MARK GILLESPIE

"Another Darkchild Classic:"
Phonographic Forgery and
Producer Rodney Jerkins' Sonic Signature

Mémoire présenté
à la Faculté des études supérieures de l'Université Laval
dans le cadre du programme de maîtrise en musique (musicologie)
pour l'obention du grade de maître en musique (M.Mus.)

FACULTÉ DE MUSIQUE
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL
QUÉBEC

2007

© Mark Gillespie, 2007

Abstract

This project communicates research on the subject of record production in popular music, specifically the function of the "sonic signature" in helping listeners to recognize production authorship, as observed in urban music recordings released between 2001 and 2005. The prevailing thesis of this study is that phonographic forgery plays a central role in enabling an identification process to take place whereby both listeners and producers become familiarized with specific production sounds in the field. This argument is expressed through an analysis in Chapters 2 and 3—the centerpiece of the work—that engages a number of productions of, and relating to, producer Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. In examining both forgeries *of* Jerkins' sonic signature and sonic signature forgeries undertaken *by* Jerkins himself, the text incorporates diverse theoretical perspectives such as Bourdieu's "field of production" (1993), Žižek's concept of "the Real" (1991), Genette's taxonomy of hypertextual relationships in literature (1997), and Barthes' theory of semiotic matrices in the language of fashion (1983). Throughout, the project's findings are supported and augmented by a discussion of analogous features in films, paintings, literature, and designer fashion. Chapter 2 introduces the idea of forgery in popular music. In addition to surveying the role of the contemporary record producer, Chapter 1 locates the historical and cultural significance of the sonic signature, provides an overview of its range in the field, and defines the term.

Résumé

Ce mémoire présente les résultats d'une recherche sur la pratique de la réalisation phonographique, et plus spécifiquement sur le rôle des « signatures sonores », qui permettent entre autres aux auditeurs de reconnaître la source auctoriale d'une réalisation donnée. L'hypothèse principale du mémoire, qui se concentre sur la période 2001-2005 de « urban music », propose que la contrefaçon joue un rôle central dans ce processus de reconnaissance, processus qui permet à la fois aux auditeurs et aux réalisateurs de devenir familiers avec des sonorités spécifiques dans le champ. Cette hypothèse s'appuie

principalement sur l'analyse (chapitres 2 et 3) d'un certain nombre de productions phonographiques orbitant autour d'un réalisateur, soit Rodney « Darkchild » Jerkins. À travers l'examen, d'une part, de contrefaçons de la signature sonore *de* Jerkins et, d'autre part, de la contrefaçon *par* Jerkins de la signature sonore d'autres réalisateurs, le mémoire convoque plusieurs perspectives théoriques, dont la notion de « champ » de Bourdieu, le concept du « Réel » de Žižek, la taxonomie hypertextuelle de Genette, de même que la théorie des matrices sémiotiques élaborée par Barthes. Le mémoire s'appuie de plus sur l'étude de pratiques parallèles observées en cinéma, en peinture, en littérature et en design de mode. Alors que le chapitre 2 propose une définition de la contrefaçon en musique populaire, le chapitre 1, en plus de présenter succinctement le rôle du réalisateur contemporain, situe la signification culturelle de la signature sonore, définit la notion, pour finalement offrir un vue d'ensemble de sa portée dans le champ.

Foreword

December 2004: A cell-phone ring tone goes off in Tokyo's Narita Airport. First heard are two ascending pitches in what might be described as mid-range cell-phone frequency (~c2). These notes are chromatically distanced and of equal duration. They are followed by a short silence, after which the notes sound again. This time they are accompanied by a second voice in what could be called the cell-phone's bass register (~c1). This lower voice repeats a dotted quarter-note rhythmic pattern on a single pitch that becomes interpreted as the tonic. The upper line accordingly is heard as undulating between the first and flattened-second scale-degrees an octave above.

Through the hustle and bustle of the surrounding noise I recognize the song in its first two notes. These adjacent timbreless pitches of equal duration, a semitone apart, present enough musical information to indentify the implied musical source: Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath" (*Destiny Fulfilled,* 2004), released only a month before. In addition to suggesting a particular recording, the ring tone also recalls the meaning of its source. Thus, not only am I hearing "Loose My Breath," I am also hearing a number one single, the first song released from a much anticipated "reunion" album, a track produced by Rodney Jerkins, and an entire network of other associated significances that the original recording—which is not actually being played—recalls by association.

In as much as the recognition of the ring tone's source creates a network of contextual meaning, the very act of recognition is itself largely a contextual one. In December of 2004, "Loose My Breath" represents one of the most frequently played recordings on the radio and is, accordingly, one of the most easily recalled tracks in my near-term musical memory. However, had I heard this same ring tone in an airport a couple of years before, the first two notes, even the bass accompaniment that follows, would have just as easily called to mind Justin Timberlake's "Like I Love You" (*Justified,* 2002). Produced by The Neptunes, this recording was also a number one single from a highly anticipated album (this time a "solo debut") that begins with two chromatically spaced pitches followed by a brief pause.

The odd thing about the apparent resemblance of these two songs to the same ring tone is that in reality these two recordings sound almost nothing alike. The latter, "Like I Love You," features an acoustic guitar in its introduction, followed by looped drums, rapping, and a solo male vocalist. The former, "Loose My Breath," begins with sequenced (not sampled) drums, contains no acoustic instrumentation, does not include rapping, and is performed by a trio of female voices. Furthermore, to my knowledge, no reviews of "Loose My Breath" have mentioned any connection to "Like I Love You." Yet somehow, on the abstract level of the ring tone—where sonic timbre has no bearing, voicing is reduced to melody and bass accompaniment, and a song's entire meaning is condensed to the order and duration of two pitches—these two songs could be the same.

April 2006: What does the connection I suggested between the two tracks above have to do with record producers, "sonic signatures," and phonographic forgery—the principle subjects explored in the present Thesis? I have included my airport experience in the Foreword not merely to entice the reader to continue until Chapter 3 when this question will be answered, but to more immediately raise an awareness and consideration of the possibility that the resemblance between two songs may be sometimes revealed in unlikely places (i.e., a busy airport) and through the aid of unlikely tools (i.e., the ringer on a cell phone). Indeed, the theme of exploring the often hidden relationships between recordings using diverse methods and tools (both technological and theoretical) will be central to this study, that incorporates everything from film theory to spectral imaging in its analysis.

The most "unlikely" aspect of the present project, however, is the subject itself. I submit that the record producer represents one of the least obvious lenses through which to examine popular music. The role of the record producer has long been neglected by the majority for whom the discussion of "pure sound" mistakenly presents an ominous, jargon-filled task relegated to musical "insiders." Thus, I have included my experience in Narita Airport—a purely sonic encounter with song identity—to illustrate how a single sound can recall not only a number of different recordings but the meaning of these tracks and a host of other relationships and connections, musical and otherwise, conscious and unconscious, contained therein. Indeed, whether or not we are aware of it, this study will illustrate that the non-verbal sound of a recording, which the contemporary record producer is often

exclusively responsible for creating, is largely responsible for determining a song's individual identity. While for many music fans this will be an obvious point, for the casual reader with only a basic acquaintance with contemporary urban popular music and record producers such a notion of musical identity may be somewhat new. To this extent my experience in Narita Airport serves as an introduction to the identifying and meaningful capability of pure sound. This experience also represents, by extension, an introduction to the rest of the present study built around this theme.

First and foremost, I conceived this project as a means of addressing two subjects in tandem: mainstream music and record producers. Out of this framework, the notion of using phonographic forgery as a way of studying this relationship came naturally, having taught myself the "art of record production" by (re)creating the sonic patterns of producers I admire. Furthermore, I envisioned this project as a stepping-stone in moving the academic discussion of urban music beyond what seems, in my own mind, to be an endless focus on "authenticity" in marginalized or underground forms. By contrast, this project addresses the importance of "forgery" in the urban top-40.

This project has benefited from a number of persons and resources. The libraries of Bishop's University and Université Laval, as well as Studio Pousseur in the Faculté de Musique of the latter institution, provided me with access to important research tools. Countless discussions with a number of colleagues at these and other locations gave me valuable insight into some of the theoretical and concrete issues addressed by the present study. I would like to acknowledge Chris Ju, Jack Eby, Séphane Girard, Rostam Batmanglidj, Luc Bellemare, Fannie Gaudette, Sandria Bouliane, Anne Danielsen, Jason King, Dave Hudson, Simon Zagorski-Thomas, Kristoffer Carlsen, Mats Johansson, Martin Roy, and Eric Filto, all of whom the journey to complete this project is in some way indebted to. Recognition must also be given to the guidance of my Thesis Committee, Drs. Phil Tagg (Université de Montreal) and Paul Cadrin (Université Laval). A magnanimous shout out is owed to my colleague Gavin Kistner, not only for relentlessly debating me on the subject of record production, but also for supporting my ongoing research on notorious English imperialists, encouraging me to stay fluent in Portuguese, and assisting me in the preparation of audiovisual classroom material ("Sounds of Abba"). Our late night beat-

making sessions sequencing "in the style of..." drum tracks represent some of the most enjoyable and insightful moments in this project's development.

The present study was inspired by my experiences working with and at the same time observing a number of urban producers and engineers—Rodney Jerkins, Freddy Jerkins, Dominique Durham, Anthology, Clayton Oliver, Fabien Marisciullo and Paul Foley. Throughout the often arduous task of writing, I was fortunate to receive the editorial assistance of my parents, James and Cynthia Gillespie, whose painstakingly detailed review of the manuscript, especially in its final days, helped get this project *done* (or should say *finished?*). I am sincerely grateful to them. Needless to say, I am still responsible for mistakes that remain. Lastly, Dr. Serge Lacasse—an experienced record producer and learned philosopher of music—served as an exemplary Director at every stage of the development of this Thesis. The cost of Serge's academic contribution to the work: one pocketsize *Larouse,* two studio keys, three months in "la Capitale-Nationale," and four semesters of international tuition; his role as a mentor: *priceless.*

Table of Contents

Abstract/ Résumé ii

Foreword iv

Table of Contents viii

Tables and Figures xi

Introduction 1

0.1 Topic Presentation 1

0.2 Review of Literature 2

0.3 Problem 9

0.4 Objectives 10

0.5 Theoretical Framework 10

0.6 Methodology 14

0.6.1 Overview 14

0.6.2 Context 15

0.6.3 Analysis 18

Chapter 1: Sonic Signatures in Record Production 20

1.1 Background 20

1.1.1 Introduction 20

1.1.2 Technological Context 23

1.1.3 Cultural Context 26

1.1.4 Function 27

1.1.5 Definition 29

1.2 Sonic Signatures in the Field 30

1.2.1 Overview 30

1.2.2 Sound-signatures 31

1.2.2.1 Discrete 31

1.2.2.2 Abstract 32

1.2.2.3 Performative 33

1.2.2.4 Structural 35

1.2.2.5 Orchestral 36

1.2.2.6 Sound-effect 38

1.2.2.7 Phonographic 38

1.2.3 Name-signatures 40

1.2.3.1 Allonymic 40

1.2.3.2 Autonymic 41

1.3 Summary 43

Chapter 2: Sonic Signature Forgeries of Rodney Jerkins 44

2.1 Introduction 44

2.2 Definition of Forgery 45

2.2.1 Reproductive Forgeries 45

2.2.2 Imagined Forgeries 47

2.3 Theories of Musical Meaning 50

2.4 Analyses of Forgeries of Rodney Jerkins' Sonic Signature 52

2.4 Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" 52

2.4.1 Context 52

2.4.2 Relation to Brandy's "What About Us?" 54

2.4.3 Relation to Brandy's "I Thought" 55

2.5 Another Level's "What You Know About Me?" 67

2.5.1 Context 67

2.5.2 Comparison with Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" 68

2.5.3 Analogy to Film 69

2.6 Summary 71

Chapter 3: Sonic Signature Forgeries by Rodney Jerkins 73

3.1 Introduction 73

3.2 Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You" 74

3.2.1 Context 74

3.3.2 Analysis 75

3.2.2.1 Instrumentation ... 75
3.2.2.2 Waveform Analysis ... 78
3.2.2.3 Spectral Analysis ... 79
3.2.2.4 Vocal Analysis ... 82
3.2.3 Analogue to Fashion ... 83
3.2.4 Conclusion ... 87
3.3 Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath" ... 88
3.3.1 Context ... 88
3.3.2 Analysis ... 89
3.3.2.1 Introduction ... 89
3.3.2.2 Generic Conformity ... 90
3.3.2.3 Generic Non-conformity ... 91
3.3.3 Conclusion ... 97
3.4 Summary ... 99
Conclusion ... 101
Reference List ... 104
A. Writings ... 104
B. Audiovisual Documents ... 111

Tables and Figures

Tables

2.1 Comparison of "I Thought" and "Keep This Fire Burning" 56
3.1 Comparison of "My Baby" and "I Got You" 76

Figures

1.1 Sequenced Neptunes-produced drum loop 33
2.1 Waveform comparison of "I Thought" and "Keep This Fire Burning" 58
2.2 Sequenced excerpt from Brandy's "What About Us?" 60
2.3 Differences in microrhythmic resemblance to "I Thought" 64
3.1 Waveform analysis, opening beats of "I Got You" 78
3.2 Spectral analysis of "I Thought" 80
3.3 Spectral analysis of "I Got You" 80
3.4 Spectral analysis of "My Baby" 81

Introduction

0.1: Topic Presentation

This project is about sonic signatures in record production. Since the inception of the record producer's role in the 1940s and, increasingly, in the decades that followed, certain figures have been associated with distinct and identifiable sonic palettes that seem to define their recordings. Such recognizable production aesthetics can be referred to as "sonic signatures" in the way they allow audiences to identify the work of well-known producers through the listening process alone. In recent years, production technologies have become more and more integrated within processes of composition in popular music and, as a result, the record producer's function has increasingly shifted from recording music to programming music. Consequently, both the pervasiveness and importance of sonic signatures in contemporary popular music have been amplified.[1] As producers move beyond simply recording and mixing to utilizing elaborate sonic palettes and even verbally "signing" works as their own, a new generation of celebrated super-producers has begun to replace the recording artist as sonic landmarks and style indicators within many areas of popular music. This change seems to be most apparent within the Top-40, a space that is technically defined by record sales, but in practical terms represents a conceptual network of songs, sounds, artists, and producers that the public (especially the North American public) sees and hears as "mainstream."

