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**Listening to The Shadows, Forty-Eight Years Later,
and for the First Time**

Franco Fabbri and Marta García Quiñones



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Listening to The Shadows, Forty-Eight Years Later, and for the First Time

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Abstract: Like many guitarists in the early Sixties, Franco Fabbri started his career trying to copy the style of Hank B. Marvin, soloist of The Shadows. Marta García Quiñones doesn't play guitar and had few chances to listen to records by The Shadows until recently. Both authors have interests in listening models, music analysis, and cognitive and emotional responses to music. The paper was suggested by a listening experience by Fabbri, who one night, unable to sleep while travelling, listened for three hours (in shuffle mode, with headphones) to a large portion of his collection of mp3 files of Shadows' recordings. Probably due to his semi-hypnotic state, the experience struck deeply, as he shifted back to his teens, when he first listened to The Shadows and started playing their instrumental pieces. Then, Fabbri sent a brief report about that experience to

García Quiñones, who was moved to ask questions about how that music was listened to in the early Sixties, and decided to listen to The Shadows (almost) for the first time. The paper is an expanded version of the correspondence that was initiated by that listening act. It tries to demonstrate that understanding any music event demands to unfold and reconstruct multiple layers of perceptual, emotional, analytic and performative experiences, present and past, which seem to be inscribed both in our bodies and in our minds.

Keywords: *listening – auditor – experience – memory – nostalgia – emotion – autobiography / biography – everyday life – performance – staging – embodied cognition*

Résumé : Comme beaucoup de guitaristes des années 1960, Franco Fabbri a commencé sa carrière en essayant de copier le style de Hank B. Marvin, guitare solo des Shadows. Marta García Quiñones ne joue pas de la guitare et jusqu'à une date récente avait eu peu d'occasions d'écouter les disques de The Shadows. Les deux auteurs s'intéressent aux modèles de l'écoute, à l'analyse musicale, et aux réponses cognitives et émotionnelles à la musique. À l'origine de cet essai, une expérience d'écoute faite par Fabbri, qui, une nuit d'insomnie en voyage, a écouté pendant trois heures (en mode aléatoire, avec casque) une grande partie de sa collection de fichiers mp3 d'enregistrements des Shadows. Probablement en raison de son état semi-hypnotique, l'expérience l'a profondément frappé, lorsqu'il s'est mentalement déplacé à l'époque de son adolescence, quand il a écouté les Shadows pour la première fois et a commencé à jouer leurs morceaux instrumentaux. Fabbri

a envoyé ensuite un bref rapport sur cette expérience à García Quiñones, qui lui a posé des questions sur la façon dont cette musique était normalement écoutée dans les années 1960, et elle a décidé d'écouter le groupe (presque) pour la première fois. L'essai est une version élargie de la correspondance initiée par cet acte d'écoute. Il tente de démontrer que la compréhension de tout événement musical exige de reconnaître et de reconstruire multiples strates d'expériences diverses : perceptives, émotionnelles, analytiques et performatives, présentes et passées, qui semblent être inscrites à la fois dans nos corps et dans nos esprits.

Mots-clés : *écoute – auditeur – expérience – mémoire – nostalgie – émotion – autobiographie / biographie – vie quotidienne – performance – mise en scène – cognition incarnée.*

Franco Fabbri:

I couldn't sleep¹: maybe I had eaten too much or I was too excited. It was the first night in my summer holidays, on board a car ferry sailing from Italy to Greece. The bed in the cabin was narrow and a bit short. So I opened my Mac, unfolded my headphones and plugged them in, launched iTunes, selected all my Shadows pieces, then clicked on "play" and "shuffle mode". Why the Shadows? Probably I wished to listen to something familiar, but also something that I hadn't been listening to for a while; probably I needed music with even, homogeneous sound and duration; pro-

bably I just wanted to exclude too much variety. Why shuffle mode? I wanted to be surprised, just a little: I know by heart the song sequences in all Shadows albums I have.

It's obvious, then, that I was preparing myself for a pleasurable experience: that was my aim. Like when I prepare breakfast or lunch, and pick up things out of the fridge, put some water to boil, and so on. Or like when I prepare myself for other pleasurable experiences, through different senses.

