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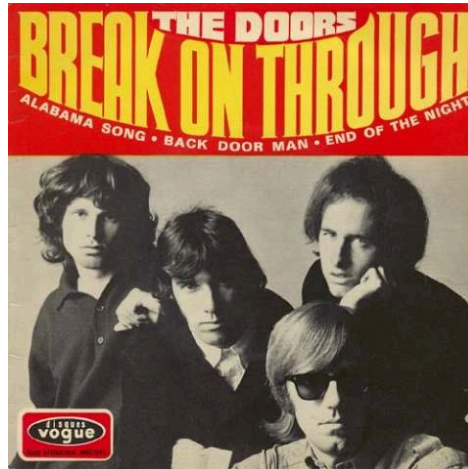
"Break on Through" : contre-culture, musique et modernité dans les années 1960

Ryan Moore

EDITOR'S NOTE

This text was published in *Countercultures & Popular Music* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2014), while its French translation appeared in this issue of *Volume!* in 2012.

- 1 AT THE DAWN of the 1960s, two musical movements developing only a few blocks from each other in New York City were poised to irreversibly shift the trajectory of American music. In the final weeks of 1959, the Five Spot café in the Bowery hosted a series of performances by the Ornette Coleman Quartet that sparked enormous controversy among New York's jazz enthusiasts, who were immediately polarised over Coleman's improvisational style that would change the course of jazz while also influencing psychedelic rock later in the decade. Whereas it was once



condemned as “the devil’s music”, by the end of the 1950s jazz had reached a pinnacle of cultural legitimacy: it was promoted internationally as “America’s art form”, taught in thousands of American colleges and high schools, and appraised by a new generation of intellectuals who developed the field of jazz criticism. Having released an album with the audacious title *The Shape of Jazz to Come* earlier in the year, the Ornette Coleman Quartet came to the Five Spot in November 1959 and invented a form of collective improvisation that violated all the musical conventions that were understood as fundamental to jazz (Anderson 2007). The cultural elite of New York’s jazz scene were passionately divided over the Coleman Quartet’s performances, with *Time* (1960) magazine’s story on the controversy quoting the legendary trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie: “I don’t know what he’s playing, but it’s not jazz.”

- 2 Both the enthusiasm for and opposition to Coleman’s music were a testament to its ground-breaking nature, as he desecrated the solidifying orthodoxy of jazz in the name of improvisational freedom. Those who took offence at his free jazz typically disparaged it as nothing but noise: undisciplined, disorderly and technically deficient. Yet free jazz would indeed be the shape of jazz to come in the 1960s, a decade we now know for a succession of cultural and political revolts against conventions and authorities throughout the social system. Within jazz music but also far beyond it, an improvisational style would pose a challenge to orthodoxies of all sorts that had congealed during the middle of the twentieth century. Coleman was one among an assortment of artists and activists who sought to liberate individual parts from overbearing wholes and rescue transitory moments of time from scheduled orders of progress and repetition. This cohort would wage war on the official forms of modernism that were instituted during the post-war years, yet the counterculture they created in the 1960s also expressed the modernist ideal that development and transcendence could be achieved through the annihilation of tradition and formal standards. Their revolt against order and tradition in the quest for freedom and innovation also included the dangers of atomisation, anarchy and self-annihilation that felled the counterculture as the 1960s came to an end with a succession of drug overdoses, violent episodes and generally bad vibes. The Ornette Coleman Quartet personified a potentially higher synthesis of this conflict between the individual and society in their practice of *collective* improvisation, but this was not the direction the 1960s took as the counterculture became increasingly libertarian in a strictly

individualistic sense, eventually devolving into a self-absorbed culture of personal growth in the 1970s.