[1] The term programming here should not be confused with radio programming. In the intended sense, programming refers to a form of composition done in the recording studio where record producers do not record live musicians to build a song's instrumental track but instead undertake the composition process alone either by playing and recording instruments themselves and later editing and reorganizing this recorded sound or by digitally sequencing synthesized or preexistent sonic material with the aid of a sequencer.

In this context, the present study looks at instances of what will be called "sonic signature forgery" in contemporary record production.[2] More specifically, the project focuses on this practice in relation to one producer in particular, hit-maker Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins, by comparing Jerkins' own work to examples of other producers attempting to sound like him. Through this comparative analysis, the project explores the musical makeup of sonic signatures, revealing how sonic signatures are structured to communicate authorial information on two different levels: style and logo. The text uses this analysis to illustrate the importance of sonic signature forgery within the field, developing the hypothesis that seemingly authentic sonic signatures like Jerkins' so-called "Darkchild sound" actually depend upon being deceitfully mimicked by other producers to be defined as a discrete aesthetic, as well as to establish significance and meaning. Thus, the project contends that the forgery of sonic signatures represents a fundamental aspect of contemporary urban record production. Incorporating a theoretical framework that draws from Bourdieu's "field of production" (1993), Žižek's critical theory (1991), Genette's taxonomy of hypertextual relationships in literature (1997), and Barthes' theory of semiotic matrices (1983), the project demonstrates that musical forgeries reveal a good deal about the real characteristics of sonic signatures in record production.

0.2: Review of Literature

Generally speaking, this project deals with contemporary record producers, their sonic "relationships" with other producers, and the way this interaction is evidenced musically. It is therefore by considering the role of the music producer in the broadest sense that the Review of Literature begins. While normally a good starting point for any musicological investigation, in the case of the producer, no entry on the subject is found in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Ed. Sadie 2001). Instead there are only loose references to what might be seen as the producer's function under the article on "Composition", which describes "the activity or process of creating music, and the product

---

[2] While at this point it suffices to simply imply what is meant by these terms, the meaning of "sonic signature" will be thoroughly examined in Chapter 1, the text's usage of "forgery" in Chapter 2.

of such activity" (Blum, VI: 187). While the results are referred to as a "product," the creative force is a "composer" and not a "producer," thereby emphasizing an artistic, anti-industrialized interpretation of the process of musical creation (one traditionally held within the sphere of classical music studies).

While Richard Middleton has written a rather long entry on "popular music" in the *New Grove,* I propose that there is no article on the "producer" and that this term has also been omitted from the dictionary's entry on "composition" based on ideology. At its core, the term "producer," denotes an intrinsically industrialized musical function, which, I would argue, has traditionally been frowned upon within the bourgeois, "art for art's sake" realm of classical music studies (remembering that the *New Grove* is written primarily by and for classical music scholars). Such sentiment, on the other hand, could not be further contrasted with the unabashedly commercialized viewpoint taken by the popular music industry. Here the "mystique" of the composer has been cut-out from the bottom-line of its industrialized jargon: in the drafting of album royalty contracts and publishing agreements, for example, there *are* no "composers," only "writers" and "producers." It should also be noted that while classical recordings do have a "producer," in most examples this role has no real creative relationship with the recorded sound, and production work tends to involve a strict process of "faithfully documenting" a performance (or collection of performances, as in the case of Glen Gould) as accurately as possible. Taking into account the peculiarities of terminology between genres, I would instead suggest that the roles of the "producer" in popular music and the "composer" in the classical sphere are not entirely different—especially in terms of what might be called their *intentional* relationship to the music. Both act as a "deciding force" throughout the process of musical creation (remembering that popular music tends to be composed as it is being recorded [Zak, 2001]). This analogy, however, must be left abstract insomuch as the two roles are executed and exercised in fundamentally different ways.

Even in the field of popular music studies where the term "producer" is not always as ideologically charged, many texts almost entirely overlook the creative aspect of the producer's role and instead only consider what could be called, the "producer as mediator." Shuker's entry (see "Producer") in *Key Concepts in Popular Music*, for example, focuses

on the arbitration between artist and public that defines the producer's job (1998: 338). Similarly, texts by Hebdige (1979), Vignolle (1991), and Negus (1993) are primarily concerned with the social aspects of the producer's function and, as such, gloss over the relationships that exist between producers. Shuker's entry, however, does raise one important issue as it relates to the present investigation. He describes a wide range of individual creative approaches that currently define the role, varying from "'try it and see what happens' to a more calculated, entrepreneurial attitude," comparing the latter approach to that of the *auteur* in cinema (338). This assessment is mirrored in Steve Jones' comments on the producer in the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* (Shepard 2003: ii: 196-197). Both of these entries help introduce the idea of sonic production identity developed in the present study.

A source of full-length texts on the subject of record production, and specifically what could be called "production practice," is found in many existing instruction manuals and guides to producing. William Moylan's *The Art of Recording, Understanding and Crafting the Mix* (2002), for example, addresses the artistic dimensions of the various recording technologies used in production. In a similar vein, Rikky Rooksby's *Inside Classic Rock Tracks: Songwriting and Recording Secrets of 100+ Great Songs* (2001) attempts to teach the compositional "tricks" record producers use, pointing to what he views as structural, harmonic, rhythmic, and textural patterns uniting a body of rock's "classic tracks." While these tutorials may be useful to fans and practicing musicians, they are more "textbook than text" in terms of their didactic commentary. Furthermore, in addition to lacking proper theoretical framework, a good deal of the subjects, techniques, and issues engaged by Moylan and Rooksby are either obsolete (such as the discussion of tape-echo devices) or much further developed in the field (for example the use of digital sampling).

Turning to more consciously "academic" literature on record production, many scholars have attempted to historicize the role of the record producer and production techniques, both in relation to the development of important recording technologies and the evolution of a few key studios. Examples of such works include David Morton's *Off the Record: The technology and culture of sound recording in America* (2002), Michael

Chanan's *Repeated Takes: A short history of recording and its effects on music* (1995), Mark Cunningham's *Good Vibrations: A history of record production* (1999), and William Clark and John Hogan's *Temples of Sound: Inside the great recording studios* (2003). The last of these is most relevant to the present study in that it addresses some of the motivations producers have, for example, the commercial benefit of establishing a recognizable production sound. However, the thrust of Clark and Hogan's text, like the others, is principally historic and, as a chronological survey, does not contemplate the practical issues of record production at length.

In terms of texts that more thoroughly engage the subject of sonic identity in popular music, Allan F. Moore's *Rock: The primary text* (2001) is a benchmark study. In the subchapter titled "Stylistic development" (211-216), Moore hypothesizes that individual musical identity is derived through "friction" or "non-friction" with an assumed generic style. He raises the question of stylistic "trajectory" by observing how over the course of the group Status Quo's career, the band's "sound" became more and more like its initial characterization in the media as "progressive," pointing to a greater deviation from 12-bar forms with each album.

Moore also devotes attention to the connection between authenticity and intertextuality in the establishment of sonic identity by describing the relationship as one of "belonging." Using the example of David Bowie, he illustrates how musical personas, like Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust," have been able to create a seemingly unique personal style through the pastiche of contemporary musical idioms and genres.[3] On the album *Young Americans* (1975), for example, the author describes how Bowie used a fictional, fantasy-like persona to combine the aesthetics of what he refers to as two typically ideologically and aesthetically opposed genres—rock and disco—without conflict.

Although portions of *Rock* touch upon issues relevant to the present study, there is a fundamental difference between his examples and the ones to be used herein. While Moore raises the question of stylistic self-caricature in Status Quo, this self-caricature is based on

---

[3] What is both unique and important in the example of Bowie is that his pastiches tend to mix "contemporary" styles, quite different from the use of historically motivated pastiche (i.e., homage, etc.), which has a more established tradition in popular music.

textual review (i.e., commentary from the media) and not sonic review (i.e., critiques posited by groups attempting to copy or reference Status Quo). Secondly, although Moore's discussion of Bowie suggests the possibility of dual-caricature in a single work, the pastiche he is describing is "playful" and acts to subvert (and even invert) the meaning of borrowed sources; in the cases examined by the present study, an exact sonic signature *and* its associated meaning and authority both attempt to be "seriously" represented.[4] Additionally, Moore's examples involve the sonic portrayal of entire genres and not individual musical identities.

A shortcoming of *Rock* specific to its relevance for the present study is that it is primarily about "recording-artists" (i.e., singers and bands) and not producers. In the subsection titled "The mediation of self-expression" (187-191)—the only portion of the text in which the author addresses the record producer at any length—Moore, like Shuker, focuses on the conciliatory and even managerial aspects that define the role (into which he also groups engineers and A&R).

To my knowledge, the only text to address the abovementioned issues of sonic identity in relation to the record producer in particular, and more importantly to the *kind* of producer examined in the present study, is Albin Zak's *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (2001). In Chapter 6 ("Engineers and Producers": 163-183), Zak contrasts the working methods of well-known Beatles producers George Martin and Phil Spector and the way their differences in method impacted the aesthetic of the music they produced for the band. Zak uses this and other historical examples of contrasting production styles to form a typology of three basic kinds of producers, citing Spector's statement that "[The Righteous Brothers] were a tremendous expression of myself" (179), as indicative of one particular approach, that of the so-called "star producer." According to Zak, this type of producer does not act reproductively (in the sense of faithfully documenting an artist), but instead *uses* the artist as a vehicle with which to forward his own stylistic vision or production sound. In the Spector example, Zak cites how the Righteous Brother's recording of (the Spector produced) "You've Lost That Lovin'

---

[4] Here I am borrowing Gérard Genette's distinction between "serious" and "playful" pastiche (Genette 1997: Chapters 21-38).

Feelin'" was "touted" in *Melody Maker Magazine* as "the great new PHIL SPECTOR Record" (178). Here Zak not only seems to be describing the kind of producer examined in the present study, he is also drawing attention to, without calling it such, the brand power of this producer's sonic identity.

In the final chapter of Zak's text ("Resonance": 184-198), he uses Bloom's (1975) theory of cultural "constellations" to describe a "musical field" in which works take on meaning through networks of intertextuality. Interestingly, he concludes that producers not only create intertextual "constellations" in their recordings, but are themselves defined by a larger body of recordings. This almost seems to preface the question, examined by the present study, of how producers influence each other on a sonic level.

Generally speaking, criticism of Zak's texts lies in the lacuna of appropriate literary references, questions of accuracy in the information presented, and contradictions in terminology.[5] Such remarks, however, are directed primarily at the book's first five chapters, which, for the sake of the present study, are also the least relevant. With regards to the remaining portion of text (Chapters 6 and 7), there are two important critiques offered. Firstly, although Zak briefly addresses the example of the "star producer" in Phil Spector, it becomes clear later in this discussion that he views such a role as an anomaly

---

[5] The first five chapters present a questionable paucity of references to previous literature. Firstly, in the Introduction, Zak states that his authorial aim is to provide a phenomenology of the producer (xiii), without mentioning Hennion's attempt at the same (Hennion 1983). In Chapter 2's discussion of the producer's role in the process of musical creation, no reference is given to works by Muikku (1990) and Tankel (1990), which more thoroughly address this subject. Additionally, Chapter 2 sets up a theoretical comparison between Phil Spector and the film *auteur* without citing Negus' (1993) or Shuker's (1998) use of the same analogy. Moreover, Chapter 3's discussion of the producer as a "cultural intermediary" fails to take into account the work of Cohn (1970) and Millard (1995) in this area. Finally, Chapter 5, a critical tutorial of the recording process, makes no reference to any "production guides," for example aforementioned works by Moylan (2002) and Rooksby (2002).