So I was expecting pleasure, from a sensorial experience, based on my ears (in a dark room, or—better—in a dark cabin). An aesthetic expe-

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rience, no doubt. And I wasn't going to dance, nor to feel my body invaded by low frequency vibrations, nor to be gratified by my status in a peer group or by my subcultural identity. I was just *listening to music*: what an incredible test for popular music studies! I must add that as soon as the music started and I put myself in a comfortable position in the bed, or after a short while, I felt like I was dozing, or in that state which is best described to me by the Italian word *dormiveglia* (more or less, "sleeping vigil"). A state "in between" consciousness and dream, when one is aware of his/her thoughts, but can't distinguish their nature clearly. The twilight zone, maybe. I remained in that state for a long time (about a couple of hours, at least), and unfortunately (like with dreams) I can't report exactly on the evolution of that state of mind, though I'm able to recall (like with dreams) some distinct episodes. However, I can report on the outcome, because at some point I felt I was now able to sleep, so I decided to stop the player, take off my headphones, halt the computer, and doing so I woke up, recalled the whole experience, was impressed by some of its aspects, and decided I would think again about it the next morning. In fact, I commented it in an email that I wrote to Marta García Quiñones a few hours later:

Last night I had a very intense psycho-emotional experience. [...] I found myself again in my early teens, I realized how much their [the Shadows'] music left a mark on me, I was moved by their naïveté, their care for detail, their way to do things the best they could; I was moved by their total lack of cynicism and trickiness. I said to myself: "This is me." And thought: "How many times in recent years I allowed the tide of Ita-

lian-style trash [in politics, media, culture] to divert me from what I know and would like to do." It's odd that such thoughts can be caused by listening to "Wonderful Land" or "Shindig", but it is so. And then, I believe that there are at least a dozen of pieces that anticipate what happened years later in English and US popular music. I owe you a compilation. (Franco Fabbri, personal communication, 19 July 2008)

Marta García Quiñones:

Logically, I was deeply moved by Franco Fabbri's message, and became very intrigued by the music that had triggered such powerful emotions. The name of the band, the Shadows, did not mean much to me, though I had a very vague idea of who they were: a British (or was it American?) instrumental group that, in my mind, was loosely associated with Western film atmospheres. Firstly I wasn't even sure whether I had ever listened to any of their themes. But later on I discovered that I actually owned a few of them: "Cosy", "Apache", "FBI", "Mary-Anne", "Nivram", "Move It" (with Cliff Richard), and even an instrumental version of the Police's "Every Breath You Take". I had downloaded them through a peer-to-peer file-sharing network back in 2005, probably out of curiosity after having seen the Shadows mentioned in an academic paper. I recount these details here because, in all likelihood, this is where my fuzzy notion of their style came from. Yet, fascinated by Franco Fabbri's story, I was determined to learn more about it.

The first chance came only two days later, when I spotted a compilation CD at a record outlet near my home. It was the third volume of the *Music Ages* collection, produced by the small inde-

pendent Spanish label of the same name, which is committed to reissuing old original recordings with “vinyl sound”. Under the title *The Shadows* it gathered 16 songs (two of which, “Apache” and “FBI”, I already owned) that had been extracted from different EPs originally published by the old EMI Spanish branch La Voz de Su Amo (His Master’s Voice). Four of the original EP covers featured on the CD cover, what made the CD look like a nostalgic object probably addressed to people who had bought those or other Shadows’ EPs in the sixties, or had a historical interest in their music. The Shadows’ anthology promised by Franco Fabbri arrived from Greece about one month later. It included a longer selection of 30 songs, among which two that were also in the *Music Ages* CD (“Shindig” and “Sleepwalk”), and other two that were already part of my music library (“Mary-Anne” and “Nivram”).

The fact that I had already listened to a few songs by the Shadows—though I only realized it when I was writing this article – apparently explains why I got an impression of relative familiarity while listening to Franco Fabbri’s compilation. Initially I listened to it in the most canonical way, sitting in front of my small hi-fi system and trying to focus solely on the music—something I rarely do—though during the following weeks and months I also played both Shadows’ CDs while doing daily chores and also on my iPod Shuffle, on the move. Also, it is probably worth mentioning that I don’t usually play music loud. I must say that I enjoyed the experience: I was able to appreciate the quality of the sound, which seemed so carefully constructed, and the beauty

of the melodies. However, I also perceived in the Shadows’ music an emotional detachment, a distance. It was as if they were describing to my ears an aesthetically pleasing landscape, though one that I could not really inhabit. Paying close attention, I recognized in it a hallucinatory quality, which for some reason I associated with masculine escapist dreams. But in spite of my efforts, I found it difficult to understand why this music had had such a strong effect on Franco Fabbri.

