubletracking) multiple guitar parts, a strategy that was put to good use in the band’s second single, ‘This Charming Man’. Marr recalls recording fifteen or sixteen guitar tracks with Porter during the October 1983 sessions for ‘Hand in Glove’ but it is Marr’s mix of the Sandie Shaw single that is particularly noteworthy.²¹

Multiple guitar parts greet the listener from the very first downbeat, parts that are spread out across the entire stereo field. In the instrumental introduction and in its subsequent reappearances (shown in Figure 6a) double-tracked acoustic guitar parts can be heard in the center of the mix, a clean guitar (with a small amount of chorus effect added) playing single notes is panned to the left, and a guitar playing short two-note figures (with a bit more chorus added) appears slightly right of center. The guitar parts present during the verses are much darker compared to those heard in the instrumental sections (see Figure 6b). A tremolo guitar part (playing on the downbeat of every two measures along with some single notes) occupies the center of the stereo field. An overdriven guitar playing chords on beats two and four can also be heard down the center while clean guitar parts appear on the left. A clean guitar playing chords is present on the left side. Finally, another guitar part heard on the right side of the stereo field plays on beats three and four in every second measure, doubling the cymbal and snare drum accents. With so many instrumental parts occupying the center of the stereo field during the verses (including the lead vocals, the bass guitar, and the drums), Marr avoids a potentially muddy mix by simplifying the guitar parts during the verse (in contrast to the busy parts heard in the instrumental sections) and by lowering the volume of all of the guitars, decisions that allow for both Shaw’s vocals and the bass guitar part to cut through the mix. The distinctive interplay between the bass and the vocals that was such a definable feature of the original single is heard once again. At the same time, Marr’s mix is able to accommodate the relatively new addition to the band’s sound of multiple guitar parts.²²

20 Reproduced online at <http://foreverill.com/disc/smithslp.htm> (Accessed November 2012).

21 Goddard, *The Smiths*, 106.

22 To complicate matters even more, the mix of the Sandie Shaw version of ‘Hand in Glove’ as it appears on the compilation *The Very Best of Sandie Shaw* (and possibly other compilations that I have not heard) is different from the original mix of the song that appears on her ‘Hand in Glove’ single.

Figure 6a

Mix of Sandie Shaw's version of 'Hand in Glove' (instrumental sections) – wider stereo mix with electric guitars prominent.

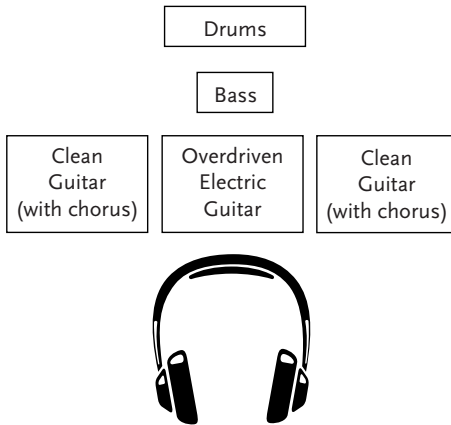
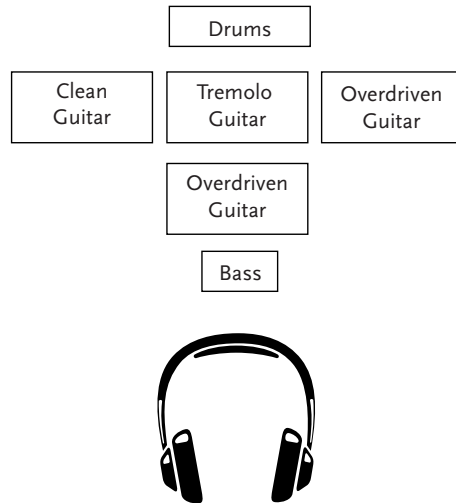


Figure 6b

Mix of Sandie Shaw's version of 'Hand in Glove' (verses) – narrow stereo mix with vocals and bass prominent.