Furthermore, there are various contradictions coming out of Zak's terminological toolbox. Chapter 2 ruminates on the idea of the producer as a "getter of sounds" (64); an entirely opposite sense of the producer is employed in Chapter 6 (giver of sound) without mention of the former characterization (179). Zak also presents questionable facts relating to the musical examples being discussed. In his examination of the snare drum used in Phil Collins' recording of "In the Air Tonight" (1981), for example, Zak presents a rather speculative discussion about how the sound was processed during recording, when, in fact the sound was never "recorded" by Collins, but extracted as an extant sample from a drum machine. According to musicologist H. P. Newquest (1989): "People complained that [the snare] was Phil's unique sound, [however] what most people don't know is that Collins *sampled* that sound from a drum machine—Yes, the sound itself is a sample (126)." While it is plausible that Collins may have subsequently processed the sample during the song's production (thus making Zak's discussion of the recording/processing at least somewhat credible) no reference is made to the actual history of the sound (cited here by Newquest).

within the field. Indeed, while the final paragraph of Chapter 6 mentions a few active producers who are "as well known as the artists they produce" (including Sean "Puffy" Combs and Dr. Dre [182]), Zak contrasts this with an overall "trend toward greater autonomy for recording artists [in relation to producers]" (180).

The present study, on the other hand, is built around the premise that all genres of contemporary popular music (from "Country-crossover" to punk-rock to R&B) are becoming increasingly dominated by a handful of "brand-name" producers, each with a distinct and recognizable sound that transcends sonic differences between the artists with which they work.[6] Secondly, in Zak's depiction of the role, he neglects the compositional duties performed by the urban producer in particular—the subject of the present study. The sense of the producer, propagated quite well by Zak, as someone who works with pre-existent sound is, in fact, only *one* of the duties of the urban producer (and increasingly the "top-40 producer").

A more overarching criticism of Zak's work concerns the phenomenology of his method. Stating in the introduction that his text represents an "encounter" with the producer (xiii), I find that Zak's approach ends up romanticizing the "producer as Auteur" and, consequently, shields much of the practical scrutiny needed to properly examine the role.[7] Not only does the mysticism through which Zak approaches the process of creation veil many of the less "artistic" practices used, on a broader level, it overlooks the basic economy of the producer's function; that is, what, practically speaking, producer's do with musical sound and why. Additionally, like Moore, Zak misses the ways in which producers are sonically influenced and affected by each other. In his aforementioned discussion of "constellations" and how they create meaning in the interpretation of music, he neglects to show how and why producers themselves *use* these networks to position and reposition their own legitimacy within the field. In the end, the text's continuous references to the

---

[6] This "kind" of producer is the subject of the present research project.

[7] This approach is evidenced in Zak's discussion of how "the performative acts of all those involved in the record-making process form the substance of the work, *the sinews of its being*" (20, his italics). Here such wording is reminiscent of the view of the composer held common in traditional musicology: the composer can be historicized, categorized, described, and even critiqued, but his/her process of creation cannot be dissected as it is, at its core, veiled in a shroud of artistry. Zak's romanticized view of the producer is reminiscent of the portrayal drawn in Charlie Gillet's *The Producer as Artist* (1980).

"magic" and "spirit" of record production reflect Zak's general tendency to gloss over the practical, scheming, enterprising, economically-driven, self-promoting, and sometimes even "cannibalistic" nature of the type of brand-name savvy "star" producer examined in the present study.

0.3: PROBLEM

Even if the previous body of literature is diverse in its depiction of the record producer, it nonetheless confirms the following: (1) there are different kinds of producers; (2) one of these is the so-called "star producer"; and (3) this kind of producer's music is typically defined by a recognizable sound aesthetic. Thus, while the existence of what I call "sonic signatures" in record production has been noted in the literature, albeit briefly, much remains to be said about what these sonic identities in production actually consist of musically, how they communicate authorial information, and what their overarching function is in authorizing, authenticating, and legitimizing both the producers (and, by extension, the artists) with which they are associated. Also overlooked is the role that sonic signatures assume in helping to distinguish the work of competing producers, and even different genres. Moreover, the question of how sonic identities in record production get interpreted, borrowed, absorbed, and exchanged by different producers in the field remains to be examined as well.

In addressing this lacuna, the current project represents I hope to be the first introduction to sonic signatures in record production. To this extent, the text examines what comprises sonic signatures, how they are formed, how they communicate authorial information, and how they, in turn, become transformed into sonic brands. The project also looks at the task of sonic signatures in mediating the aesthetics of competing producers. Focusing on the example of one producer in particular, Rodney Jerkins, this project asks the following question: What role has the practice of musical forgery played in the creation, legitimization, and evolution of hit-maker Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature?

0.4: OBJECTIVES

In addition to offering an analysis of one sonic signature in particular, this research project aims at the following:

- To develop a methodology for the discussion and analysis of sonic identity in popular music
- To offer an interpretation of the musical relationships between competing record producers in the field of production
- To create an awareness of the importance of sonic signatures in contemporary record production

On a broader level it endeavors:

- To address neglected aspects of the record producer's role in the composition of popular music
- To engage issues of forgery in music
- To encourage the study of record production
- To generate academic interest in areas of music perceived as "mainstream"

0.5: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is built on two main theoretical foundations: Baudrillard's notion of simulacra and Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field. The second of these, expounded in Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), describes the cultural field as a dynamic space in which "agents" (artists, writers, critics, producers, etc.) compete for control of a series of (largely symbolic) interests and resources. Bourdieu contends that agents never exist in an operational "vacuum" but instead "act in concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations" (Bourdieu 1993: 6). Such contexts, according to Bourdieu, define and constitute the constantly changing space of a given field.

As discussed, extant literary portrayals of the record producer do not take into account the relationships between competing producers (Moore, Zak). For the present study, Bourdieu's cultural field serves as a means of situating and describing these relationships. According to Bourdieu, the field of production represents the network in which symbolic goods, for example, musical recordings, circulate. The structure of this field is neither rigid nor concrete and is at all times defined by provisionality and fluidity of its constitutive rules (Bourdieu 1993: 34). In particular, the field provides a theoretical and analytical framework for developing the following two discussions: (1) *how* cultural agents, such as record producers, act in relation to one another; and (2) *why* these relationships are important, or, to *what* effect they are used. In considering the first of these, (i.e., "how,") Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* will serve as an important terminological tool. Habitus, as described in the *Field of Cultural Production*, refers to "a 'feel for the game,' a 'practical sense' (*sens pratique*) that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules… rather, [that] is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions" (Bourdieu 1993: 5). Not only is *habitus* based on a stylistic competency rooted in context and exposure, it also acts as the means through which "value" in a field is distinguished, differentiated, and organized. For the present study, the theory of habitus will help illustrate how record producers assume sonic "positions" within a field.

The question of "why" these positions are important and to "what" effect they are used, necessitates a borrowing of two more theoretical concepts from Bourdieu's field: *strategy* and *trajectory*. The former is based on his contention that agents' actions are motivated by a logic that is "economic" in its process but which has no inherent relation to economics.[8] Bourdieu observes, for example, how in literature, "supply attempts to create demand and not vice versa." In other words, by assuming a certain position in the field,

---

[8] In cultural fields, value and profit tend to be largely symbolic—relating to "prestige," "celebrity," "consecration," and so on—the actual economic criteria for which may be inverted from one field to the next. For example, the literary field "is a field where effort is not necessarily rewarded with success, where the value accorded to specific positions or honours (for example, membership of the Academy in France) may vary greatly according to the agent in question, where supply attempts to create demand rather than vice versa, where seniority has little bearing on career paths, and where writers with many different social and geographical backgrounds coexist, often having little in common other than their mutual interest in literature" (Bourdieu 1993: 13).

through a particular *oeuvre*, a writer is attempting to transform the composition of the field itself so that his assumed, and previously inconspicuous, position will become a consecrated one in order to ultimately convert this symbolic value into an economic one. For the present study, this model of strategy is useful in understanding how record producers exaggerate and confuse supply, through the practices of caricature and forgery, in order to create demand for a particular sound or sonic identity—even if it is not inherently their own.

Finally, the concept of trajectory is important in illustrating how strategy changes over time. In contrast to traditional positivistic interpretations of stylistic evolution in music, Bourdieu's trajectory allows for a correspondence between the successive positions that an agent (composer, producer, etc) occupies over time, without seeing these as directly causal or deliberately connected. Bourdieu's viewpoint takes into account the dynamic composition of the field itself, where, for example, the course of an agent's trajectory can have as much to do with restructuring in the field as it can with changes in his or her own strategy. For the present study, this theory illustrates how the formation and evolution of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature has as much to do with its reception in the field, as it does with his own deliberate strategy; indeed, as much to do with "being perceived" as with "being."

This issue of "ontological perception" (being versus being perceived) provides the impetus to explicate the present investigation's second theoretical cornerstone: the notion of *simulacra* employed in Jean Baudrillard's architectural writings on Los Angeles, and more specifically those on the subject of MGM studios (1988, 1994, and 2003). Baudrillard's general theory of simulacra describes the *simulacrum* as a copy, reproduction, or sign that represses and overwhelms all distinction from the source it represents. The simulacrum is not "a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody [;] it is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself" (quoted in Rojek and Turner 1993: 132). Baudrillard observes an interesting example of this "sign substitution" in Los Angeles' MGM studios. He remarks how movie sets originally designed to reproduce typical American "scenes" (i.e., the ranch, the diner, the nuclear home, the cityscape, and so on) have been transformed into a source model for the droves of

American tourists who visit MGM to have their imaginary conceptions of America and American life affirmed and authenticated.

What is of specific interest in the MGM simulacrum, and what makes this example an important theoretical tool for the present study, is that it presents a case where a representation has not simply replaced an original source, but has done so through an active and ongoing "dialogue" with this source. In the introduction to Baudrillard's *Mass, Identity, Architecture,* Franco Proto (editor) notes, "the experience of one's double is as authentic as one's need to resemble it" (2003: 11). In the same way, MGM's cinematic vision of America has become America's vision of itself—of its past, its present, and its future—even to the point where exiting MGM and entering Los Angeles instills "the same feeling you get when you step out of an Italian or a Dutch gallery into a city that seems the very reflection of the paintings you have just seen, as if the city had come out of the paintings and not the other way about" (Baudrillard 1994: 43).

For the present study, this specific simulacrum serves as a theoretical tool in considering how identity is appropriated and reabsorbed in the sonic relationship between Rodney Jerkins and competing producers within the field. In Chapter 3, for example, I will use Baudrillard's model to show how Rodney Jerkins' own sonic signature gets, paradoxically, reshaped in the process of being referenced by other producers. Just as for Baudrillard "the American city seems to have stepped right out of the movie [and] to grasp its secret, you should not begin with the city and move inwards to the screen; you should begin with the screen and move outwards to the city;" (1994: 43) so to, understanding the "secret" of the Darkchild sound begins in the "forgery" and moves outwards, looking both retrospectively and "after the fact," towards "the Real."[9]

An additional important theoretical truss binding this project is the semiotic theory of Umberto Eco. The specifics of this approach to interpreting musical meaning and its

---

[9] The terms "Real" and "forgery" used above highlight the need to address two supporting terminological sources this project will invoke. To begin with, I will at times be borrowing Slavoj Žižek's (1991) distinction between un-symbolized reality and "the symbolic Real", as presented in his analysis of filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock's cinematic vision. Additionally, I will make use of parts of Gérard Genette's (1997) typology of hypertextual relationships, and specifically his discussion of literary forgery and caricature. I will augment the meaning of both of these vocabularies by (briefly) referring to relevant fictional works by author Jorge Luis Borges (1996), specifically, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote."

relevance to the present study will be explained and expanded upon in section 2.3. For the moment, however, it is first important to set up the whole discussion of musical meaning by introducing the work of a related scholar, Roland Barthes, to which the fundamental premise of this project is in many ways indebted. Without evoking Barthes' general theory of semiotics, I believe it useful at this point to reference the specific model of "signifying matrices" he presents in *The Fashion System* (1983). This represents an economy of the language of women's fashion magazines (primarily *Elle*) in which a structural system of coding and competence allows for the creation of unique semiotic relationships not evident outside the field. For example, well-versed readers of fashion magazines understand "a sweater with a boatneck collar" to be the same as "a hat with a high crown" in terms of the style/meaning expressed (63). In other words, even though these two descriptions seem to be literally quite different from one another, they are structured to produce the same effect, induce the same response, and mean the same thing.[10] Hence, even though "linen overcoat" signifies "mid-season", it can also connote to the contrary "cool-summer evenings"; while, on the other hand, "mousseline fabric" and "taffeta fabric" both can imply "cocktails" (53). While in some ways common sense, the above highlighted model of coded equivalencies serves as a good model in illustrating a logic important to the present study. This is because Barthes' "matrices" not only provide a framework for discussing how meaning is organized and imbedded in active commercial languages (including musical ones), but also, more specifically, how the meaning of sonic signature can be recreated by another producer through the employment of "analogous" musical effects.