Probably, part of the problem was that I was trying to understand their music from a sensually poor stand. Yes, I had listened to a significant sample of their musical production, but I couldn’t really *see* them. Not having had the chance to attend any of their concerts, the only visual hints I had were the EP covers featured on the *Music Age* CD, showing four white young men apparently nice and clean, dressed in formal or casual attire, clearly eager to please. Later on, Franco Fabbri and I discovered some Shadows’ videos on the net that also became part of our correspondence (see the videography). Besides the famous “Shadows step”, which is a minimal choreographic routine that the band used to include in their performances, I was amazed at the emotional reactions of some of their fans, as I wasn’t able to identify in their performing style any of the transgressive elements typical of rock. What was so overwhelmingly moving about them? Clearly, I was missing the point, so I questioned Franco about the way the Shadows were listened to in the sixties, and about how he had become acquainted with them.

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Franco Fabbri:

Probably, I first listened to the Shadows from a juke-box, at a seaside resort, in 1960 or 1961 (it may seem strange, but I still have a vague memory of the scene). *Apache* was a hit in Italy as well. I played guitar then, but I didn't own an electric guitar. I was eleven or twelve years old then, and a fan of Paul Anka and Neil Sedaka, and Italian singer-songwriters like Sergio Endrigo or Gino Paoli. I was also a fan of Western and war movies, especially those where a small gang or platoon defeated enemies, like in *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) or in some episodes of *The Longest Day* (1962). Engravings on the vinyl of my first Shadows' singles (it was a habit then in Italy to engrave on masters the date of the cutting) show a definite *post-quem* term for my Shadows addiction: 1962. Then I started longing for an electric guitar, which I got as a present in the summer of 1964. But I definitely was already a Shadows "expert" between 1963 and 1964, as I recall clearly my discussions with a school mate ("la Galliani") who was a Beatles fan: the Shadows for me were definitely better, especially the lead guitarist and the drummer. The Beatles were for girls, as my girlfriend's attitude clearly demonstrated. And I lived in a very masculine world indeed (for this and other details of my early commitment to music see Fabbri, 2011).

A stereo record player was available to me as early as 1960, but all Shadows records I have until 1965 are mono (though all Shadows albums had been available in stereo in the UK since 1961). There was no market for pop stereo records in Italy before 1965-1966. Headphones existed in recording studios, but stereo headphones became avail-

able for the consumer market after 1967 (and I didn't own one until 1969). So, during my teenage addiction to the Shadows I simply listened to their mono records *loud*, either on my home stereo record player, or—during summer holidays—on a Philips affordable small record player. But at the end of that period (1965-1967), when I started playing in a band and had a much more varied musical diet, I used to listen to my stereo records *very loud*, holding the player's loudspeakers close to my ears.

1964 was probably the top of my undisputed love for the Shadows. Owning an electric guitar (an Italian-made Galanti) I discovered some of the "tricks" that had remained obscure in my previous efforts to re-create Shadows pieces with my Spanish guitar. It took a while, anyway, to discover that the "stopped" effect typical of many Hank Marvin passages didn't need any special device applied to the bridge, but just damping the strings with the palm of my hand. And I found myself wanting an Echoplex. The first piece I ever performed in front of an audience was "Blue Star", and many Shadows pieces became part of the repertory of my first band (along with pieces by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Animals, and—by August 1965—the Byrds). In 1966 I became a member of another band (that still exists) and at the end of that year I entered a recording studio for the first time; that definitely marks the end of my daily familiarity with Shadows' records, which slowly vanished during 1966 replaced by repeated listening to albums like *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, *Aftermath*.

Since the beginning, the Shadows were linked for me with an image of concentration and perfectionism, supported by liner notes on their albums and by their attitudes in most of the photographs I could see (mostly, photos on their record covers). Therefore, it was a surprise for me much later to know about the ‘Shadows step’ and to watch old videos where the band performed their choreographies; it was a surprise for my British friends and colleagues too, when they realised that I didn’t know anything about an aspect any Brit from my generation (be it a Shadows fan or not) was “naturally” aware of. In fact, I discovered that while the Shadows used to play most of their hits doing those funny dances, there were “serious” pieces (like the jazz-oriented ones) where they had to show their musicianship, and so sat down, crouched on their instruments.