In the Shaw version of 'Hand in Glove', all of the parts exist within a stereo field that is narrower than the mix of the original single but wider than the remixed version heard on *The Smiths*. In terms of the depth of the mix, the vocals and the bass guitar are prominent with Marr's guitar parts slightly behind them except during instrumental sections where his parts move closer to the foreground (reminiscent of the mix represented in Figure 3 from the Troy Tate sessions). Joyce's drumset resides at a comfortable level in the center of the mix behind the guitar and vocal parts. In many ways, Shaw's version of 'Hand in Glove' corresponds quite closely to the generic Smiths mix represented in Figure 1.

Recording in various studios under a variety of producers for over a year, The Smiths absorbed and rejected various mixing strategies before finally arriving at a specific sound the band felt best represented their recorded output.²³ For fans and critics, however, it would be some time until they heard The Smiths in what would prove to be their preferred sonic environment. Following the release of their debut album in February 1984, The Smiths released two singles ('Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now' in May and 'William, It Was Really Nothing' released in July) and the compilation *Hatful of Hollow* in November 1984. The songs included on the singles releases were produced by John Porter and are mixed very similarly to the songs heard on *The Smiths*. *Hatful of Hollow* includes selected A-sides and B-sides of previously released singles as well as sessions from the band's multiple performances on BBC radio, including sessions produced by Porter and others produced by Dale Griffin (the former drummer of Mott the Hoople and producer for John Peel Sessions from 1983 to 1994) and Roger Pusey, another longtime producer for the Peel Sessions on BBC Radio 1.

The final Porter-produced single released by The Smiths was 'How Soon Is Now?'. Originally released as the B-side to 'William, It Was Really Nothing' and subsequently re-released as an A-side in February 1985, 'How Soon Is Now?' is unlike any song in The

23 In this respect, 'This Charming Man' also points towards the band's signature sound. Although produced by John Porter, the vibrant mix of 'This Charming Man' does not carry over to the other tracks heard on *The Smiths*.

Smiths catalog, both in its structure and sound. Whereas so many songs by The Smiths can be easily identified by the ‘jangly’ chord progressions associated with Marr’s clean guitar sounds, ‘How Soon Is Now?’ is built upon a riff played on the lowest strings of the guitar. With ‘How Soon Is Now?’ the reputation of The Smiths as a band seemingly intent upon updating a pop sound associated with the 1960s is replaced by that of a band experimenting with sounds and textures generally associated with a rock tradition, notably psychedelia (yet creating a track that is still infectiously danceable). The psychedelic signifiers recognizable in ‘How Soon Is Now?’ extend beyond the main riff, the power chords, and the repeated semitonal ‘sigh’ figure and include the mix. Without a doubt, ‘How Soon Is Now?’ is the most adventurous mix the band ever put on tape. Throughout the track, the stuttering tremolo guitar that forms the basis of the song swirls throughout the stereo field – both hard left and hard right – resulting in a stereo image that is much wider than even the original mix of ‘Hand in Glove’. Throughout the song, key structural moments are articulated by the presence or absence of more guitar parts, all of which reside at different points within the stereo field. Even in the hazy and swirling mosaic of guitars that dominates the mix of ‘How Soon Is Now?’, one consistent aspect of earlier mixes by the band and Porter remains: the bass guitar is positioned behind all of the guitar parts and does not engage in any sort of dialogue with Morrissey’s lead vocals. The band’s second full-length album, *Meat Is Murder*, was released in February 1985. With production duties credited to The Smiths (except for ‘How Soon Is Now?’), the album bears a consistent, unique sound – the sound of The Smiths – that developed over the course of the previous year and that most closely resembles the mix of the Sandie Shaw version of ‘Hand in Glove’. From the opening of ‘The Headmaster Ritual’ (the album’s opening track), the narrow stereo field is occupied by Marr’s overdubbed electric guitars heard on the left, center, and right. Most significantly, Rourke’s bass guitar part is featured prominently in the mix alongside Morrissey’s vocals. This would be the standard mix heard on the majority of releases by The Smiths until they disbanded in 1987 with Morrissey and Marr assuming production duties for the albums *The Queen is Dead* (1986) and *Strangeways, Here We Come* (1987) as well as the many singles the band released during this time.²⁴