0.6: METHODOLOGY

0.6.1: Overview

Considering the subject of the last theoretical source, Barthes' *The Fashion System,* (which has also inspired a good portion of *what* the present study examines),[11] it seems appropriate

---

[10] Indeed, these two descriptions can be interchanged and exchanged for one another because they are both describing the same class of "style" or the same break with a particular class.

[11] There is little relation to the *methodology* of Barthes' *The Fashion System.*

to now address the question of methodology. A method of analysis helps achieve the above-outlined objectives. In Chapter 1, after providing some historical and cultural context on record production, as well as providing a preliminary definition of the term "sonic signature," the text makes a broad survey of various contemporary recordings to illustrate the range and diversity of sonic signatures as they presently appear in the field. In Chapter 2, the project attempts to develop a precise account of one sonic signature—that of Rodney Jerkins—by comparing recordings he produced to recordings produced by other producers meant to sound as if he produced them. This chapter will also provide some theoretical background on the notion of forgery in relation to musical meaning. Chapter 3 tests and refines observations previously made about sonic signatures by examining instances of forgery opposite to those looked at in Chapter 2, more specifically, taking into account recordings produced by Rodney Jerkins intended to sound like the work of other producers.[12] The text concludes by positing some ideas on the structure and purpose of sonic signatures in contemporary popular music and the importance of musical forgery in the field, as well as proposing ideas for future research. Although previous texts have discussed sonic identity[13] and musical forgery,[14] none has looked at the role of the record producer in particular.

0.6.2: Context

The scope of music addressed in the present study generally comprises works that appeared on *Billboard's* "rap/R&B" chart, roughly from the period of 2001 to 2005.[15] The first parameter (which I will also be referring to as the urban top-40 and the urban mainstream)

---

[12] As part of this comparison, the text will draw a brief but important parallel between the *modus operandi* of the brand-name in (1) sonic signatures and (2) handbag (and to some extent jean) fashion. Previous academic texts to connect an analysis of popular music with clothing fashion include Hebdige (1979), Ewen (1988), Cartledge (1999), Cogan (2005).

[13] Fabbri (1999), Moore (2001), Zak (2001),.

[14] Meyer (1967), Goodman (1976), Davies (1987), Kivy (1995), Dutton (2003),

[15] *Billboard Magazine* has for many decades served as the music industry's most widely recognized "success barometer." Both current and historic charts can be viewed on <http://www.billboard.com>. Accordingly, all future references to *Billboard* figures and charts are un-authored and can instead be easily accessed using date and genre search parameters on the above website.

is appropriate because although so-called "star producers" often work with a diverse range of mainstream artists (usually artists who have appeared on *Billboard's* "Hot-100"), their productions tend to be associated with specific sub-genres. For example, producer Byron Gallimore has a perceptibly "crossover-country" sound, regardless of who he's producing, while (Grammy's 2005 "Producer of the Year") John Shanks' has a "pop-rock" sound whether he's working with Kelly Clarkson, Ashlee Simpson, Lindsay Lohan, or anyone else.[16] Bearing this in mind, it is my contention that the "urban" sub-genre of the mainstream, (defined as the "rap/R&B top-40" on *Billboard* charts at any given time), is more dominated by this type of producer than any other field and, as such, provides a fitting space in which to examine their practices.

The given timeframe of this investigation is suitable because as urban music has, since 2001, taken-over a good portion of the space of the top-40.[17] As part of this influx into the mainstream, urban producers have attracted increased public attention and in many ways have become crucial in the marketing of new music. This increase in production celebrity is also apparent in what Allan Moore calls the "primary text," i.e., the recording itself. Based on these two points (both highlighted in more detail in the introduction of Chapter 1), I would argue that the given timeframe of this study, the period of 2001-2005, provides an apt context in which to investigate sonic signatures in record production.

I have chosen producer Rodney Jerkins as the centerpiece of this work for a number of reasons. Firstly, he fits the scope of the investigation, being an urban producer who from 2001 to the present has consistently been an active force on top-40 *Billboard* charts.[18]

---

[16] The artists coupled with producer John Shanks are interesting insomuch as they have all been characterized as "pop-rock" artists based on their Shanks-produced debut singles. One might even say that these artists are "pop-rock" *because* they worked with John Shanks.

[17] For example, as I write these words (May 21, 2005) 7 out of the top 10 positions on *Billboard's* "Hot 100" are also presently on the "Rap/R&B Top-20" chart (see <http://www.billboard.com>).

[18]While "mainstream", it is clear on a number of levels that Rodney Jerkins' "sound" resonates within the field of "urban music". He can be considered mainstream in that a good many of his productions have reached the number 1 position on *Billboard's* North American"Top-100" (beginning in 1998 with Monica and Brandy's "The Boy is Mine"). His sound, however, is firmly "urban" insomuch as every successful single that Jerkins has produced (with the exception of a few for Britney Spears, The Backstreet Boys, 'NSync, and Faith Hill) has appeared in *Billboard's* "Rap/R&B" category. A variety of anecdotal evidence also supports this characterization: in 2002, Jerkins was honored at the BMI Urban Music Awards (along with producers Irv Gotti, The Neptunes, and Dallas Austin (Anonymous 2002a). Further, Jerkins' is listed as one of five

Secondly, he exemplifies the previously discussed qualities of "star producers"; Jerkins' well-known "Darkchild" sound has been sonically advertised in singles by many of the world's top-selling artists, including Michael Jackson, Britney Spears, Brandy, 'N Sync, The Backstreet Boys, Whitney Houston, Jessica Simpson, Jennifer Lopez, and Destiny's Child.[19] Moreover, the celebrity of his sonic identity is evident in the plethora of production references that permeate both the anticipation and review of these and other singles on which he has worked.[20]

I have selected Rodney Jerkins' to be the subject of the present study for an additional reason. From June of 2002 to January of 2003, I served as an assistant-producer at Darkchild Studios, Atlantic City, NJ. In addition to collaborating creatively with Jerkins on numerous projects, I had the opportunity to observe him producing on his own at great length, to discuss musical influences and strategies with him, and to generally gain an insight into his methods and practices. While the present study is not intended as a first-hand account, and I will only refer anecdotally to this experience where relevant and appropriate, it has nonetheless been crucial in inspiring the study. It is, therefore, with regards to my own capacity to address "brand-name" record producers that there could not be a better subject than the present one.

---

producers on Neff's "Urban Producers" website (Neff 2006) and as one of the eleven greatest urban producers on the R&BKrazy Producers homepage (Anonymous 2004a).

[19] I am specifically referring to the following cuts: Whitney Houston's "Its Not Right, But Its OK" (*My Love is Your Love,* 1998), The Backstreet Boys' "Shinning Star" (*Black & Blue,* 2000), 'Nsync's "Celebrity" (*Celebrity,* 2001), Michael Jackson's "You Rocked My World" (*Invincible,* 2001), Britney Spears' "Overprotected" (*Britney,* 2001), Jessica Simpson's "I Never" (*Irresistible,* 2001), Brandy's "What About Us" (*Full Moon,* 2002), Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You" (*Rebirth,* 2005), Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath" (*Destiny Fulfilled,* 2005).

[20] One example of this "celebrity" is evidenced in the following excerpt from an MTV news-reel (December 6, 2002) anticipating Britney Spear's *In The Zone*: "Phoning in to 'TRL' on Friday, Spears said she'll again work with producer Rodney Jerkins for the follow-up to last year's *Britney.* Jerkins, the hitmaking mastermind behind tunes by the Backstreet Boys, Brandy and Destiny's Child, produced the *Britney* cover of 'I Love Rock 'n' Roll,' an Arrows song made popular by Joan Jett" (Anonymous 2002b). In a similar vein, a 2001 review of Jessica Simpson's *Irresistible* (2001) reads: "Notable is 'I Never' which is a clear Darkchild (Rodney Jerkins) song. He usually works with people such as Brandy but lately has worked with the Spice Girls and Backstreet Boys" (Anonymous 2001).

0.6.3: Analysis

This project's musical analysis consists of four primary examples. The first two examples involve recordings by other producers meant to sound like the work of Rodney Jerkins, while the second two involve the opposite—recordings created by Rodney Jerkins intended to sound like the work of other producers. Generally, each example consists of two recordings: a host text (i.e., the one doing the copying) and an exemplary source text (i.e., a text that appears to have been copied).[21]

The resources used in the musical analysis are almost entirely commercially available material. In a few cases, a discussion of unreleased music is presented, as are references to extra-musical information such as quotes, reviews, and so on. In addition to the specific musical texts examined as the focus of this study, I also briefly refer to other recordings as they relate to and help support specific points being made. Since commercial recordings are, for the most part, copyright restricted, I have had to use various alternate means of communicating their content in the analysis. When discussing abstract musical parameters such as rhythm, I have incorporated standardized sequencer/drum-machine notation. In Chapter 1, I use a sequencer-based rhythmic chart to illustrate an important rhythmic feature found throughout The Neptunes' music. In more "nuanced" examples, I resort to digital waveform representation to illustrate certain attributes—rhythmic, textural, and spectral, not practicably communicable with either Western musical notation or sequencer gridding. For example, in Chapter 2, I use waveform comparison to demonstrate how Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" (2003) reproduces the de-quantized "swing" of Brandy's "I Thought" (2001). In other cases, spectral analysis is used to illustrate similarities and differences between recordings. For instance, spectral analysis is incorporated in Chapter 3 to show how a particular Rodney Jerkins production is meant to

[21] These terms have been borrowed from Genette (1997). The present study modifies Genette's usage of "source text" so that it is mainly meant to serve as a "good example" of authorial elements being represented in a host text. In other words, there is not a 1:1 ratio between source text and host text; rather, there is more like an x:1 ratio (x representing a body of exemplary authorial-texts that constitute and define a particular style). Thus, while I will be focusing on one source-text in each example, I may also reference other relevant source material. Having said this, in all of the recordings discussed, there are at least some direct connections between source text and host text (which is why I have chosen these texts in particular).

sound "sample-based," contrasting the limited frequency range of this example with the broad sound spectrum of other recordings he has produced.

I have primarily based my analysis on three analytic models: two provided by Serge Lacasse (2000, 2005) and one by Phil Tagg (1999).[22] Tagg's model divides "musical expression" into five basic parameters including "instrumentational," "compositional," "temporal," "tonal," and "dynamic." Lacasse, on the other hand, reduces "phonography" to three general constituents: "abstract parameters," "performative parameters," and "technological parameters."[23] In my analysis I will reference terminology from both of these models, (1) to isolate and focus on the "borrowed" aspects of the recordings being discussed, and (2) to observe where and on what levels the sonic signature is most apparent in these recordings.

In the end, the above-outlined method of analysis is used to explore aspects of contemporary record production not yet addressed by academic scholarship. It presents what I hope to be the first detailed account of sonic identity in record production, illustrating how, ironically, production identities are formed through a process of both "forging" and being themselves "forged." On a broader level, this project attempts to provide an alternative route around the myth and misunderstanding that has shaped so much existing literature about the place of "authenticity" in popular music—especially urban popular music. This project will touch upon and offer some new interpretations of many age-old questions regarding authorship, not only of import to popular music studies, but relating to the broader spheres of "Art and Craft" (to quote R. G. Collingwood [1938]), where long-held conceptions of authorship, identity, and authenticity are increasingly becoming blurred and in many cases redefined in modern application.

---

[22] These analytic models are in part based on the work of Gary Burns (1987).

[23] Both Tagg and Lacasse also subdivide each of these basic parameters. Lacasse, for example, separates "technological parameters" into "loudness", "space", "time", and "timbre".

Chapter 1: Sonic Signatures in Record Production

1.1: Background

1.1.1: Introduction

In 2001 the king of pop, Michael Jackson, released his first album in over a decade, *Invincible.* The first piece of verbal information presented on this album's only single, "You Rock My World," the track that would be responsible for either making or breaking Jackson's much anticipated return to pop music, is the word "Darkchild." Prior to its utterance, the song begins as an electronically sequenced instrumental groove; a steady pulse of programmed drums and keyboard bass create the basic rhythmic texture while a syncopated synthesized guitar line dances around this regularity on the offbeat. After continuing for four bars, Jackson's voice enters this soundscape, delicately phrasing the word "Darkchild" just before the downbeat of bar five. Almost as soon as this word is spoken, a piano part is added to the instrumental track and, accompanied by an upper-register string part, works to soften the harmonic bleakness of the rhythmic groove with a smooth progression of lightly accented seventh chords that shift between tonic and dominant.