I hope this will prove to be a useful background for my attempts to analyse that listening experience in the ship’s cabin. Though from the eighties on I bought a few Shadows CDs, and more recently imported them into my iTunes library, and though I definitely had chances to listen to those CDs with my car stereo or at home for many years, probably I had never found myself in a situation where I could listen to the Shadows’ pieces with such a quality (stereo versions, listened to with good headphones) and in such a quantity. It would be an exaggeration to say that I had an “auratic” experience (or that I was struck by the Stendhal syndrome), but this aspect shouldn’t be dismissed. Of course I shouldn’t overestimate the quality of mp3 files (though above average), but if I compare 1) my

listening experience in the cabin with 2) listening to an increasingly cracking copy of *The Fantastic Shadows* in mono on a Philips cheap record player in 1964, the former is definitely closer to the original masters than the latter. What’s the distance, in fact? The vanishing of the “aura” was discussed originally in the context of “mechanical reproducibility”, but with magnetic recording music entered the age of “electronic produceability” (Cutler, 1985). When a “reproduction” is an (almost) exact copy of the original, does the idea of the vanishing ‘aura’ still hold?

Marta García Quiñones:

Thus, if I understood it well, the strength of Franco Fabbri’s listening experience lay not only on its links to past listening experiences, but also on the enhanced enjoyment enabled by digital technology. Listening to the Shadows with digital quality, through headphones, was almost a fresh impression, and precisely one that seemed to guarantee a more direct contact to the music. But what about the music then? Surely there must be something in the Shadows’ music that justified Franco Fabbri’s reaction, and that could make me feel closer to it. Let’s take for instance “Shindig”, the first of the songs contained in the *Music Ages* anthology, and included also in Franco Fabbri’s compilation. Composed by Shadows’ members and guitarists Hank B. Marvin and Bruce Welch, “Shindig” was issued as a single in September 1963, and reached number 6 in the UK hit list. It is one of the Shadows’ songs that I like the most, and also one that both Franco Fabbri and I find more characteristic

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of the Shadows' style during their most successful period.

The song starts with two typical rock chords, repeated three times, which reappear symmetrically at the end. The main melody (the chorus), played (as all of them) by Hank B. Marvin's lead guitar, sounds almost naive, like a traditional tune. It spans over eight bars, plus a two-bar repetition, and is performed twice just after the opening chords, once towards the middle of the song, and twice again just after the final chords. In this most simple way, the melody succeeds in claiming principal status without actually developing. Instead, the song resorts to contrast with

two other melodies (bridges I and II), which respectively occupy a lower and a higher register than the main theme, and which are also very different in character: epic, Western-like the first one; lyric, dreamlike the second one. These two secondary tunes appear only once, precisely before and after the main theme's middle occurrence, acting thus as brief getaways from the firmly established main tune, yet counterbalancing one another. Therefore, considering musical form, "Shindig" offers an almost symmetric structure, a good balance of moods and registers, and a pretty homogeneous instrumental texture—what, all summed up, could justify my impression of emotional restraint.

Shindig

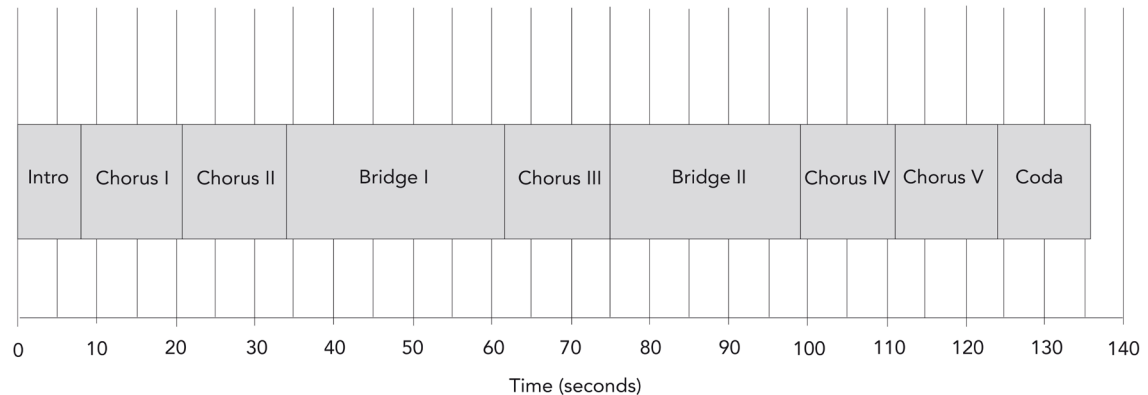


Table 1 : Formal analysis of 'Shindig'