Sources for The Smiths’ Sound

Throughout the band’s relatively brief career, reviewers and critics struggled to find a label to describe The Smiths’ musical sound. Given the band’s instrumental makeup, many writers tried to label the band as ‘traditionalists’ or ‘revivalists’, who hearkened back to the standard guitar-based bands common to a great deal of 1960s rock music. On the one hand, the traditionalist label was often applied in a very superficial manner, as a way of highlighting the instrumental differences between The Smiths and the many synthesizer-based bands popular at the time. On the other hand, the traditionalist label was often invoked in relation to Johnny Marr’s ‘jangly’ guitar sound, a sound that writers would try to connect to the 12-string guitar work of The Beatles’ George Harrison (as heard on *A Hard Day’s Night*) and Roger McGuinn with The Byrds. While Marr’s timbres may evoke the style of these and other guitarists from the 1960s, the place and function of his guitar parts within the context of an entire record bears little resemblance to rock music from the 1960s.

Given the ages of the members of The Smiths at the time of their first releases in 1983 (late teens and early twenties), it might be expected that punk rock would have exerted a strong influence on the band’s sound. Although band members often identified punk

24 Stephen Street is identified as a co-producer on *Strangeways, Here We Come* along with Morrissey and Marr. Street previously worked as an engineer on the band’s ‘Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now’ single and *The Queen is Dead* album.

and new wave acts such as The Clash, Television, Patti Smith, and (proto-punkers) The Velvet Underground as influences, the music of The Smiths would never be mistaken for the aggressive, distorted, and 'lo-fi' (low-fidelity) sound typically associated with punk rock recordings. Even critics who tried to link The Smiths with other bands associated with the vibrant post-punk musical scene in Manchester in the early 1980s struggled to hear connections between The Smiths and bands like Joy Division, New Order, The Durutti Column, and other bands closely associated with the Factory Records label in Manchester. The unique sound of The Smiths prompted John Peel's famous quote that the band appeared 'to have not been influenced by anything that preceded them.'²⁵

Peel's judgment that the sound of The Smiths is unique in the history of recorded popular music contributes to a mythology surrounding the band – their *sui generis* place in the history of rock music – that began to emerge shortly after their first releases and that persists amongst many fans and critics to the present day. In the words of biographer Tony Fletcher, 'proof of The Smiths' singularity' is discernible in the fact that

while the music of The Smiths remains historically associated with the Thatcherite 1980s ... it still sounds gratifyingly fresh. There is ... a sweet poetry to the fact that a group that chose to swim upstream, against the commercial tide of the mid-80s comes across as, if not completely contemporary on the radio these days, then at least *au courant*. Very little other hit music from that decade could lay the same claim.²⁶

The claims made by Peel and Fletcher regarding the band's unique sound and their ability to transcend geography, politics, and history fosters and sustains a romanticized image of the band, an image where the band exists outside and above influence. However, such a view of The Smiths and the band's sound fails to distinguish between songs, artists, and timbres that influenced The Smiths' musical style and how these various elements were filtered through a specific sound sensibility that is represented on their recordings.

In interviews, members of the band mentioned artists and bands they admired in addition to individual songs and specific musical elements that influenced their own songwriting process. For example, the oscillating G major to E minor chords in 'Panic' is a direct reference to T. Rex's 'Metal Guru (1972)' while the 'swampy', tremolo-laden sound of Creedence Clearwater Revival is a distant relative to the sound that permeates 'How Soon Is Now?'.²⁷ Shifting the focus from individual bands or songs to specific musical styles or movements associated with a particular place or time period, Marr emphasizes how 'the post-punk era is where I come from. As a school kid my singles box was full of punk records by British artists such as Wire, The Gang of Four, and The Psychedelic Furs'.²⁸ In order to understand how these and many other disparate influences were assimilated by the band and then re-presented to listeners via recordings that share a common and distinctive musical sound, I believe we must consider the important role played by Patti Smith in the development of the sound of The Smiths.