Given its context and its apparent effect on the music, we know the word "Darkchild" is important. But what does it mean? Why does Jackson place it at the beginning of such an important track? And why does it seem to change the course of the music? Beginning with the last of these questions, it could be suggested that the temporal relationship between the occurrence of the word "Darkchild" and the entry of a number of harmonic instruments, including piano and strings, is not a coincidence. This is because the word is part of a reference to the track's producer, Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins; the sound of his nickname, "Darkchild," draws attention to his contribution as the producer by the fact that it is immediately followed by the entrance of the only "real-sounding" instrument in the entire song, the piano, associated with an actual performer. However, the larger puzzle remains as to what purpose a reference to the producer serves to the extent that the

first word heard on one of the most highly anticipated releases of 2001 is the name of the record producer, rather than the recording artist?

One answer to this question could be that Jackson sought, by calling immediate attention to the brand power of this young "hit-maker's" nickname, "Darkchild," to connect his music with a new generation of fans. While these fans may have been too young to know Jackson's work from the previous decade, they would almost certainly recognize the word "Darkchild" as a result of having also heard it in hit singles by other artists, such as Destiny's Child, Brandy and Monica over the course of the previous year.[24] Such an intertextual connection, however, only draws attention to a number of newly revealed mysteries, among these: Why is the word "Darkchild" inserted not only at the beginning of "You Rock My World," but at the beginning of all these other singles as well? Why should a sonic network between these songs need to exist? Are the connections being created intentionally, and, if so, by whom? Finally, what do these sonic patterns tell us about the actual role of the record producer in contemporary popular music?

With these queries in mind, a second interpretation of the upfront appearance of the word "Darkchild" in "You Rock My World" may be proposed that does not depend upon knowledge of the specific extra-musical details of Michael Jackson's return, his attempt to reach out to a new generation of music fans, or even the fact that Jackson is performing in this song at all. Instead, evidenced by the connection this utterance makes to a larger body of *Rodney Jerkins* productions, it could be argued that the placement of the word "Darkchild" in "You Rock My World" is part of an unchanging sonic message meant to help define the producer's work as such. The word represents a kind of "sonic signature"; Michael Jackson utters it in order to *sign* this song, not as his own creation, but as the work of Rodney Jerkins, and as part of a larger body of Jerkins' work.

Thus, it would appear that the sonic signature connects a given song with a network of other songs created by the same producer and, in making this connection, imbues a kind of associated meaning into the track regardless of its specific history and the background of

---

[24] These tracks include Brandy & Monica's "The Boy Is Mine" (1998), Brandy's "Angel of Mine" (1998), and Destiny's Child's "Say My Name" (1999), all of which reached number one on *Billboard* charts.

the artist performing on it. To clearly and convincingly communicate this point, however, a proper exploration of the idea of sonic signatures, including the circumstances that have brought them about, their cultural and historic context, the role they play in the field, their shape and form, and the larger significance they represent for popular music, is required.

As a preface to this exploration, representing the subject of the present study, this chapter develops the basic idea that sonic signatures exist in record production. The chapter first attempts to situate sonic signatures in relation to specific cultural and technological shifts that have recently taken place in the field of popular music. This will show how the record producer's role in recent years has in many genres been dramatically altered and even refined. This discussion, in turn, will allow for an explanation of the forces that have enabled sonic signatures to become an increasingly important feature of contemporary popular music, not only from the standpoint of their newfound significance in the creative music making process, but also in terms of how music is received and evaluated within the field, the relationship between recording artists and producers, and even relationships among producers themselves.

From this, a more thorough definition of the term sonic signature will be put forward. The remaining portion of this chapter is dedicated to a brief survey of the different types of sonic signatures that can be observed in the current North American mainstream pop market. This is used to help build a taxonomy of the different types of sonic signatures, part of a system of classification that will later be needed to make a closer examination of one signature in particular, that of the aforementioned producer Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins.

Before beginning the analysis of sonic signatures, two questions must be addressed: why do sonic signatures exist in record production, and, what purpose do they serve musicians (producers, recording artists, and so on)? Indeed, before proposing a definition (1.1.5), I will turn to address the technological (1.1.2) and cultural (1.1.3) contexts in which sonic signatures have emerged, as well as the function (1.1.4) it might have in the field. This background is needed to properly situate the sonic signature's importance within the current popular music marketplace in order to understand *why* the first word of Michael

Jackson's highly anticipated return to popular music is a reference to his producer, "Darkchild," i.e., Rodney Jerkins.

1.1.2: Technological Context

When considering transformative shifts that have reshaped the sound and practice of popular music over the past decade (from roughly 1996 to the present), two clear developments arguably stand out. One is technologically rooted, which I will now address; the other is based on cultural relationships, which I will turn to in the next section (1.1.3). Beginning with the first of these shifts (technological), there has recently been a strong increase in both the amount and sophistication of computerized tools used in the process of creating a recording. The emergence in the mid to late 1990s of musical aids such as Digidesign's ProTools, advanced real-time sequencers, 24-bit samplers, and algorithmic FX processors have all helped to reshape not only the recording process, but also the listening process as well. This is because such advances have brought with them a greater awareness and evaluation of the production within the recording. As Simon Frith has remarked, in the digital age, listeners have replaced a vocal oriented approach with one more concerned about the overall aesthetic of the mix. According to Frith:

> The rise of digital technology where different sounds are being laid over one another in a particular mix has had the effect of moving voices from being the central sound. It makes the actual process of layering more significant... and [shows] how much less important the voice [has become]; the character or personality of the singer [has] been taken over by the soundscape in a song (quoted in Gross 2002: 1).

This is certainly true in the phenomenon of remixing, in many ways a product of the digital sound era, where the value of a song is not based on its vocal performance, but on the quality and originality of the instrumental production used to set this performance within a new context.

While the remix illustrates a change in listening practices in an area of popular music traditionally associated with production (i.e., dance music), this shift in the focus of

listening has impacted diverse and unlikely subgenres from country to rock, all of which now utilize digital recording technologies in production. Even in these genres, I submit that new technologies are not merely being used to aid the process of recording, but are becoming ingrained within the very fiber of song writing and compositional acts. While some subgenres and musical cultures have been less willing to publicize this technological induction than others (for example, the apparent resistance of the folk-rock and punk-rock scene), it is safe to say that almost every track being played on North American radio has been sonically affected at some level by these new technologies.

This influence can be observed, for example, in the recordings of "anti-pop" icon Avril Lavigne. Even though Lavigne's recordings are meant to have the appearance of sounding rough—in contrast with more polished, overtly "technological-sounding" pop—the very rawness of her sound has to do with an integration of specific technological advances on the side of production. Lavigne's first three singles were written and produced by The Matrix, a production trio renowned for having developed a compositional process in which mastered mixes of their productions are created at the same time as the songs are being written (Kawashima 2003).[25] While this immediate writing/recording/mastering process helps to create a kind of organic feel in Lavigne's music, in fact, it is an entirely new approach to music making, not possible in previous eras, in the sense that digital technologies now allow what were once a number of temporally distinct musical processes (writing, recording, producing, mixing, mastering) to converge within a single act. As this example suggests, creative processes in popular music are also uniting as a result of technology in terms of the personnel they involve.

Increasingly song-writing is, as a process, centering on the producer, rather than the artist. As a caveat, it should be underscored that such a relationship is not entirely new within popular music. In the chapter "Art Versus Technology: The strange case of popular music," Simon Frith (1986) makes the case that due to the fundamentally industrial nature of popular music and because the primary text has for many years been the recorded and not the live performance, the record producer has long served a role central to the process

---

[25] These tracks are "Complicated," "Sk8er Boy," and "I'm With You," all from the album *Let Go* (2002).

of musical creation. I would suggest that what is new and important in the example of The Matrix is the extent to which recent technological advances have consolidated and exaggerated this relationship to a level previously unseen.

The process of building a finished recording from experimental first-takes, represents an interesting example of what Evan Eisenberg (1988) has called "phonography" in popular music. In the case of The Matrix, new technology has allowed the traditionally separate steps of laying down a guide track in the recording studio and then recreating it with more attention to the quality of sound to be condensed into one. This illustrates how the traditional role of the record producer is increasingly overlapping into the creative processes that were once the purview of an entirely separate persona, namely, the recording artist, the songwriter, or the engineer. This is in part because the use of recorded sound as a compositional feature via samplers, sequencers, and other digital-sound tools, has become equally (if not in many cases more) important in defining a given song's sonic identity and subsequent commercial success, as the actual melodies or words performed in the abstract sense (something echoed by Frith [Gross: 1]). In other words, the meaning of a musical text now has as much to do with *how* sound is inscribed, as it does with *what* material is inscribed, or, perhaps, that these two levels of sound—the concrete and abstract—are simply no longer separable in the popular recording. Hence, the performative and technological parameters have converged within the recording process to the extent that the record producer's role is no longer to "translate" information from performance to recording; rather, it is to form the very ideas and information being communicated *through* or *in* the process of recording and not before it. This is observed in the case of The Matrix creating final mastered cuts in the act of thinking up musical ideas—ideas that are at the same time abstractly and performatively bound to the capabilities of new technology.

For the present study, it is important to note that this technological shift in recording practice has resulted in the emergence of the record producer, once an obscure figure who worked behind the scenes, as an important persona in the public's eye. Mainstream listeners (as will be evidenced in magazine reviews cited later) are not only becoming increasingly familiar with the contributions of record producers but are beginning to identify their work according to sonic character within songs. Hence, the profile of the record producer has

been raised to an unparalleled proportion as a result, in part, of technological advances within the field.

1.1.3: Cultural context

Having addressed the role that technological advances have played in helping to bolster the role of the record producer in the recording process, it is now important to consider a second shift at the cultural level that has had much the same effect. Specifically, I am referring to an influx in the popularity of what is often called "urban music" (i.e., rap, R&B, gospel, dancehall, neo-soul, etc.). In recent years, urban music has become firmly ensconced within the mainstream North American pop market. Arguably it represents the new "coffee-table" pop in the sense that it has become the background music of shopping centers, television advertisements, and, to a large extent, the most prolific force in North American pop radio. What is important about the emergence of this genre for the present study is that while urban music is difficult to define in terms of a specific musical aesthetic, it represents an understood collection of sub-genres in which the record producer currently assumes, and has historically assumed, a prominent and visible position.[26] This is because in the setting of urban music, the record producer works not only as a recordist or arranger (tasks also traditionally associated with the record producer in rock or country music), but additionally as the central creative force in bringing a piece of music into existence. It is clear that the typical urban producer is involved in all levels of a song's development, from its origin as a simple drum beat, to its mid-stages as a fully programmed instrumental backbone (the vocals in urban music are normally written to a finished instrumental track), to its completion as a radio-ready product.[27] Thus, I would suggest that as urban music has become a familiar part of the pop music landscape over the past decade, the increasing

[26] The important role of the producer in urban music was clear as early as the 1960s with Jamaican producers like Leslie Kohn, Lee Perry and King Tubby who were in many ways central to the commercial rise of reggae and dub. A similar role of importance can be observed in the late 1980s with the emergence of New Jack Swing, a musical genre that was the brainchild of producer Teddy Riley.

[27] Boogie, Sherburne, Smith (2005)

visibility of importance of urban producers has helped draw attention to and expand the role of the record producer in all genres of popular music at large.

I.1.4: Function

The two shifts defined above, the increasing presence of technology at all stages of the writing/recording process in popular music, and the emergence of urban music as a central force in top-40 radio, represent catalysts that have caused mainstream audiences to recently take an interest in both record producers as celebrated personas, as well as in the importance of record production in the musical texts being listened to. While recording artists continue to be regarded as the main authors in popular music (evidenced by the fact that their names continue to appear on the spines of CDs), I would suggest that the general public is also coming to recognize specific producers and their individual "touch" in the sonic identity of the music being heard.

This is evidenced in the transformation of ways new music is marketed. For example, mention of the record producer is becoming a crucial aspect of the advertisement of new singles and albums.[28] In the past few years, citing the producer's name on the cover of compact disks has progressed from Whitney Houston's *My Love is Your Love* (1998), where a sticker attached to the CD wrapper advertised "tracks produced by Babyface and Rodney Jerkins," to the mid 2000s, when all track titles listed on the backside of Gwen Stefani's *Love, Angel, Music, Baby* (2004) are accompanied by a corresponding producer's name in bold lettering.[29] Magazine reviews reflect a similar trend. An article anticipating Britney Spear's 2003 album, *In The Zone*, states: "Spears says that her new album will be very different, calling it her 'baby.' She has reportedly worked with producers such as

---

[28] This is not entirely new. As early as the 1960s, as Alban Zak (2001) has pointed out, reviews of the Righteous Brothers' music often mentioned Phil Spector's contribution as their record producer. It is the tone and frequency of this sort of advertising that has reached an unprecedented level in recent years.