- 3 Just a few blocks north and west of where controversy was raging at the Five Spot, a revival of folk music had been ongoing in Greenwich Village and developed into a full-fledged subculture by the end of the 1950s. Hundreds of young people wielding a wide assortment of stringed instruments were gathering in Washington Square Park on the weekends to sing folk songs, while nearby MacDougal Street had become home to Izzy Young's Folklore Center and a number of coffeehouses where people in the folk scene congregated (Hajdu 2001). The folk music subculture embodied a dual character that would ultimately prove unsustainable in the 1960s: while one part expressed folk culture's romantic attachment to pre-industrial America, thereby exalting sincerity and an aesthetic of social realism, a second, divergent path was shaped by the urban bohemianism of Greenwich Village, where experiments with representation and form were opposed to social realism, and the search for the authenticity was undertaken as a process of becoming rather than being. Folk music is rooted in tradition and inherently suspicious of modernity: Raymond Williams (1983: 136–7) has traced the usage of "folk" from "a general meaning of "people"" in the seventeenth century to the nostalgic connotations it developed in the nineteenth century, as "a complex set of responses to the new industrial and urban society" in which folk songs "came to be influentially specialised to the pre-industrial, pre-urban, pre-literate world". Folk music maintained a presence in American society in large part through the labour movement and the political Left, where folk was celebrated not only for its lyrics about popular struggle but also for the participatory form of its common ownership and accessibility to anyone with relatively simple instruments. The neighbourhood of Greenwich Village that became a central point for the folk revival had previously been the setting for collaborations between bohemia and the American Left in the period roughly between 1890 and 1920, when the anarchist Emma Goldman was regularly rabble-rousing in the streets, John Reed wrote *Ten Days that Shook the World* after witnessing the Bolshevik Revolution, and intellectuals, artists and labour activists intermingled at the salon of heiress Mabel Dodge (Stansell 2000). At the end of the 1950s, a reprise of this tenuous alliance between folkie populism, Left politics and bohemian modernism was developing again in Greenwich Village's folk scene.
- 4 Folk had become the most popular genre of music among more intellectual and politically engaged young people, particularly on the expanding college campuses, when in January 1961 Robert Zimmerman arrived in Greenwich Village from Minnesota, adopted many of the affectations of Woody Guthrie, and began performing regularly in the coffeehouses using the name Bob Dylan. Alongside Joan Baez, Dylan took folk to the apex of both its commercial popularity and social significance, but he also pushed the contradiction between folk realism and bohemian modernism to its breaking point, from which a new synthesis developed in the second half of the 1960s. In his early years, Dylan crafted his image and style to meet the expectations of his audience, which grew from the folk scene in Greenwich Village to the college campus circuit across the US during the peak years of the Civil Rights Movement. Dylan's stardom immediately created contradictions within the culture of folk music, for the image of sincerity in Dylan's pose as a proletarian troubadour was largely contrived, enabling him to achieve fame as something like a folkie pin-up in a scene that defined itself in opposition to commercialism. The sincerity and social realism demanded by the folk scene was also an immediate fetter on the creativity of Dylan's music and

lyrics, as even before changing to a rock sound he had been criticised by the folk community for writing songs that were more personally introspective than politically topical. When he dropped the folkie image in favour of dark sunglasses, motorcycle gear and an electric rock band, Dylan was greeted with a polarity of responses akin to those that faced Ornette Coleman: as many believed they were witnessing an artistic breakthrough to the new shape of things to come, those attached to the standards and traditions of folk music correctly perceived a threat to their culture and the community it supported. Dylan abandoned the cultural field of folk, but in doing so he created a new field of possibilities for rock, mainly by linking the music and his new image to the lineages of Romanticism and the defiant poets and painters of modernity. In the second half of the 1960s, musicians began to approach rock as a means of experimentation and self-exploration, and music became an intellectual, emotional and physical medium of social change surpassing what folk had once been.

Modernisation and Modernism in the 1960s

- 5 My argument situates the music and counterculture of the 1960s within the forms of modernism and the processes of modernisation that spanned from the end of the Second World War until the economic and geopolitical crises of the early 1970s. This particular stage of modernisation was fuelled by monopoly capitalism with a greater degree of state management and planning, one which has been supplanted by a more chaotic, global yet decentralised form of neo-liberal capitalism since the 1970s (Harvey 2007). In the post-war years, capital conceded to pay higher wages because they stimulated lifestyles of mass consumption among the working populace while securing their loyalty to the corporation, thus resolving the crisis of under consumption and class warfare that threatened capital during the interwar years. As the 1960s began, American capitalism had reached new peaks of prosperity after more than a decade as the dominant power in the world economy, and this prosperity translated into roughly equal increases in the standard of living of people throughout the class structure. The US state played a crucial role in shaping the direction of post-war modernisation by launching "urban renewal" projects to demolish older city neighbourhoods while subsidising the construction of new suburban housing and highways, thus remaking the American landscape into a more de-centred, atomised sprawl that facilitated conformity and mass consumption. The state's role in post-war modernisation also included major investments in the public system of higher education, whose expansion was crucial for scientific and technological research in the Cold War. In the second half of the 1960s, these colleges and universities would be flooded by massive numbers of young people conceived during the giddy years of post-war triumph, the "baby boomers" raised with the confidence that they would be the most educated and prosperous generation in American history (Gitlin 1987).
- 6 My understanding of the dialectical relationship between modernisation and modernism has primarily been shaped by Marshall Berman (1982: 16), who defines modernism as "an amazing variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernisation, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own". For Berman, this maelstrom is energised by the collision of numerous social processes, but its centrifugal force is capitalism's profit motive, which

fuels investment and innovation, demands rationalisation and calculability, incites mass migration and the growth of cities, and compresses spatial distance through mass communications. The common effect of all these social processes is to create a modern world characterised by an uncertainty of values and an accelerating pace of change, a volatile and frenzied world where "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned", as Marx and Engels (1998: 38) put it.