Along with Television's *Marquee Moon* (1977) and Talking Heads' *Talking Heads: 77*, Patti Smith's *Horses* (1975) is one of the most influential recordings associated with New York-based punk rock and new wave. For budding songwriters Morrissey and Johnny Marr, the instrumental arrangement and lyrical delivery of Smith's song 'Kimberly' provided the blueprint for their song 'The Hand That Rocks the Cradle' from The Smiths'

25 Quoted in: Campbell and Coulter, 'Why Pamper Life's Complexities? An Introduction to the Book', *Why Pamper Life's Complexities?*, 11. The original quote appears in the hour-long documentary on The Smiths featured on *The South Bank Show* that aired on ITV on October 18, 1987.

26 Tony Fletcher, 'The Birth of The Smiths', *Mojo* 227 (October 2012), 68, 69.

27 On 'Panic', see Goddard, *The Smiths*, 225; On 'How Soon is Now?', see *ibid.*, 124 ff.

28 Pat Gilbert, 'The Boy With the Thorn in His Side', *Mojo* 231 (February 2013), 80.

debut album.²⁹ The significance of ‘Kimberly’ and Patti Smith for Morrissey and Marr can be traced back even further, to August 1978 when The Patti Smith Group performed at the Apollo in Manchester, a concert attended by both Morrissey and Marr.³⁰ Not only were the two able to witness a key performer associated with the first wave of punk and new wave in a live setting, but Morrissey and Marr were also introduced to the ways in which a punk or new wave musical aesthetic could be realized. A song that appeared regularly in many concerts by The Patti Smith Group from late 1977 through early 1979 was her cover of The Ronettes’ ‘Be My Baby’ (1963).³¹ In the hands of Patti Smith and her band, ‘Be My Baby’ is transformed from the monophonic ‘Wall of Sound’ approach to production associated with Phil Spector to become an aggressively distorted, guitar-based song typical of contemporary punk rock acts. In the minds of Morrissey and Marr, however, Patti Smith’s stylistic reinterpretation of a pop classic suggested an alternative to how records could sound. Such an alternative could only be realized, however, during the post-punk era when bands began to develop and explore the possibilities suggested by the pioneers of punk rock, possibilities relating to image, musical proficiency, lyrical topics and subject matter, and modes of musical production and distribution that did not rely on major record labels, traditional concert venues, or the formulaic and predictable playlists associated with FM rock radio. When Morrissey and Marr reunited approximately five years after the Patti Smith concert, the many musical possibilities suggested by punk were being realized by contemporary post-punk acts. The Smiths’ place in a post-punk musical aesthetic can be understood as an inversion of what they witnessed five years earlier: if Patti Smith could reinterpret the instantly identifiable recorded sound of a classic girl-group song according to the sounds and timbres of punk rock and new wave, The Smiths seemed intent upon reinterpreting the ‘lo-fi’ musical sound typical of many punk and post-punk records in the context of early pop records, particularly the dense and intricately arranged monophonic recordings of Phil Spector.