[29] The layout of Stefani's album back cover is reminiscent of classical recordings. For example, on any given solo piano recording by Vladimir Horowitz, each track's composer (i.e. Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, etc.) will be clearly listed next to the song title. Stefani, who uses a different producer for almost every track, in copying this format seems to be acknowledging her role as an "interpreter" rather than "composer" (or "producer").

RedZone, Rodney Jerkins, Moby, The Matrix, P. Diddy, and others" (Anonymous 2003). These names are in fact helping lend credibility to Spears' claim that the album will be "different." A similar article notes "Britney Spears has recruited an all-star cast to propel her new album *In The Zone*. Moby has written and produced 'Early Mornin,' R. Kelly is behind 'Outrageous,' and additional producers include Bloodshy & Avant and Guy Sigworth" (Cashmere n.d: [1]). This information is not inserted for the benefit of hardcore industry buffs. Rather, it is telling mainstream readers and potential audiences, increasingly familiar with producers and their sounds, what to expect, what each track is going to sound like, and ultimately to whom this album will appeal. All for good reason: Britney Spears, produced by The Matrix, will sound more like Avril Lavigne or Lindsay Lohan, also produced by The Matrix, than Britney Spears produced by any of the other producers mentioned in the above review.[30]

Another editorial on the aforementioned Spears' album comments that, "These days, high-stakes pop CD's are shopping sprees, with dozens of songwriters and producers being thrown into the cart" (Strauss n.d: [2]). This analogy to shopping suggests how recording artists are now not only being *listened to*, but in many ways also *judged*, according to their producers. Returning to this chapter's opening example, it is for this reason that Michael Jackson began his comeback album with the word "Darkchild." It is also why on the one hand The Backstreet Boys produced by Max Martin (producer of Britney Spears) is categorized on iTunes as "pop," while The Backstreet Boys produced by John Fields (producer of rock band Switchfoot) gets categorized as "modern rock." In these cases, the work of a particular producer seems to imbue a generic identity into the recording that an alone artist cannot. By the same token, through changing producers, an artist can change musical genres and potentially reach different fan bases. In a previous paper (Gillespie 2004b), for example, I have tried to illustrate how Justin Timberlake's decision to break with 'Nsync's former Swedish production team, Cheiron, and instead enlist hip hop producers, The Neptunes, for his solo debut, *Justified* (2002) was a deliberate attempt reposition and authenticate his new role as an "urban" artist. I have also examined

---

[30] As these excerpts imply, depending upon production, various tracks by Spears have the potential to resonate with fans from different listening audiences—from The Matrix-created Avril Lavigne-style punk-rock anthems to Underdogs-produced Omarion style R&B ballads.

(Gillespie 2004a) the same principle at work in Britney Spears' move to hire producer Rodney Jerkins at the eleventh hour, just weeks before releasing her 2001 single "Overprotected," to remix the song from sugar-pop anthem to club-banger as part of a strategic image change.[31] Hence, there is arguably real and practical motivation for recording artists to use specific producers and to credit them in the music (or let them credit themselves) as part of signaling a new sonic direction to both existing and potential audiences.

1.1.5: Definition

While producers' sonic signatures have become an important link between perceived cultural authenticity and commercial success for many recording artists, this is only a secondary function of the sonic signature. The sonic signature's fundamental purpose, I would suggest, is to identify the producer and, as such, serves the producer first and foremost. It acts to imbed a clear production credit that is recognizable in music broadcast as sound alone. In the age of digital media dissemination, where artist name and track title are often the only bit of referential information attached to a song over the course of transmission (either as compressed digital audio or over the radio where producers are traditionally not named), and given the previously highlighted importance of the record producer in the current musical environment, the sonic signature can be approached as a means of letting record producers credit themselves for what is often the majority of the work done to bring a track into existence. In an era when the commercial fate of a single depends upon more than ever on the sound of its production, the sonic signature helps protect the ownership of a successful production aesthetic by turning it into a sonic brand that is automatically associated with, and becomes the domain of, a single producer. Hence,

---

[31] I would propose this is also why in 2005 The Backstreet Boys *could* rehire Max Martin to produce their comeback album (*Never Gone*) because he had completely redefined his sound. In Martin's case, while his old sound was easily recognizable and fell out of favour at the end of 2002 (with the success of the abovementioned "Overprotected" remix), unlike most of the other producers mentioned in this survey, his name was never an integral part of the musical text. Thus, he has recently been able to rebuild a new and successful sound, and to a large degree, only because, while his two production sounds are known and recognizable, his name is not.

the sonic signature acts as a link between a distinct production sound and an individual producer

With this essential function of the sonic signature in mind, a more detailed definition of the term can now be provided. Unlike Bernd Gottinger's (2005) usage of the term "sonic signature," mine does not refer to the "traces" left in a musical text by recording technologies; rather, it refers to the identity markers left in a musical text by the record producers.[32] More specifically, I would define the sonic signature as a collection of sound material consistently worked into a body of recordings by a producer or group of producers as a means of identifying production authorship on a purely sonic level within musical texts. This definition must necessarily remain imprecise because the shape and form of sonic signatures vary widely from genre to genre and from producer to producer, as will be illustrated in the following survey.

1.2: Sonic Signatures in the Field

1.2.1: Overview

Having examined the circumstances that have created a genuine need for sonic signatures in the field of record production, as well as having put forward a definition of what is meant by the term sonic signature, I will now apply this knowledge to an examination of the various manifestations of sonic signatures in the current market. In doing so, the following survey attempts to develop a systematic taxonomy of the different kinds of sonic signatures, dividing them first between sound-signatures and name-signatures, and

---

[32] The "sonic signature," which in itself only denotes a correlation between sound and authorship, is commonly used in the world of professional audio to mean many different things. Bernd Gottinger, for example, has recently used the term to describe the sonic evidence that various recording technologies leave in music they are used to create. According to Gottinger (2005: 1), "recorded sound is shaped by sonic signatures which exist in sound recording technology on various micro and macroscopic levels." As an example of this relation, Gottinger illustrates how something as small as the design of a single op-amp impacted the design and layout of studio mixing boards built during the 1970s and in turn helped shaped the aesthetics of the era.

subsequently breaking each of these into a series of subcategories. "Sound-signatures" refer to non-vocal sonic material meant to help signify production authorship in a recording. As the text will explain, this refers to various levels of musical material: discrete-sound, abstract, performative, structural, orchestral, non-musical, and phonographic sound-signatures. "Name-signatures," on the other hand, communicate production identity through verbal utterance, either in the form of *allonymic* signatures where the reference to the producer's signature is made by someone other than the producer (usually the artist), or as *autonymic* signatures where the producer names himself/herself within the work.[33]

1.2.2: Sound-signatures

1.2.2.1: Discrete

Sonic signatures can be communicated through discrete concrete sounds that are immediately recognizable and carry with them a clear sense of production ownership. Examples of this kind of sound material include the Timbaland flute, the Timbaland "beat-box" kit, or the John Shanks "muffled piano."[34] In all of these cases, for listeners I would suggest that the discrete sounds mentioned tend to be perceived as belonging to a specific producer and their appearance in a recording communicates this production identity regardless of how they are organized within it. This point is illustrated through the recent success of "producer kits," that is to say collections of instrument patches sold commercially to a market of amateur producers attempting to mimic well-known

---

[33] I would like to thank Dr. Serge Lacasse for suggesting this terminology. The terms *allonymic* and *autonymic* are derived from literary theory. In literature, for example, a preface is considered *auto*graphic when it has been written by the author him/herself, and *allo*graphic when written by someone else. In order to avoid confusion with allo- and autographic works of art, which are referenced later in Chapter Two, I have replaced the suffix "graphic" with "nymic," which refers to naming something or someone (appropriate in the description of sonic signatures which sonically "name" producers).

[34] Timbaland's signature flute can be heard in the following cuts: Jay-Z's "Big Pimpin" (1999), Justin Timberlake's "Right For Me" (2002), Timbaland's "Indian Flute" (2003), B2K's "Take it to the Floor" (2003), Jennifer Lopez' "He'll Be Back" (2005). Examples of beat-boxing are found in Justin Timberlake's "Cry Me A River" (2002), Obie Trice's "Bad Bitch" (2003), Brandy & Usher's "What Is She To You" (2004), Brandy's "Sirens (2004). John Shanks "muffled piano" can be heard in the beginning of the following: Michelle Branch's "Are You Happy Now?" (2003), Lindsay Lohan's "Symptoms of You," (2004), The Backstreet Boys' "Safest Place To Hide" (2005).

producers. In other words, there is a clear and important connection between discrete sounds within a recording and the perceived sonic identity of an individual producer. A typical "Timbaland kit," for example, will almost always feature, among other obvious sound choices, a variety of patches resembling his signature "Indian flute" sound. While in some cases the flute sounds included in these patches are merely close approximations of instruments heard in Timbaland's productions, in other cases they appear to have been extracted directly from extant Timbaland-produced songs. Interestingly, I have discovered that royalty-free sample CDs, such as *Deepest India* (1998) and *Abracatabla* (1994), actually represent the source, not only of the sounds featured in these producer kits, but also in many of Timbaland's signature own productions. The fact that some of Timbaland's most recognizable instrumental patches come from commercially available sample CDs suggests that discrete sounds may be appropriated from commercially available sources and still come to be uniquely identified with an individual producer.[35]

1.2.2.2: Abstract

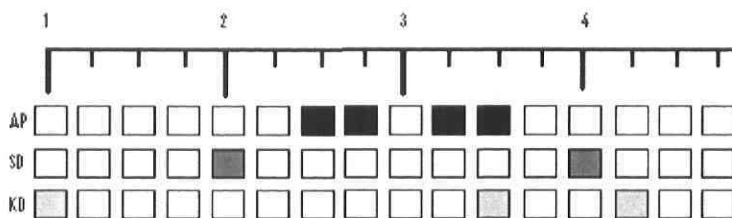
Conversely, sonic signatures may get communicated through abstract musical relationships. For example, particular rhythmic patterns may identify production within a work irrespective of the concrete sounds that are used to orchestrate them. In one example of this, Virginia-based production duo, The Neptunes (Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo), consistently utilize a specific auxiliary percussion rhythm (notated in Figure 1) or a close variation thereof, between beats two and four, in their drumbeats.[36]

---

[35] However, as both this Timbaland example, and later instances by Kanye West, Lil Jon, and Rodney Jerkins will highlight, in order for appropriated sounds to assume production identities, the sounds must be borrowed from foreign settings and placed within a new and unique context—either historically (West's use of 1970s record samples), culturally (Timbaland's use of Indian tabla drums) or generically (Lil Jon's appropriation of orchestration from European house music). Furthermore, the fact that these recorded samples (e.g., Indian flute) are not well-known to the public despite their commercial availability also helps producers associate these sounds with themselves in our culture.

[36] This rhythmic motif (or a variation of it) can be heard in the auxiliary percussion of the following tracks: Jay-Z's "Just Wanna Luv Ya" (2000), Ray-J's "Wait a Minute" (2001), Britney Spears' "Boys" (2001), N.E.R.D.'s "Lapdance" (2002), The Clipse's "When the Last Time" (2002). I have chosen to illustrate this rhythmic motif using sequencer-based representation rather than Western notation in part based on the fact that The Neptunes produce with sequencers and accordingly see their own compositions this way in the studio. For practical reasons, I have also chosen to use this method of representation because what is significant is the rhythmic proportions that make this pattern unique, and can be expressed in various subdivisions of meter (quarter-notes, eight-notes, etc.).

Figure 1.1: Sequencer-based representation of kick drum (KD), snare drum (SD), and auxiliary percussion (AP) in a typical Neptunes-produced drum loop.



1.2.2.3: Performative

The above (Figure 1) illustrates how a sonic signature can relate to abstract musical parameters, in this case a particular rhythmic pattern. It is noteworthy that this rhythmic pattern is further emphasized within recordings produced by The Neptunes by the fact that it is never *quantized*.[37] This performative feature is perhaps equally as important in communicating The Neptunes' sonic signature as the pattern itself. While The Neptunes quantize only fundamental rhythmic instrumentation (such as the kick and snare drum), they deliberately leave auxiliary percussion (hi-hats, tam-tams, bongos, keyboards, etc.) with the natural timing incongruence of the original play-recorded performance on the sequencer. As member Chad Hugo (2003, [1]) notes, "Usually we quantize the kicks and snares, but not the hi-hats [because] we like the live feel that makes you think someone is actually playing the drums." This makes the rhythmic motif in question stand out within a track and consequently draw attention to it as an element of The Neptunes' sonic signature. Thus, one aspect of The Neptunes' sonic signature involves both abstract (the pattern) and performative (the quantized/non-quantized parts) attributes.

The fact that *not* quantizing certain lines has become a feature of The Neptunes' method of production becomes all the more interesting and logical when compared with producer Dr. Dre's aesthetic, defined in large part by his employment of overly rigid or

---

[37] Quantization refers to a function in MiDi sequencers whereby the timing of play-recorded material is regulated—either during performance or afterwards—typically by locking played material along a grid of equal metric subdivisions.