However, another musical element seems to be more significant than form: the quality of the sound, exceptionally crisp and clear, never distorted (fuzz boxes were introduced a couple of years later, but here I am referring to unintentional distortion). As Franco Fabbri has explained, the Shadows were (and still are) a model of virtuosity for guitar players. But obviously they were virtuoso guitar players in a different sense from, for instance, Jimi Hendrix—they were less showy and flashy. I would even dare to say that, for listeners like me, who have never tried to play guitar, much less to learn any of the Shadows' tricks, Hank B. Marvin and his partners' enormous talent is not so striking (whereas Jimi Hendrix' is). Their understated skillfulness corresponds to their dispassionate attitude on stage; or rather, their controlled sound (e.g. the “stopped” effect Franco Fabbri mentioned before) appears as the logical effect of a very much controlled body disposition. Ultimately, the famous “Shadows step” and some specific sound effects form a coherent unity in performance.

Franco Fabbri:

The Shadows were perfectionists, everyone agrees. Of course, after 1966-67 (Hendrix, Clapton, etc.) to be a good rock guitarist came to mean speed and virtuosity, feedback control, new effects (fuzz, wah-wah, etc.). But in the late fifties and early sixties the canons for good guitar musicianship prescribed clean sustained sound, deep lower strings, crisp echo and reverb, like in the styles of Duane Eddy, the Ventures and other “surf bands”, and of course the Shadows. According to biographers, Bruce Welch (the Shadows'

rhythm guitar) felt uneasy not being able to play clean and fast melodies (not as fast as Hendrix or Clapton!) like Hank B. Marvin, but took hours tuning his guitar and was at least as responsible for the band's sound as the lead guitarist. When I started playing Shadows pieces on my electric guitar, starting from a classical guitar background, I faced two main difficulties: 1) keeping up with the tempo (I played along with records: not that they were very fast, but they were steady, which isn't what you learn when you are taught to play Mauro Giuliani's *Studies* opus no. 48!); 2) producing a neat prolonged sound. The latter was particularly frustrating, also because my cheap guitar had a far too big action (the distance between each string and the fretboard), and very thick strings. I realized how different fingerings, though melodically equivalent, produced very different sounds, some of which were good for my Shadows aesthetics, and some unacceptable. I'd like to point out that at that time no video performance of popular acts was available in my country, and there were no electric guitar manuals around, not to mention specialised magazines, etc. Getting the right sound or fingering, using the proper amplifier or reverb or echo effect was a matter of trial and error or of word of mouth with other guitarists. As a result of that struggle, I still feel “in my fingers” the melodies of pieces like “Shindig”, or “Nivram”, or “Round and Round”. And I remember feeling them, and many others, during my listening experience that night. Neurologists have shown that the “mirror neurons” effect (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, 2006) is activated also by sound stimuli: that is, when a subject hears a sound, some of his/

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her neurons – related to the action that may produce that sound – discharge (Molnar-Szakacs and Overy, 2006). Barthes (1991) made a distinction between music as performed (*musica practica*) and music as listened to, and argued that listening is strongly influenced by the ability of the listener to play an instrument (or by the lack of it). I'm aware that quite often, when I talk about music, I make gestures that simulate the actual performance of that music on instruments I can play (specially guitars of all kinds, including bass guitar, but I've had some practice also on keyboards, saxophone, trombone, and even drums), and I'm sure many other musicians (or musicologists) do so. I bet that the roots of harmonic thinking of many music scholars are in their fingers. And a mass diffused version of this behaviour, generally devoid of too many fingering details, is of course the "air guitar".

So, definitely, I would say that part of that strikingly emotional listening experience I'm trying to analyse was due to the fact that I felt I could play most of that music (on all instruments, except for the fastest passages on the drums). As I was dozing, probably I didn't move, but maybe my mirror neurons were performing their task, and my Barthesian *musica practica* listening attitude was operating.