- 7 The experience of modernity is constituted by this dialectical relationship between modernisation and modernism. Considering the modernism of the 1960s, Berman identifies three tendencies of cultural response to the conditions of modern life: affirmation, negation and withdrawal. The affirmative voices of the 1960s welcomed the continuing evolution of the electronic media and the erosion of the boundaries separating art from commercial culture, whereas those who advocated withdrawal sought to maintain their ideals for the autonomy of art via self-referential formalism. Most of all, the modernism of the 1960s expressed a spirit of negation, an adversarial culture dedicated to destroying conventions and desecrating traditions. Berman remains dissatisfied with each of these affirmative, negative and withdrawn responses, but his survey of 1960s modernism primarily examines high culture, urban architecture and the intelligentsia while saying little about popular music. I believe that a closer look at the music of the 1960s, along with the counterculture surrounding it, will reveal a dialectical ambivalence that Berman finds in an earlier generation of modernists – from Goethe and Marx to Baudelaire and Dostoyevsky – who did not simply affirm or reject modern life but instead tried to harness its creative energies in order to transcend its limits. Berman contends that this form of modernism "is ironic and contradictory, polyphonic and dialectical, denouncing modern life in the name of values that modernity itself has created, hoping – often against hope – that the modernities of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will heal the wounds that wreck the modern men and women of today" (1982: 23).
- 8 In the analytic narrative that follows, my method is to fleetingly traverse the times and spaces of the 1960s in a modernist style, initially focusing on youth and its relation to modernity, and then moving west to California – the homeland of the counterculture and the terminal point of American modernisation in the 1960s – to examine the rivalling scenes that developed in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In the preceding section, we began to identify some of the different symbolic responses to modernisation that were already emerging in New York's free jazz and folk scenes at the beginning of the 1960s. Against the processes of modernisation that praise novelty for its own sake, the folk revivalists sought to anchor themselves in the past, preserve the means of expression established by previous generations, and rediscover forms of community that had been shattered in the name of progress. This anti-modernisation style of modernism could also be seen in early 1960s New York, where Jane Jacobs (1961) outlined an alternative conception of urban life in opposition to the sprawling, automobile-centred projects of Robert Moses, whose plan to build an expressway through lower Manhattan was thwarted by neighbourhood opposition led by Jacobs. On the other hand, the free jazz of the same time embraced the spirit of modernisation with its frenetic pace, disdain for convention and tradition, and celebration of individual freedom from the collective. This type of modernism that aligned itself with the velocity and volatility of modernisation was also a recurring cultural tendency of the 1960s, especially within the counterculture that was energised by an experimental approach to raising its collective consciousness while utilising the newest electronic

media and chemical concoctions in the pursuit of self-expression. However, in both free jazz and the folk revival we also see glimpses of an alternative, more ambivalent response, one that transcends the dichotomy of affirmative or negative responses to modernisation. Although free jazz was an improvisational form that broke with the usual constraints of pitch, tempo, bar and chord, it did not amount to musical anarchy but instead established a new collective form in which one player's freedom opened opportunities for the others to contribute to the performance in new ways. Meanwhile, if the folk revival sought refuge from modernisation in clinging to tradition and community, a new crop of electrified rock bands were poised to demolish the cultural boundaries of folk in the process of opening new avenues for music.

Youth, Modernity and the Counterculture

9 To fully understand the significance of the counterculture and its music during the 1960s, we must consider the experience of youth which forms an intermediary relation between music and society. As Theodore Roszak (1969) was the first to argue, the "counterculture" was composed of college students and young people in both the hippie/acid rock culture and the movements of the New Left, who Roszak believed should be grouped together, despite all their differences, because both were created by the young in opposition to the American "technocracy" (also see Keniston 1968). The technocracy that developed from post-war forms of modernisation provided this counterculture with its various targets for revolt: the heartless American war machine; the conformity of the organisation man; intractable government bureaucracies; an atomised landscape of suburbs and highways; soulless consumer materialism and the standardisation of mass culture; the rationalisation of an educational system enmeshed with industry and the military. However, young people of the counterculture did not rebel simply in opposition to modernisation, but also to realise the promises of social and personal development that are the hallmarks of modernity. These were not simply movements of resistance but also experiments in renewal, growth and possibility. The search for sources of personal and social transformation – and the confidence that they would eventually find those sources – characterised both the hippies and the New Left, even if they differed on what needed changing and how to realise those changes. The rebellions of the 1960s took shape in opposition to technocracy, but they were conceived in a maelstrom of flux and growth and nourished by the utopian vision of a post-scarcity society.

10 In the 1960s, the experience of youth mediated between the conditions of modernity and the formation of a counterculture. Henri Lefebvre (1995: 195) noted this ambivalent relationship between youth and modernity in 1961, seven years before millions of students and workers took to the streets of Paris to "demand the impossible":

Everywhere we see [young people] showing signs of dissatisfaction and rebellion. Why? It is because they themselves are new and thirsty for innovation – that is, modernity – and are therefore experiencing all of modernity's unresolved problems for themselves. Their finest qualities are the ones which cause them the most pain. Their vitality exposes them and makes them vulnerable. Attracted by it, yet repeatedly disappointed by it, they live out the "new" and all its empty moments. It is they who are worst hit by the disjunction between representation and living, between ideology and practice, between the possible and the impossible. It is they who continue the uninterrupted dialogue between ideal and experiment.