"hard" quantization schemes. In the case of Dre's tracks, instrumental material tends to be regulated, not along a sixteenth-note grid (which is normal in 90-100 BPM music) but according to a straight eighth-note quantization scheme (this practice is sometimes referred to as "hard quantization"), creating a unique and recognizable aesthetic.[38]

A third, additionally contrasting example of a largely performative sonic signature may contain is found in producer Rodney Jerkins' penchant for the exaggerated "groove" or de-quantization presets found in the Akai MPC 2000 sampler/sequencer. In his productions, Jerkins normally uses a series of groove-quantization functions to shift fundamental elements, including the kick and snare drum, away from tempo grids, both ahead and behind time, by as much as 40-50 ms.[39] The unnatural rhythmic "wobbling" that results from this process has become a defining element of Jerkins' distinct sound, a point expanded in the following chapters.

The three performative signatures highlighted above are unique in that in each case pre-existing technological functions and presets are used (or not used) to distinguish production identity on a microrhythmic level. In the first example, that of The Neptunes, this signature is created through avoiding rhythmic quantization where it would normally be used in a production. In the second (Dr. Dre), the signature is created out of the employment of an unnaturally rigid quantization scheme. Finally, in the case of Rodney Jerkins, the signature is itself a function of rhythmic processing using groove quantization algorithms.

---

[38] Examples of this rigid rhythmic texture can be observed in the following: Snoop Dogg's "Gin & Juice" (1993), Dr. Dre's "Still D.R.E.," Eminem's "My Name Is" (1999), Mary J. Blige's "Family Affair" (2001), Gwen Stefani's "Rich Girl" (2005).

[39] Heavy groove quantization can be found on the following tracks: Brandy's "What About Us?," "B-Rocka Intro," "I Thought" (2002), Deborag Cox' "Like I Did" (2002), K-Ci & Jo-Jo's "It's Me" (2003), TLC's "Who's It Gonna Be" (2003). The knowledge of what equipment Jerkins uses is derived from first hand observation and discussion in 2002.

1.2.2.4: Structural

For other producers, the sonic signature does not get conveyed through the use of discrete sounds, abstract rhythmic relationships, or performative processing, but through the broader creative choices used to structure and organize a recording. This may be the use of specific textural or harmonic patterning, as the case of Swedish hit-maker Max Martin suggests. In a previous paper (Gillespie 2004c) I have illustrated how the final chorus of Martin's productions, for instance, consistently feature what had previously been two separate vocal arrangements combined in a contrapuntal, call-and-answer "mega-refrain."[40] These choruses are often also recognizable by their regimented harmonic features including a "ready-steady-go" lead-in from the dominant key and a rise to the relative major (or in major keys, to secondary dominant) in the second stanza.[41] The Backstreet Boy's "Shape of My Heart" (2001), for example, contains a dominant lead-in on the word "Looking... (*downbeat*)," followed by a modulation in the third bar to the V of V chord, thereby setting up a dramatic return to the tonic through a series of secondary dominants at the end of the refrain. Interestingly, while Martin's overall sound has been dramatically (and I would argue intentionally) redefined over the past half decade (from the "bubble-gum" quality of his early Jive Records productions to the "grungy" guitar-inflected tone of more recent work), his tracks have retained these abstract structural links.[42] In other words, while both his sonic arsenal and the overall sound of Martin's productions have evolved greatly in recent years, his productions continue to be organized in a way that makes them recognizable and thus serve as *structural* sonic signature, uniting and identifying his work.

---

[40] This chorus structure is found the following Martin-produced tracks: The Backstreet Boys' "Don't Want You Back" (1999), Robyn's "Do You Know What It Takes" (1997), Britney Spears' "Oops… I did it again" (2000), NSync's "Bye Bye Bye" (2000), The Backstreet Boys' "Shape of My Heart" (2001).

[41] Examples of such harmonic contouring are found in the following Martin-produced choruses: Britney Spears' "Oops… I did it again," "Stronger" (2000), The Backstreet Boys "Shape Of My Heart" (2001), Bon Jovi's "It's My Life" (2000), Britney Spears' "Overprotected" (2002), Kelly Clarkson's "Since You've Been Gone" (2004).

[42] This connection was self-confirmed during a recent first listen to The Backstreet Boys *Never Gone* (2005) when, without consulting the accompanying liner notes, I successfully picked out all three tracks Max Martin contributed to the album ("Climbing the Walls," "I Just Want You To Know," and "I Still…").

1.2.2.5: Orchestral

For other producers, the sonic signature may be expressed in a recording through the deployment of specific combinations of instrumental patches or discrete sounds. This is the case for producer Jonathan Smith, better known as Lil Jon, whose tracks are marked by a very specific collection of patches found on the Yamaha Motif, Novation A-Station, Roland XV-5080, Nord Lead, and E-mu Proteus and XL-1 keyboards. As a review of Lil Jon's music notes: "While the programmer-musicians of electronic dance music and most current hip-hop alike spend hours tweaking their patches to mask their sources, Lil' Jon's tones sound like they come straight out of the box [and] anyone might come up with the same unvarnished kazoo sounds within five minutes of sitting down at a keyboard store's display model" (Sherburne 2005: [1-2]). Curiously, while Jon's orchestration scheme has become a key element of his sonic signature within the world of urban production, he is by no means the first producer to use this collection of patches in tandem. In a recent interview with *Scratch Magazine* (Smith 2005), Jon admitted that he first heard this particular orchestration of hi-fi "buzz" synthesizer patches and preset drum sounds in the house music played at strip clubs in his hometown of Atlanta. Jon's unique stylistic contribution, and consequently what made this collection of sounds part of his sonic signature as a producer, was simply to transpose the orchestration he heard in house music into an "urban" musical environment. In other words, to create his signature, all Jon did was borrow the same patches being used in house music and simply shift the tempo of the beats made using these sounds from the 120 Beats Per Minute (bpm) tempo characteristic of dance music, to 95-105 bpm, a tempo range indicative of hip-hop and R&B. To further emphasize this generic repositioning, he also presented these patches in "urban" modalities like Phrygian, rather than the standard major or minor tonalities traditionally associated with house.[43]

The resulting sound, dubbed "Crunk," has been received as new and groundbreaking in the world of urban music, and more importantly, has been recognized as

[43] I would suggest that one reason urban producers have traditionally used Phrygian is because sampled bass notes only have to be pitch shifted a semi-tone in this modality to create a harmonic progression (i-bII). Electronic dance music, on the other hand, with its lack of samples, and more importantly, its pronounced European roots, has generally retained the "classical" modes of Dorian and Aeolian. Norwegian group A-ha's "Take Me On" (*High and Low,* 1990) is a quintessential early example of this European electro-sound.

Lil Jon's own sonic formula. The producer even glossed the cover of the August 2005 edition of *Source Magazine* as "The King Of Crunk." Ironically, Lil Jon stated in a January 2005 interview with *Remix Magazine* that the most famous keyboard patch from his "Crunk" sound is a basic stock precept from the Emu XL-1 synthesizer:

> I was just going through sounds, and that [*expletive*] synch sound, the famous one that's on 'Yeah,' I was playing with it, and that just was hitting. Just playing with sounds, that's how I got my most famous signature sound right there. Now, everybody wants that sound on whatever track [I create] (Boogie 2005).

The above quote is especially significant for the present study by the fact that Jon goes so far as to use the phrase "signature sound" in relation to his use of an instrumental patch. As he states in the last line, many of the artists he now works with ask him to use this sound in tracks he produces for them. This quote, therefore, confirms the previously discussed assumption that, in addition to serving producers, sonic signatures also play an important role for artists in the second-degree in relation to their ability to connect a particular artist to an established body of hits by other artists via a single producer.

The last two words of the above quote—i.e., "I create," are not Jon's own but have been interpolated by the magazine's editor. I would propose that another interpretation of Jon's words might very well modify the phrase's ending to "they create"—"they" referring to *other* producers. In this sense, Jon's last sentence might suggest the *producers* attempt to copy his sound. The idea of producers copying sonic signatures represents a kind of third-degree use of the sonic signature—an idea the text will return to.

1.2.2.6: Sound-effect

In the case of a few contemporary producers, their sonic signature may be invoked outside the bounds of what would be considered compositional identity in the traditional sense. Producer Irv Gotti and more recently producer Scott Storch, whose productions are difficult to distinguish based on things like orchestral palette or harmonic structure, both network their music through the use of recurring sound effects. More specifically, these two producers use glissando descending "sweeps" (which in the case of Storch, I call a "Storchdown") at the beginning of chorus sections in their productions.[44] For example, in Justin Timberlake's "Cry Me a River," a track co-produced by Storch and Timbaland, beat-boxing is used throughout the first three choruses as part of Timbaland's aforementioned sonic-signature. For the final chorus, produced almost exclusively by Storch, the beat-boxing is eliminated, and the section is introduced with a "Storchdown" glissando. This change in sonic surface is not merely symbolic; rather, it is arguably a deliberate marker of production authorship inserted by Storch to help listeners recognize and distinguish his own musical contribution within the track from that of Timbaland.[45]

1.2.1.7: Phonographic

Sometimes the sonic signature can get imbedded in a track at the level of phonographic staging. This may be through the employment of specific recording techniques or post-production practices including distinct filtering, processing, or mixing aesthetics. One example of this kind of sonic signature can be observed in the music of self-described

---

[44] I first began to identify Irv Gotti's tracks by the presence of an electric airy sweep effect resembling an airplane landing at the beginning of 4 or 8 bar phrases. Examples include: Jennifer Lopez' "I'm Real" (2001), Ja Rule's "Wonderful" (2001), Ashanti's "Down 4 U," "Foolish" (2002). A "Storchdown" can be heard in the choruses of the following Scott Storch produced tracks: Christina Aguilera's "Can't Hold Us Down" (2002), Beyonce's "Baby-Boy—The Scott Storch Remix" (2003), Justin Timberlake's "Cry Me A River" (2003), Mario's "Let Me Love You" (2004), Chris Brown's "Run It" (2005), and Fat Joe's "Lean Back" (2005).

[45] These references to the producer also serve an important function in legitimizing the song's performer, Justin Timberlake, who is using both the positions of Timbaland and Scott Storch as urban producers to help transform him from a pop singer into an urban artist. Interestingly, at the 2003 Grammy Awards, Timberlake only acknowledged the contribution of Timbaland when this track received an award. In an interview after the event, a visibly bitter Scott Storch proclaimed "Cry Me A River" to be the last "Scott Storch track" Timberlake would ever receive.

"sample-based" producer Kanye West.[46] Even though West's tracks use material that is often clearly borrowed—including lengthy record samples from well-known, extant recordings—paradoxically, his productions are still very recognizable and can even be distinguished from those of similar sample-based producers, such as Just Blaze, who employs a similar "sample-based" process. The difference in sound between the two producers is a function of the unique equalization and mixing pallet that West emphasizes in recordings including, among other things, dramatically low-fidelity melodic and, to some degree, percussive material mixed well behind a hi-fidelity wall of sound. Like the case of The Neptunes, who intentionally do not quantize their signature rhythmic motif, West seems to emphasize the important signature component of his processing by panning important percussive elements in the mix (i.e. hi-hats) from hard-left to hard-right at regular intervals (often quarter-notes), thus isolating them both within the mix and helping the track to stand out as distinct from the sound of other sample-based producers.[47]

As I have demonstrated, sound-signatures can be communicated through the diverse aspects of song's non-verbal sonic character. This can range from the discrete sounds used in sequencing to the way these sounds are staged in the space of the recording, from the microrhythmic relationships of a looped measure to the larger structure of an entire composition. As has also been suggested, different producers favor the different types of signatures. Some rely almost exclusively on one, such as Irv Gotti, who identifies his productions by the inclusion of a single sound effect. Other producers use a combination of sound-signatures, for example, The Neptunes, who, in addition to being associated with particular sounds, are also connected to certain patterns, harmonies, structural features, and so on. Thus, a producer's sonic signature is not always defined by a single element; rather,

---

[46] "Sample-based" is a confusing title because it doesn't actually refer to the practice of sampling in literal terms. Timbaland's use of the aforementioned "Indian flute" sound, for example, which comes from royalty-free sample CDs such as *Deepest India,* is not considered sampling. Sample-based record production refers to the established practice of extracting copyrighted material, and specifically entire phrases and not just discrete sounds, from a canon of recordings that includes (though not exclusively) soul and slow disco from the 1970s and early 1980s—(see Kistner 2006).

[47] This unique style of phonographic staging can be found in the following West produced tracks: Ludacris' "Stand Up" (2003), Kanye West's "Slow Jams," "Through The Wire" (2004), Jay-Z's "Encore" (2003), Terror Squad's "Take Me Home" (2004), Kanye West's "Livin' A Movie" (2004), Brandy's "Talk About Our Love" (2004).

it requires in the process of listening (and analysis) that attention be paid to a number of different aspects of the recording simultaneously.