But let me go back to "Shindig" for a moment. Those chords in the Intro (and in the Coda) may sound today as typical rock "power chords". But I bet the Shadows didn't finger them as a guitarist would play them today (by the way, I learnt of the existence of "power chords" from scholars: I was in a professional recording band for sixteen years without ever hearing the term). They were

probably fingered as full *barré* chords, with a special effort to let the strings (all strings, or maybe just the lower four: the B sharp and C sharp of the G sharp and A chords can be distinguished clearly) vibrate as long as possible, because no sustain pedal or fuzz would prolong that sound. The reason why those introductory (and final) chords sound like the rockiest part of the piece to today's ears is that the parallel motion of *barré* chords on the fingerboard became in the first half of the sixties a stylistic marker for pieces or bands, like the Kinks' "You Really Got Me", "All Day And All Of The Night", "Tired Of Waiting", and the Nashville Teens "Tobacco Road". As an old fan, of course I'm delighted to hear in Shadows records anticipations of sounds, techniques, styles that became widespread in the following years: I'm not sure whether this attitude (and the related pleasure) could be operating while listening in the cabin, but it is so well rooted in rock criticism and in the memories of musicians like Pete Townshend, Eric Clapton, Brian May (see Read, 1983) that it could be enacted as a mental automatism.

The melody in the chorus is simple and corresponds to that *esprit de geometrie* which seems to rule other aspects of the same piece (its structure, for example) and most of the Shadows' instrumentals. Feeling it on a guitar fretboard, however, I wouldn't describe it as "less rock" than those introductory chords. It's based on one of the most common rock guitar licks, with fingers moving in what was later theorized (in rock guitar manuals) as a "box". It's a very economic lick, as the result sounds richer than the energy needed to produce it. The most important aspects are the open E (1st)

string sounding together with the hammered-on C sharp on the 2nd string, and the final passage on a C natural (a blue note in A major), that is fingered separately by Marvin (but apparently not picked), in a fashion which is different from the approach a blues guitarist would use (bending the 3rd string). Recent videos show another possible fingering. Marvin moves to the fourth position on the B, to hammer-on the C sharp with the third finger, while the second finger presses the E on the 2nd string: this lick isn't less common than the one described above, but offers better control on the duration of the E. The two different intermediate sections, or bridges, also function as frames to portrait different sounds and techniques. The first, starting in F sharp minor, offers Marvin the chance to show his ability to sound like Duane Eddy (one of his obsessions, apparently): long low notes, with a distinctive *twang*, probably obtained mounting new strings before the recording session, as well as with a very firm pressure on the frets. At the end one can hear the typical “stopped” guitar sound, on descending parallel scales. The second section, starting in D, with a Western-sounding passage on a G (subdominant of D as well as flattened seventh of A), shows Marvin's ability to play two parallel melodies with a very clear and clean sound, with an effect similar to the parallel thirds or sixths used by Brian May in many Queen hits (or by Joe Walsh and Don Felder in “Hotel California”'s famous guitar solo), but without overdubs.

Of course both sections (for melodic and/or harmonic reasons) are stylistically closer to country than to rock 'n' roll: many Shadows' pieces, by the way, are classified as “country” in the Gracenote

Database. But, when I first listened to the Shadows, my perception of rock 'n' roll was no less influenced by Bill Haley or Duane Eddy than by Little Richard or Chuck Berry, so I would have never argued that the Shadows “didn't rock”, even in pieces where they were accompanied by Norrie Paramor's orchestra, like “Wonderful Land” or “Atlantis”. And, to make a final note about “Shindig”, the drumming was tight and loud as it had never been heard on rock 'n' roll records until then. So, I could say that one of the reasons of my intense emotive participation in that night's listening experience was that I was offered a chance to contemplate (aurally) some of the building blocks of a musical competence that continued to grow during decades, like if I was brought back to my infancy and exposed only to the words I first learnt.