- 11 Millions of young people rebelled against the social system in the 1960s, yet their rebellion was enabled and shaped by the system itself, especially because their sense of generational self-importance was fuelled by the apparently limitless abundance of the capitalist economy. The counterculture mocked the stability and predictability of modernisation while taking its productivity for granted, thus creating a utopian vision where the values of leisure, spontaneity and self-expression would triumph over work, discipline and instrumental rationality.
- 12 Young people occupy a privileged position relative to modernity's spirit of novelty and innovation, especially because they embrace the latest things and the possibilities of the future while casting tradition and security aside. The extension of higher education, postponement of work, advancement of birth control technologies, and other social changes have created youth as a distinct phase of the life cycle, a "psychosocial moratorium" (Erikson 1968) which allows the young to try out different identities while maintaining distance from adult social roles. The baby boom generation was uniquely privileged in the sense that they inherited the confidence of the post-war years and symbolised the apparently bright future of American society. Baby boomers would be doted on in countless parenting manuals, courted as a multibillion-dollar teen market and pack university campuses infused with military spending. Politicians, educators and self-proclaimed childrearing experts declared that this was a special generation that would benefit from all the difficult sacrifices of the past and the infinite opportunities of the future. As the 1960s progressed, it was evident that much of this generation took these messages about their collective importance to heart, but not in the way that authorities had intended.

Better Living through Chemistry: LSD and Acid Rock in San Francisco

- 13 Few things symbolise the 1960s spirit of modernity and its ironies better than LSD. After being discovered by the Swiss chemist Albert Hoffman during the Second World War, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conducted experiments with LSD as part of their search for mind control drugs in the 1950s, administering doses to everyone from military personnel and college students to prostitutes and the mentally ill in studies of its psychoactive effects (Lee and Shlain 1985). Among other places, LSD then found its way into Harvard's psychology department, where it was studied in the experiments – of the Harvard Psilocybin Project and transformed two of the lead researchers – Dr Timothy Leary and Dr Richard Alpert – into advocates of a psychedelic and spiritual change of consciousness. At roughly the same time on the opposite coast, Ken Kesey was also participating in the CIA's research on LSD at Stanford University. In the ensuing years, Kesey wrote his acclaimed novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and gathered his group of "Merry Pranksters" to host "acid tests" where LSD was distributed, accompanied by the music of a band that would later be known as the Grateful Dead. LSD and its infiltration of American society were thus the products of post-war American modernisation, of military research in the context of the Cold War and scientific research at the nation's top universities. And yet as LSD became the chemical inspiration behind the counterculture that developed in the 1960s, it activated modes of consciousness that not only opposed the American government and

its war machine but also contradicted the calculating, mechanical thinking that fuels modernisation in its totality.

- 14 LSD had a decisive influence on the music of the 1960s, particularly in the San Francisco psychedelic rock scene that began forming in the Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood in 1965. The San Francisco scene began as a continuation of the folk revival and the Beat literary movement that was centred in the city's North Beach neighbourhood. By 1965, musicians, writers and various eccentrics had begun moving into the Haight-Ashbury's dilapidated, low-rent Victorian houses (Perry 1984). The new crop of San Francisco bands were a mix of the communitarian ethos of folk and the improvisational spirit of jazz and the Beats, but they ruptured the boundaries and surpassed the limits of both cultural traditions by adding an explosive concoction of LSD and electrified rock and roll. Concurrent with the prime years of LSD's exploration, the Beatles and the other bands of the British Invasion, along with a newly electrified Bob Dylan, had begun to open new possibilities for the creation of rock music as a meaningful form of cultural expression. In the second half of the 1960s, LSD and rock music blended to create a collective expression of modernity's quest for elevation and expansion, one that promised to cultivate higher states of consciousness and being among individuals nurtured within a loving community. Along with LSD, rock music presented a challenge to American institutions and social norms, but it too was nurtured by scientific and technological modernisation, by multicoloured light shows, massive amplification and new innovations in the recording studio. So-called acid rock was imagined to be a liberator of minds and bodies, uniting musicians and audiences in a community of the young, taking them higher and further with experimental recordings and improvisational performances. By the end of the 1960s, however, this vision would lie defeated and exhausted: unable to change reality in accordance with its collective imagination, the counterculture imploded, went into retreat and gradually dissolved.
- 15 The Grateful Dead combined all of these musical and cultural elements, under the influence of LSD and other psychedelics, to help create the countercultural daydream for an emerging community that was expanding from its nucleus in northern California. The members of the Grateful Dead initially met during the early 1960s in Palo Alto near Stanford University (approximately 30 miles south of San Francisco), where the mix of folk music and Beat literature had generated a flourishing bohemian community. Jerry Garcia was initially inspired to learn guitar as an adolescent after hearing Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry, but in Palo Alto he was one of many folkies who played guitar and banjo in bluegrass and jug bands. On the other hand, Phil Lesh was a classically trained musician who played the trumpet in high school and had a keen interest in jazz improvisation and avant-garde classical music, which led him to explore new methods for playing the electric bass as more like a second lead than a time-keeping instrument of rhythm. Ron "Pigpen" McKernan represented a third musical trajectory, at least until his death from cirrhosis in 1973: he grew up listening to the blues and rhythm and blues (his father was a local disc jockey), and in the Grateful Dead he played the harmonica and blues organ, looked like a Hells Angels biker, and sang in a rugged voice coated with alcohol. Finally, the rhythm section that was an essential part of the improvisational process included not one but two percussionists, thus doubling the complex web of musical interactions during a jam session (McNally 2002 and Spector in this volume).