Johnny Marr explains how when he ‘heard [Phil Spector’s] records, a whole new world opened up to me.’³² Once again, it was Patti Smith who introduced the young Marr to the possibilities contained within the grooves of the recordings produced by Spector and how the sound of Spector’s records could be reinterpreted within a post-punk musical context. ‘It was Patti Smith that got me into Phil Spector’, Marr explains,

[and] when I got into him it was just the end for me. He produced The Ronettes, so I got into them. I always said that I could relate to Phil Spector more directly than guitar players – like your Jeff Becks of your Eric Claptons.³³

Elsewhere, Marr describes the band’s sound as being influenced by groups and records and not musical movements or styles. ‘I like the idea of records,’ Marr explains,

- 29 When Morrissey first presented Marr with the lyrics to the song that would become ‘The Hand That Rocks the Cradle’, Marr ‘thought it scanned over the meter [and] the tempo of “Kimberly” by Patti Smith. Also [“Kimberly”] was terra firma, that [record] was a real big touchstone for us.’³¹ Goddard, *The Smiths*, 18.
- 30 Simon Goddard suggests that Marr and Morrissey were first introduced to one another at this performance. See Goddard, *The Smiths*, 9. Given the important role played by Patti Smith in the songwriting, arranging, and recording history of The Smiths, it is worth pondering if (or how) her influence may have had an impact on the name of the band.
- 31 An ongoing project documenting concerts by Patti Smith can be found online at: <http://setlists.pattismithlogbook.info> (Accessed February 2013)
- 32 No author, ‘This Chiming Man’, *The Guitar Magazine* 7/2 (1997). Available online at: <http://foreverill.com/interviews/post87/guitar.htm> (Accessed November 2012).
- 33 Harry Wylie, ‘Johnny Marr: Beyond The Smiths’, *Total Guitar* 6 (May 1995), 39.

even those with plenty of space, [records] that sound symphonic. I like the idea of all the players merging into one atmosphere. I tend to hear the record as it will be produced as I'm writing the song.³⁴

In light of Marr's remarks, the defining features of the band's sound as described above – the narrow stereo image, the dense instrumental timbres, and the prominent place of the bass guitar in relation to the vocals – can be understood as an attempt to recreate Spector's 'Wall of Sound' in a stereo environment (as opposed to Spector's preference for monaural recordings).

Whereas Marr focuses on the sound quality of records from the 1960s as important to the band's sound, Morrissey has confessed his love of records as objects. For Morrissey, records carry not only sound but also a sense of nostalgia. From an interview conducted in 1983, Morrissey explains how

in the Sixties records were actually *worth* something. People went out and bought a seven-inch piece of plastic and they treasured it, which they don't seem to do any more. [The Smiths are] trying to bring back that precious element which is, I suppose, reminiscent of an earlier time.³⁵

The band's 1986 paean to records, 'Rubber Ring', captures the two qualities described by Morrissey and Marr: the meaning(s) of records and their sound. Morrissey's lyrics ascribe records with redemptive qualities (*But don't forget the songs that made you cry / And the songs that saved your life. / Yes, you're older now and you're a clever swine / But they were the only ones who ever stood by you.*) and a form of faithfulness often associated with old friends (*And when you're dancing and laughing / And finally living / Hear my voice in your head and think of me kindly.*). At the same time, 'Rubber Ring' exemplifies the sound of The Smiths I have described with the bass guitar assuming a prominent place within the mix even as the center of the stereo field is gradually filled with Morrissey's vocals and numerous overdubbed guitars and synthesized string parts. While the lyrics only tell part of the story, it is the sound of The Smiths – a recorded sound that took over a year to coalesce in the studio and that owes a great deal to records and mixes from the 1960s – that gives 'Rubber Ring' and so many songs by The Smiths their distinctive sonic quality.

34 Joe Gore, 'Guitar Anti-Hero: Johnny Marr, The Smiths and Beyond', *Guitar Player* January (1990). Available online at <http://foreverill.com/interviews/post87/antihero.htm> (Accessed November 2012)

35 Morrissey quoted in Bill Black, 'Keep Young and Beautiful', *Sounds* (November 19 1983). Available online at: <http://foreverill.com/interviews/1983/charmed.htm> (Accessed November 2012)

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 _____. 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now' b/w 'Suffer Little Children', Rough Trade, ROUGH RT 156, 1985.
 _____. 'How Soon is Now?' b/w 'Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want', Rough Trade, ROUGH RT 166, 1985.
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