Marta García Quiñones:

On the contrary, my difficulties in engaging with the music of the Shadows are obviously related to not having ever been physically involved in playing their songs. Also, as I have already suggested, their concept of rock is markedly different from the models of my (post-punk) generation: they would hardly be considered a prototype of rock by my contemporaries. Yet these arguments could also be hold against the early Bob Dylan, for instance, whose songs I found much more thrilling. Besides the Shadows' formal balance and emotional restraint, there must be something else that explains my detachment—recently a banal episode gave me a hint about what it may be. One day, while I was watching a very popular cooking

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television show while having lunch at home, I was struck by the sudden idea that the music used as background during the preparation of the recipes was a theme by the Shadows. In fact it wasn't: as I realized afterwards, the melody did not correspond to any of the Shadows' songs I knew, and—what was a definitive cause of rebuttal—a saxophone had been added to the mix. But there certainly was something about that music—how it was instrumented, the shape of the melodies, the steady rhythm—that legitimately reminded me of the Shadows. Even if—as Franco Fabbri can explain—the recording balance in the Shadows' songs does not correspond to the one used in the original Muzak recordings, this detail would hardly be noticed by post-Muzak ears like mine. Instead, the connection of instrumental music—music like the one created and played not only by the Shadows, but also by so-called “surf bands”, like the Ventures—with a clear (non-distorted) sound, singable melodies, a homogeneous rhythm, to background listening comes quite naturally. As a matter of fact, some of the Shadows' last albums, in the seventies and eighties, consist entirely of covers of classic and modern rock hits, like the version of “Every Breath You Take” that I have in my music library. Though this does not turn their music into Muzak, it certainly says something about how their sound has been trivialized, both by repeated airing, and by the selection of a facile repertoire.

When we think of sensuous experiences, we usually think of *intense, overwhelming* feelings like the ones Franco Fabbri unexpectedly had while listening to the Shadows inside a ferry cabin. Yet

light, superficial impressions like the ones formed by mere distracted exposure to music can also have a powerful effect on our ability—or inability—to react and be moved by it. In fact, rescuing some music style from banal listening can be a much more challenging enterprise than attaining a better understanding of a style of which we just have a passing knowledge, but that we have been listening to more consciously. My contention is that music analysis may be useful in both cases, particularly if it not only accounts for the specific characteristics of the musical material, but also for the cultural and musical values attached to it. In the case of my second-ear experience with the Shadows, formal analysis clearly was not enough to elicit an emotional response, whereas Franco Fabbri's extended explanation of some of their performative innovations, as well as his strong involvement with that music, enabled me to listen to it from a different stand. Obviously, I cannot pretend that I have their songs in my fingers, or that they are part of my musical past, but I definitely feel closer to them.

Franco Fabbri:

I understand Marta García Quiñones' point completely. The Shadows' sound can be heard everywhere in the world when an electric guitar (a Fender Stratocaster specially) is playing a popular tune, and it has been so for more than forty years. Rescuing the Shadows' individual qualities from that Muzak-like sound (although with a different frequency balance) needs *work*, and presents us with an interesting paradox: that to understand how a seemingly “cold” piece of music can gene-

rate an emotional response we have to re-build our music competence, also by means of analytical tools.

Gino Stefani describes music competence as the synthesis of various forms of knowledge (“to know, to know how to do, to know how to communicate”), put into practice when one lives a musical experience. “Summing up”, he continues, “competence [can be seen] as the ability to *produce meaning* with or about music.” Stefani articulates music competence into five levels:

General codes of the Homo Musicus, like the habit to live emotional, muscular, sensorial, synaesthetic experiences, to apply elementary perceptive and mental schemata, to put into place basic anthropological behaviours also towards sonic objects; Social practices, that is, the habit to apply cultural rules and schemata; Musical techniques, or the abilities one acquires learning music-specific theories, methods and procedures; Musical styles, or the abilities one acquires attending to particular modes in which musical techniques are articulated, that are specific of a genre, an epoch, a style; Works, or the ability to recognize specific aspects of individual musical texts. (Stefani 1998, 13, quoted in Marconi 2001, 33)

Apparently, all levels of my music competence were operating while I was listening to the Shadows in the cabin, being involved in a fully emotional and sensuous experience. Though it has been fashionable at times (especially in popular music studies) to maintain that analytic competence “kills emotions”, and/or that emotional and bodily involvement in musical experience is not mediated by cultural codes, I bear witness that pleasure or an intense emotional experience resonate at all levels

of one’s music competence. As psychologists maintain, there is no “pure” sensorial activity: even low-level perceptions are mediated by the brain’s mnemonic functions (see for instance Gregory 1998).