- 16 Musically and culturally, the Grateful Dead were an amalgamation of all the countercultural components that had accumulated up to the mid-1960s, amplifying the traditionalism of the folk revival into an improvisational practice that was expanding from a community of folkie bohemians into a more colourful movement of hippie freaks. They personified the duelling musical responses to modernisation – folk and experimentalism – but also the promise that a youthful counterculture was poised to transcend this duality in an alternative vision (or hallucination, if you prefer) of modernity. The Dead's roots were in the folk scene, but their ascent into a rock band was fully connected with the spread of LSD and Kesey's Merry Pranksters. By 1966, the emerging hippie scene concentrated in the Haight-Ashbury had become a veritable "psychedelic city-state" with its own neighbourhood head shop (the Psychedelic Shop) and underground newspaper (the *San Francisco Oracle*) (Lee and Shlain 1985: 141–9). A rapidly growing community of musicians with backgrounds in folk, jazz and the blues was also forming in the neighbourhood. Marty Balin had opened a venue in San Francisco called the Matrix after witnessing the emergence of folk rock, and he formed Jefferson Airplane by adding a trio of guitar and bass players who played folk, country and the blues. Similarly, the founding members of Big Brother and the Holding Company had begun their musical careers in San Francisco's folk circuit, while their drummer came from a jazz background. Months later, the local hippie concert promoter Chet Helms introduced Big Brother to their newest member: a blues singer who had just arrived from Texas named Janis Joplin (Echols 1999).
- 17 Social solidarity was a core ideal of the folk scene, and it continued to be prominent even as music ventured in experimental directions during the second half of the 1960s. One prospect of the counterculture was that it might overcome the opposition between individualism and collectivism by forming a collaborative community of creative people who could inspire and influence one another in the development of a unique self. This collective vision formed in opposition to post-war modernisation and the suburbanised life of the American middle class, whose atomised existence in cars and cul-de-sacs made people anxious to conform and unwilling to deviate, thus creating neither community nor individuality but instead a "lonely crowd" in the words of sociologist David Riesman (1950). As with free jazz, the psychedelic rock bands could be seen as microcosms of this countercultural model of social relations, especially as the collective process of music-making involves individual musicians working within an interdependent collective, one where each member makes a unique contribution to the sonic whole by utilising their particular skills in a continuous interplay with the others. The collective improvisation of the acid rock bands was surely enhanced by the fact that their members often lived together – at different times, the Grateful Dead cohabitated at 710 Ashbury St, Jefferson Airplane at 2400 Fulton St., and Big Brother and the Holding Company had a house in neighbouring Marin County – and therefore allowed creative bonds and improvisational familiarity to develop among some extremely unique individuals. On a larger scale, live performances and festivals became the most significant medium for creating a sense of community within the counterculture. As the rock audience grew into the multitude of Woodstock Nation, rock music concerts created an environment similar to religious rituals or festivals – Emile Durkheim (1915: 245–55) called it "collective effervescence" – where the intensity of social interaction produces a state of euphoria among people who feel elevated beyond their ordinary, everyday selves.

- 18 Just as folk music was being absorbed and surpassed by psychedelic rock, the communitarian politics of folk culture took on more colourful and theatrical forms that expressed not just resistance but also collective joy. The Diggers, for instance, evolved from the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a group of actors who had been staging improvisational forms of radical theatre in the city's streets and parks. After holding a parade on Haight Street to celebrate "The Death of Money and the Birth of the Free" in 1966, the Diggers began giving away food and clothing on a regular basis at the panhandle in front of Golden Gate Park and established a free store, a free bakery and even a free medical clinic (a precursor of the revered Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic). They took their name from a seventeenth-century agrarian movement that arose in England to resist the Enclosure Acts and rising food prices. These seventeenth-century Diggers claimed squatters' rights for common lands and engaged in digging the soil (hence the name) and planting vegetable gardens to feed the needy. The San Francisco Diggers, by contrast, were products of modernity and urbanisation, forming a movement based on the appropriation of an enormous surplus produced by a prosperous economy, a surplus they imagined could be redistributed to allow people to avoid wage labour and live freely. A strong distrust of money and commercialism was shared by the folk and the bohemian cultural traditions, and in the 1960s this was expressed in concerns about the commercialisation of music and conflicts between rock bands and their record labels. Within the San Francisco scene, these conflicts over commerce and music created a rivalry between Bill Graham and Chet Helms and the Family Dog commune: while Graham was an unabashed businessman who was on the way to becoming the leading rock concert promoter of his time, Helms and the Family Dog promoted concerts as vehicles of liberation that minimised the role of money (Perry 1984).

Rock Music and Consumer Capitalism in Los Angeles

- 19 The San Francisco music scene formed largely in opposition to the mainstream pop music of the recording industry, and those commercial forces were concentrated in the city's hated rival to the south, Los Angeles. Over the course of the 1960s, the centre of the American music industry shifted away from New York City, where the biggest labels were headquartered and the country's most successful songwriters and publishers worked in Tin Pan Alley and the Brill Building. In 1960, the movie industry still greatly overshadowed the music industry in Los Angeles: several of the major labels were subservient divisions of the movie studios (e.g. MGM, Warner Brothers) in search of teen idols that could cross over to film and television. This left Capitol Records as the most significant player – its local supremacy signified by a skyscraper designed like a stack of records, erected in 1954 – along with a cluster of independent labels like Dot, Liberty, and Specialty Records, all of which were housed on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. However, Los Angeles had become synonymous with the commercial side of pop music by the time of the Monterey Pop Festival in June 1967, and so as the festival was being organised by Lou Adler (a record producer who had recently become a millionaire following the sale of Dunhill Records) and John Phillips (leader of the commercially successful LA-based folk act the Mamas and the Papas), the conflict between the two scenes was palpable. As Adler recalled, "The San Francisco groups had a very bad taste in their mouths about LA commercialism ... And it's true that we were a

business-minded industry. It wasn't a hobby. They called it slick, and I'd have to agree with them" (cited in Hoskyns 1996: 145).

- 20 Los Angeles emerged as a centre for innovations in popular music during the early 1960s, when Phil Spector was developing his "wall of sound" approach to recording at Gold Coast Studios, while at the same time surf music expressed the carefree leisure of young people raised on American abundance. Spector made advancements on the Brill Building sound after apprenticing with the songwriting duo of Leiber and Stoller in New York, bringing greater volume and depth to studio recordings by utilising an orchestra of instruments playing simultaneously to create a dense, lush composition surrounding the vocal harmonies of the groups he was producing. Spector's wall of sound was engineered to carry through to jukeboxes and AM radio, leading to a string of hit singles by the Crystals, the Ronettes, and the Righteous Brothers from 1962 to 1965, prompting Tom Wolfe to christen him "The Tycoon of Teen". But the music that resonated most with great numbers of young people in the early 1960s was surf music, particularly the music linked to a wider cultural celebration of surfing, the beach and spring break vacation depicted in a succession of teen movies. Although southern California's surfing subculture originated among rebellious individuals in refuge from wage labour and social convention, its evocations of leisure, youthfulness and sex were perfectly suited to serve as advertisements for consumer hedonism among affluent white teens. The reverberating sound of surf music was originally developed by guitarists and instrumental groups like the Ventures and Dick Dale, and the formula for writing songs about surfing, cars and fleeting summertime romances was established in a succession of hit singles from 1961 through 1965 by Jan and Dean and the Beach Boys (Hoskyns 1996).
- 21 The prosperity and leisure of southern California's "endless summer" of the early 1960s contained an underside of racial exclusion that confined Blacks and Latinos within an environment of poverty, unemployment and police brutality. In August 1965, at the same time that the Beach Boys' "California Girls" was climbing the singles chart, the ghetto of Watts exploded in an uprising that lasted for five days and required the dispatch of 15,000 troops from the National Guard before it was finally suppressed (McCone Report 1995). The significance of the Watts rebellion as a watershed moment in the struggle for racial equality, and as an opening signal of the militant turn of the late 1960s, can hardly be overstated. Beginning only days after passage of the Voting Rights Act had abolished the last vestiges of legal segregation, Watts exposed the limits of liberal democratic remedies for racial injustice and activated a more radical turn toward issues of political economy and state repression in the Black social movements of the late 1960s. Watts was a stark reminder that there was something rotten in the land of sunshine, for the local African-American community was continually subjected to racist police violence while being denied access to the affluence surrounding them in the white suburbs and the electronic media beaming out of greater Los Angeles. Guy Debord (2007: 197) of the Situationist International saw the rebellion and destruction in Watts as nothing less than a negation of the "spectacle-commodity economy" erupting on the perimeter of Hollywood's dream factory:

The looting of the Watts district was the most direct realisation of the distorted principle: "To each according to their *false* needs" - needs determined and produced by the economic system which the very act of looting rejects. But once the vaunted abundance is taken at face value and directly *seized*, instead of being eternally pursued in the rat-race of alienated labor and increasing unmet social

needs, real desires begin to be expressed in festive celebration, in playful self-assertion, in the *potlatch* of destruction. People who destroy commodities show their human superiority over commodities.