Secondly, some aspects of the Shadows’ music, like the cleanliness and balance of their sound, their perfectionism and concentration, the simple and symmetric structure of their melodies and their pieces, even the primitive distribution of their instruments in the stereo soundfield, were apparently coherent with some of the basic metaphors (Johnson, 1987) that relate our mental activity with the shape and functioning of our body. There is an obvious connection between those metaphoric projections and the first of Stefani’s five levels, but I find it worth mentioning separately because when I “awoke” I found this aspect to be the clearest and most evident: a suggestion that all complexity be based on the assembly and interaction of simple elementary distinctions, like up/down, left/right, thin/fat, empty/full, fast/slow, and so on.

Thirdly, most Shadows pieces imply a basic social structure and division of labour, an almost egoless participation in a collective project, which are on one hand typical of the late fifties and early sixties, and on the other hand of course resonate deeply in the mental processes of someone who was a teenager then².

As I wrote in my message to Marta García Quiñones, I found it odd that such thoughts could be caused by listening to “Wonderful Land” or “Shindig”, but I am not surprised they can be confirmed by even the simplest music analysis.

Marta García Quiñones & Franco Fabbri:

In conclusion, what made Franco Fabbri's listening to the Shadows such an intense experience? Cognitive scientists Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff (2005, 456) suggested that "imagining and doing use a shared neural substrate", and that "the same neural substrate used in imagining is used in understanding". As we have discussed, listening to music can imply imagining the bodily actions that produce the sounds: following and extrapolating from the above suggestion, we could say that understanding music is based on the same neural resources involved in doing it, and that abstract music concepts and meanings stem from actions and gestures, be they real or imagined.³ The connection between action, imagination (conceived here as a form of "mental simulation") and understanding also explains why images, and particularly moving images (audiovisuals), are so useful, beyond their documentary value, not only in engaging viewers/listeners in musics they are not familiar with (as happened to Marta García Quiñones in watching old Shadows' videos), but also in telling them many particulars about how those musics work. These notions are certainly worth to be examined by the musicological community, which probably—we also want to underline—would also profit from the current debate among cognitive scientists about the validity of first-person accounts (for a review see Overgaard, Gallagher and Ramsøy, 2008).

Yet, what cognitive scientists call 'understanding' may still be much simpler than the web of associations and projections generated by the prolonged listening act we have been talking about, which also—crucially—involved memory. Firstly, the embodied memory of past actions (Franco Fabbri listening to some Shadows' songs back in the early 60s and learning to play them on his first electric guitar), but also the emotions associated with those actions. Secondly, the experience and understanding of the values that the Shadows and their pieces incarnated at the time—the joy of young men meeting to play together as a group, and the pride of "playing it right". Thirdly, the placing of those sounds and actions into a historical perspective, by seeing and listening to them as antecedents of subsequent practices, and as the beginning of a personal involvement in music-making—memory as a tool to understand the present, rather than to long for the past. On the other hand, as we have argued, memory does not consist only of layers of conscious experiences that have triggered emotions in us (as players or listeners), but also of the myriad of everyday occasions in which we may get in contact with music, even when we may not be quite aware of it. In spite of their apparent insignificance, these occasions may also build associations in memory—they may resignify some musics or, as showed in our correspondence, they can even hinder their appreciation, "deactivate" them. As we learnt by listening to the Shadows together, musical meaning is not fixed: it is constantly produced and restructured in time.

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Listening to The Shadows...

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« SHADOWS – FBI », <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVION-wc6RM> [February 2013]

« The SHADOWS – Nivram », <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoB6B0ocvRg> [February 2013].

Notes

1. This article is based on a shorter (unpublished) paper that was presented at the Study Day “Analysing the Musically Sensuous” sponsored by the Society for Music Analysis and the University of Liverpool, and held at the latter’s School of Music, on 22 November 2008. Cf. <http://www.sma.ac.uk/event/asd-2008-analysing-the-musically-sensuous/>.
2. “Down in the coastal baby-boom ‘burbs of southern California, dozens of little instrumental combos popped

out of the woodwork, most of them with matching suits and Fender Stratocasters. “It doesn’t have a nose or a mouth or eyes’, former Pixie and southern California native Frank Black says of surf pop. ‘It’s something else, like amps and guitars. It’s totally egoless and anonymous.” (Hoskyns 2003, p. 58)

3. Tagg’s theory of gestural interconversion (Tagg 2005) could be interpreted as the semiotic codification of the outcome of this process, where gestures are considered as interpretants of music meanings.