- 22 Only a few months after the Watts riots, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys began working at his home in Beverly Hills to record an album that would rise to the challenge recently set forth by the Beatles' *Rubber Soul* (Granata 2003: 68). Wilson continued to utilise and further develop the dense musical landscapes and expansive harmonies employed in previous Beach Boys songs, but *Pet Sounds* also featured a deep undercurrent of loneliness and estrangement, one that threatened to negate the fun-in-the-sun sound and image that had become the group's trademark. During this time, critics of "mass society" maintained that behind the glossy façade of the consumer culture and suburban lifestyles afforded by post-war modernisation was an atomised society of isolated individuals – as Phillip Slater (1970: 7) argued in his treatise *The Pursuit of Loneliness*, "Americans attempt to minimise, circumvent, or deny the interdependence upon which all human societies are based ... We seek more and more privacy, and feel more and more alienated and lonely when we get it." While he and the other Beach Boys had been writing and singing about surfing, cruising and summertime, in reality Brian Wilson was far too reclusive and awkward to have enjoyed much of this life of youthful leisure, and so it had been a dreamworld for him in the same way it was for most of his audience. Now, in 1966, having recently discovered LSD, and with the symptoms of an emerging mental illness beginning to surface, Wilson's growing sense of estrangement formed an antithesis within *Pet Sounds* to offset the upbeat harmonising and carefree hedonism of the Beach Boys' sound. The signs of alienation appear immediately on *Pet Sounds*, when a cheery song about teenage lovers is unsettled with the question "Wouldn't it be nice to live together in the kind of world where we belong?" and the observation that "You know it seems the more we talk about it/It only makes it worse to live without it." On the surface, the gorgeously sad falsettos of *Pet Sounds* appear to stem from personal heartbreak, but a closer listen also reveals a young man suffering from a more social or even political kind of disconnection, a feeling that he "just wasn't made for these times".
- 23 In short, if the Watts riots were a destructive assault waged by those excluded from the "spectacle-commodity economy", *Pet Sounds* was an early sign of the dissatisfaction and estrangement developing from inside the spectacle among those born into a position of privilege within this economy. Though Wilson and the Beach Boys approached them from a different direction, along with the San Francisco bands they too pushed against the limits of post-war modernisation and modernity, exposing the need to overcome its contradictions to progress further. *Pet Sounds* did indeed become known as one of the greatest rock albums of all time, but not in 1966: the album was initially a commercial failure and mostly ignored by the burgeoning rock community, and only subsequently has it accumulated the massive symbolic capital it now possesses. By 1966 the torch had already been passed to a new cohort of folk rock bands, some of whom (the Byrds, Love, Buffalo Springfield) had built a following within the counterculture through their performances at nightclubs on the Sunset Strip. Sunset Boulevard hosted a small riot of its own in 1966, when plans to demolish a folk rock hotspot called Pandora's Box sparked a confrontation between police and young people that began in November 1966 and continued sporadically for the next two years (Davis 2007). As the hippie subculture was emerging and a moral panic about youth, music and drugs began to spread, the LAPD tried to vigorously enforce a 10 p.m. curfew while routinely harassing

and beating long-haired youth outside the clubs; in appropriately Hollywood style, the melees were immortalised in both film (*Riot on the Sunset Strip*) and song (Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth"). Like the Watts riots, these confrontations with the police developed into festivals of joyous destruction that united the young in a collective identity forged in opposition to state power. A self-described Hollywood rock "groupie", Pamela Des Barres (1987: 44) recalled the formative influence of these events for her:

I felt like I belonged, united with a thousand other kids, protesting what THEY were doing to US ... I watched as Gorgeous Hollywood Boys overturned a bus, and I cheered on the offenders from my warm spot on the Sunset Boulevard blacktop. I gazed at Sonny and Cher, arms wrapped around each other, wearing matching polka-dot bell-bottoms and fake-fur vests, and realised that we were all one perfect hip force with one huge beating heart.

Coda: I Cannot Go Back to Yer Frownland

- 24 The story of how this loving community with its dreams of social progress and individual growth imploded internally while being repressed externally, and all the consequences that followed, is much too complicated to be explained here. It is, in brief, the story of modernity's exhaustion and the emergence of a postmodern sensibility that spread across a wide spectrum of cultural forms in the decades that followed. Musically, the sound of things falling apart can be clearly heard on an album released in the summer of 1969 that still continues to disturb the unsuspecting set of ears like few others can, Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*. The 28 songs on *Trout Mask Replica* sound as if what Pamela Des Barres called the "one huge beating heart" of the counterculture has been ripped into a thousand shreds, only to be stitched back together in ways that seem random and haphazard at first but eventually reveal a new system of chaos. The beat of this music, as Beefheart (Don Van Vliet) has explained, no longer approximates the soothing regularity of a heartbeat, but instead has been crushed into a mishmash of erratic rhythms that never carry on long enough for the listener to settle into a groove or state of tranquillity. Beefheart's music was a concoction of the disorderly noise and frenetic pace of free jazz, simulations of unpolished sounds from the earliest blues recordings and the disorienting clamour of psychedelic rock, all of which are accented by Vliet's gruff shouting of lyrical puns and nonsensical word associations. Langdon Winner (2007: 59) explained why *Trout Mask Replica*, venerated by some as a masterpiece but denigrated by many others as unlistenable noise, would be his choice as the one album he could bring to a deserted island: "a desert island is possibly the only place where I could play the record without being asked by friends and neighbours to take the damned thing off" (on "freak out" recordings and sonic anarchy, see Keister in this volume).
- 25 As the 1960s wore on, the collective hopes for development, transcendence and authenticity embedded in the counterculture's modernism began to fizzle out even faster than they appeared to arise. The tumultuous year of 1968 was the most significant turning point, the year when young people all over the world took to the streets and undertook radical projects of personal and political transformation because, as Lefebvre put it, they were "experiencing all of modernity's unresolved problems for themselves". Yet in their attempts to break through these contradictions of modernity, young people were met with massive exercises of state violence in both

capitalist and communist societies. Meanwhile, in the late 1960s both the New Left and the counterculture were also imploding from within, the former as a result of the toxic mixture of sectarianism and state repression, the latter coinciding with an individualistic withdrawal from the vision of collective change. The modernism of the 1960s that was created by a youthful counterculture imagined new possibilities in the simultaneous pursuit of social change and personal growth, but by 1969 these possibilities had been extinguished and reduced to empty symbolic gestures circulating through the consumer culture. Young people exposed the limits and hypocrisies of post-war modernisation while representing an image of the new world that could take its place, but their attempts to make this collective dream into reality were resisted by the dual powers of state repression and commercial co-optation. A fragmented, postmodern culture – characterised by an absolute rejection of modernist notions of progress and development, authenticity and originality, and totality and universality – took root in this social context of despair.

- 26 Jacques Attali (1985: 11) has theorised that noise contains prophetic powers: “It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible.” Two months after the release of *Trout Mask Replica* – and not more than 20 miles from the Woodland Hills house where Vliet shackled up his entire band while insisting on complete authoritarian control over their rehearsal and recording – the Manson family committed a string of gruesome murders, including one at the Benedict Canyon home that Manson believed was still occupied by former Beach Boys producer Terry Melcher (see Carlin and Jones, in this volume). At the end of the 1960s, images of crazed hippies seized the media spotlight in the weeks following the celebration of peace and love at Woodstock, and this turn of events was reinforced in December 1969 by the violence at the Altamont festival in northern California. In explaining why news of the Manson murders came as less than a surprise to her and those she knew in Los Angeles at the time, Joan Didion (1979: 41) wrote, “This mystical flirtation with the idea of “sin” – this sense that it was possible to go “too far”, and that many people were doing it – was very much with us in Los Angeles in 1968 and 1969.” *Trout Mask Replica* stands as the most dramatic document of this time and space of social disintegration, analogous to the word salad and anti-art concocted by Dada in response to the senseless horrors of the First World War. The record begins with a flurry of sounds that seem to be coming from every direction as Vliet protests in his raspy voice, “My smile is stuck/I cannot go back to yer frownland”, as if he is being dragged back to a humdrum reality after momentarily basking in the sunshine of utopia. The record ends with a ferocious jam session to conclude the anti-war song, “Veteran’s Day Poppy”. Noise is always ahead of its time, according to Attali’s definition, and so although *Trout Mask Replica* was a commercial flop in 1969, it accumulated influence over the course of the 1970s with a new cohort of punk musicians like Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo and Joe Strummer of the Clash, the latter of whom told Greil Marcus (1993: 31), “When I was sixteen ... that was the only record I listened to – for a year.” “What is noise to the old order”, as Attali (1985: 11) put it, “is harmony to the new.”

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ABSTRACTS

This paper examines music and the making of the American counterculture within a wider social context of the modernity and modernism that developed in the period after World War II and would become exhausted by the end of the 1960s. Buffered and emboldened by affluence, the American modernism of the 1960s was characterized by a spirit of innovation and faith in progress, and the counterculture expressed this sense of possibility in its experiments to discover higher states of consciousness and more authentic ways of living. The mediating link between music and the modernist spirit of innovation and progress was youth, in this case a generation raised on the prosperity and promises of post-war America, benefiting from massive state investments in public education as well as a discursive celebration of "youth" as symbol of hope and transformation. Beginning with the free jazz and folk music scenes in New York at the beginning of the 1960s, my analytic focus then moves west to consider the different variations of rock music that emerged from San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Cet article analyse la musique et le développement de la contre-culture américaine dans le contexte social plus large de la modernité et du modernisme, entre sa naissance après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et son épuisement à la fin des années 1960. Le modernisme américain des années 1960 était caractérisé par un esprit d'innovation et de foi en le progrès, et la contre-culture exprimait ce sentiment dans ses expérimentations : la recherche de niveaux de conscience plus élevés, de manières de vivre plus authentiques. La jeunesse était le lien entre la musique et l'esprit moderniste d'innovation et de progrès : une génération qui avait grandi dans la prospérité et les promesses de l'Amérique d'après-guerre, qui bénéficiait des investissements massifs de l'État dans le système éducatif ainsi que de la célébration de sa comme symbole d'espoir et de transformation. Se concentrant d'abord sur les scènes free jazz et folk de New York au début des années 1960, mon analyse se déplace ensuite vers l'ouest, pour considérer les différentes variantes du rock qui émergèrent à San Francisco et Los Angeles.

INDEX

Geographical index: États-Unis / USA, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York

nomsmotscles Doors (the), Coleman (Ornette), Dylan (Bob), Jefferson Airplane, Beach Boys (the), Grateful Dead (the), Diggers (the), Captain Beefheart

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Subjects: free jazz / Great Black Music, folk / folk revival, psychedelic / acid rock, punk / hardcore punk, rock music

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