1.2.3: Name-signatures

1.2.3.1: Allonymic

Lastly, and perhaps most apparently, many producers' sonic signatures contain an element that closely resembles traditional conceptions of the signature in the plastic arts. This kind of signature, what I call an *allonymic signature,* features the producer's name sonically joined to the corpus of a recording text. Returning to this chapter's opening example, this was observed in the case in the previously discussed case of Michael Jackson whispering the word "Darkchild" at the beginning of "You Rock My World." Similarly, a majority of the recordings produced by The Neptunes feature a kind of spoken acknowledgement by the recording artist of their role as producers.[48] For example, Snoop Dogg's "Signs" (2004) begins with the rapper reciting the line, "It's legit, you know it's a hit, when The Neptunes and the Doggy-dog fin to spit." Interestingly, this statement draws a parallel between The Neptunes' production work, the appearance of "legitimacy," and the potential of the song to be a "hit." Similarly, in "I Just Wanna Luv You" (2000) rapper Jay-Z states: "...get you bling like The Neptunes sound." The term "bling" is hip-hop jargon referring to commercial success. In this example the artist even makes a direct reference to the producer's sonic signature: Jay-Z overdubs a vocal recreation of a specific synthesizer sound associated with The Neptunes in the background simultaneous to reciting the abovementioned line.[49]

In another example, tracks by producer Timbaland also tend to include verbal references to the producer's sonic signature. B2k's "What's My Name," for instance, which

---

[48] Examples include the following songs: N.O.R.E.'s "Superthug" (1998), Jay-Z's "I Just Wanna Luv U" Jay-Z (2000), Ludacris' "Southern Hospitality" (2003), Usher's "You Don't Have To Call"(2002), Ray-J's "Formal Invite" (2001), P. Diddy & Loon's "Show Me Your Soul" (2003), Pharrell's "Change Clothes" (2003), Snoop Dogg's "Signs" (2004), Jay-Z's "Excuse Me Miss" (2003).

[49] This sound resembles a descending glissando on a moog synthesizer.

begins with Timbaland's signature "Indian flute" sound, features lead singer Omarion proclaiming in the song's introduction, "This track honestly don't need no talking on it, but I got to do it: Big Timb." Having already pointed out how Timbaland's sonic signature can get communicated through individual sounds like the "Indian flute," one interpretation of Omarion's words could be the following: *The "Indian flute" sound clearly heard in this recording's introduction already identifies the track as a Timbaland production. However, since Timbaland's productions also tend to feature a verbal acknowledgement as part of his sonic signature, (and since the reference to Timbaland will connect this track (and me by extension) with an entire network of Timbaland hits), I'll do it anyway: "Big Timb."* This example, like the previous ones, points to the commercial success that a producer's signature can be seen to help initiate for artists. The fact that music is beginning to be judged according to its production credits *can* be beneficial to artists who work with respected producers and do a good job advertising the producer's signature within the musical text. However, as was true in the earlier example of Michael Jackson saying the word "Darkchild," I would contend that this application is not the fundamental purpose of the sonic signature; rather, it only shows how artists have been able to use sonic signatures to their advantage.

1.2.3.2: Autonymic

Finally, in what might be dubbed "sonic graffiti," some producers (especially urban producers) even use their own voices to "tag" an *autonymic signature* into recordings they produce.[50] Producer Jazze Pha's protocol, for example, is to open recordings with the line, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a Jazze Pha production."[51] Pha is by no means unique in this regard; the sound of Rodney Jerkins voice whispering the word "Darkchild," or Lil Jon screaming out "Lil Jon" are crucial elements of their own productions as well. Producer

---

[50] "Tagging" is a street term commonly used in graffiti culture to describe the act of inscribing simple and clear marks of identity on an object, for example a single word written with an ink marker on a mailbox (Ganz 2005). A "tag" is different from a "piece" (a spray painted bubble-lettered mural) in that its aim is to be clear, concise, and consistent. It is a symbol that graffiti artists use to define turf and mark territory.

[51] Pha's voice can be heard announcing his role as producer in the following tracks: Nelly's "Na-Nana-Na, Errtime" (2004), Ciara's "Goodies," "Looking At You," "One, Two Step" (2004).

Missy Elliot even uses the same grammatical structure as Pha, beginning a good number of works with the line, "This is a Missy Elliot Production."

The fact that Elliot uses the same words as Pha to sign her recordings illustrates an important component of name-signatures, namely that in addition to their function as a "spelled-out" stamp of production identity, they also communicate this information through non-verbal and purely sonic means. This is because it is not only the words and names being spoken that are important in establishing the producer's identity within a recording but also the specifics of the performative and phonographic staging being used.[52] On a performative level, the sound of producer Jermaine Dupri beginning a track with the line "Y'all know what this is," is as important in identifying his production role as the actual words spoken—something evidenced by the fact that Dupri *never* actually says "what this is" because the sound of his voice and the phrasing of these particular words are suggestive enough alone. In terms of phonographic staging, this purely sonic element of the name-signature is also revealed by the fact that Rodney Jerkins always filters his voice through the same "telephone" EQ effect. Similarly Jazzy Pha's *name-signature* features a recognizable re-performed echo of certain words, while Lil Jon's has as much to do with the intensity of the vocal performance as the particular words used to shout out "Lil Jon!" Finally, Missy Elliot's *name-signature* is defined not only by the line "This is a Missy Elliot production," but also by the elongated timing of the line "This…[breath]...is…[breath]…a…" and the unique register of her voice as one of the only prominent female urban producers. Hence, while the name-signature may seem more apparently couched within classical notions of the "signature" in art, this incarnation is by no means more recognizable or more deliberately placed in sound recordings than the types of sound-signatures I have previously described, beginning with Timbaland's "Indian flute" sound. Indeed, as part of a theme that will be developed in the following chapters, sonic signatures often work to communicate production authorship on a number of different levels simultaneously as both as name-signatures and sound-signatures.

---

[52] As will be examined later, this has to do with the fact that sonic signatures work on two levels: *logo* and *style.*

1.3: SUMMARY

This chapter has expanded the initial idea that sonic signatures exist in recordings and are an important feature of current North American pop record production. It has addressed the basic function of the sonic signature in allowing producers to imbed a production credit in a recording text that is clearly communicated through sound-transmission alone. The text has also illustrated that in the second degree, artists often advertise sonic signatures in recordings as a way of linking themselves, via the producer, to a network of existing recordings by other artists that they wish to be aurally connected with in the minds of listeners. As the text has illustrated, this parallels a larger phenomenon of "producer marketing" in mainstream North Ameircan music where increasingly bold references to producers are being made, both on CD packaging and within the music itself, in an attempt to profit from the brand power that a producer's name can be perceived to carry with it. As an earlier quote made clear, artists sometimes even stipulate in their contracts with producers that "signature" sound material appear in recordings. The previous survey showed that sonic signatures can include both non-verbal material (i.e., discrete sounds, abstract patterns, performative processing, phonographic staging, sound effects, orchestration, and structural features), as well as verbal material (such as *allonymic* and *autonymic* references to the producer) in their makeup.

Finally, this chapter's survey suggested in its conclusion that sonic signatures may also serve a purpose for producers attempting to draw upon the success of more established or highly consecrated producers in the field. A quote by producer Lil Jon seemed to indicate that some producers have attempted to mimic specific elements of *his* own sonic signature in *their* recordings as part of an attempt to play off of the success of his work. This idea that sonic signatures may be deliberately "forged" is an interesting one. For the present study, further analysis of this practice has the potential to shed light on, not only what sonic signatures actually consist of, but what larger purpose they serve, and how, as a whole, the field of record production and the sonic relationships between record producers are defined and negotiated by these identifying elements within recordings.

Chapter 2: Sonic Signature Forgeries of Rodney Jerkins

2.1: INTRODUCTION

While I have argued that sonic signatures are to be identified by listeners, this project does not base its account of sonic signatures on empirical research by submitting listeners to audio texts and drawing conclusions around this response.[53] Instead, the text organizes its research around what represents a naturally occurring study of sonic signatures taking place in the actual field of production. The previous chapter concluded by raising the possibility that sonic signatures might serve a kind of "third degree" function in the field. That is to say that in addition to being an important tool for allowing producers to credit themselves within recordings, as well as in enabling artists to credit their producers as part of an attempt to validate the quality of their music, sonic signatures may also serve as an important resource for lower-level producer who attempt to pass off their own productions as the work of more consecrated producers. For the present study, an examination of this practice of "sonic signature forgery" has potential to reveal a great deal about sonic signatures that might not otherwise be apparent. This is because in such examples, the work of dissecting a given sonic signature has already been done by figures most aware of them—record prodders themselves.

Accordingly, this chapter is dedicated to the analysis of two examples of "sonic signature forgery." More specifically, after a definition of what I mean by "forgery" and a brief survey of semiotic theory, I focus on two examples of works where producers have attempted to pass off their music as the production of Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. These songs are Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" (*Don't Stop The Music,* 2003) and Another Level's "What You Know About Me" (*From The Heart,* 2002). The selection of these recordings is justified by the fact that each exhibits what I argue to be important reproduced elements of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature. Moreover, their relationship to specific

---

[53] While the present project does not include surveys as part of its research methodology, it would be useful to have such research conducted in the future as part of an ongoing study of sonic signatures.

Jerkins-produced source texts is evident in both, making their case all the more convincing. Finally, insomuch these two recordings depict Jerkins' sonic signature are in many ways contrasting, they provide interesting insight into the range and diversity of the constitutive features that a sonic signature may contain.

2.2. Definition of Forgery

2.2.1: Reproductive Forgeries

Given the diverse range of legal, commercial, artistic, ethical, and academic meanings the term forgery can imply, it is imperative to first explain exactly what it will mean in the following discussion. In referring to forgery, I do not mean to invoke those uses of the term, mostly literary, that couch it within the confines of a "playful" context, (i.e., satire, parody, and so on). Instead, the type of forgery I will be referring to is of a serious nature and represents instances where a sonic signature has been (allegedly) consciously faked as part of a deliberate attempt to pass off one producer's work as that of another (in the cases examined by the present chapter, this "other" being Rodney Jerkins).

In his essay "Art and Authenticity" (1976), Nelson Goodman presents a valuable discussion and subsequent interpretation of the concept of forgery in the plastic arts, much of which I will borrow for the following analysis. Goodman begins his own examination of the term by presenting a commonly recognized example of forgery in art: the case of a painting by Rembrandt (1606-1669) where a perceptibly exact replica has been produced by an unknown artisan for the purpose of fooling some unwitting buyer into mistaking it for an original and purchasing it at an inflated price. Interestingly, Goodman makes the claim that this kind of forgery of an existing work is not possible in music. This is because music, like all written languages, according to Goodman, has developed a system of notation that forces its "identity conditions" to be fixed. Thus, the musical text is reproducible without distorting or obscuring its original meaning or value. For example, any performance of a Beethoven symphony is as genuine as the next, assuming the correct notes are performed, dynamic markings respected, etc. This is because the score contains exactly the same

musical information as the original manuscript.[54] Goodman uses this apparent distinction between music and painting to set up a broader dichotomy between the "autographic" arts, i.e., forms where there is only one genuine instance of a work and the "allographic" arts, among these photography, literature, or music, where the work of art is not the object itself, but the inherently reproducible information that this object contains within it.

Reexamining Goodman's conclusion, I would suggest that the sound recording text, unlike performances of musical scores, is limited to a single genuine instance and as such has the potential to be forged.[55] As an anecdotal example, consider an experience I had in Bangkok, Thailand in January of 2005. Soon after sitting down for lunch in an indoor café in the Chatuchak Market district, I began following along with the familiar melody of The Backstreet Boys' "Drowning" (2000) playing through speakers recessed in the ceiling above me. As the song developed, a level of incongruence between my aural expectations based on previous listening and what I was actually hearing materialized. As this discrepancy continued, it became clear that I was not actually listening to The Backstreet Boys singing, but to an excellent imitation of them by an anonymous group of Thai singers (the accent was subtle yet apparent). Importantly, the track was also a product of the deliberate work of an unknown producer to re-sequence the original song's instrumental parts, process and mix the vocals in likeness to the source recording, and so on. Interestingly, the liner notes of this commercially available Mix-CD listed the track as "Drowning" by The Backstreet Boys.[56] Thus, I had been listening to something Goodman claimed not to be possible: a musical forgery of an existing work. Indeed, even the waiter who owned the CD, as well as the other members of the restaurant staff, all had no idea they were not hearing the "genuine" version of the Backstreet Boys' song in question.

---

[54] In the case of a notated score, it should be pointed out that Goodman is clearly thinking in terms of reproduction of the content (the musical notes), rather than the physical artifact (i.e. Beethoven's manuscript) which, if forged, would be more an "artistic" forgery than a "musical" forgery,

[55] A similar conclusion has been suggested by Serge Lacasse (2002).

[56] While I have not been able to find conclusive evidence to support this claim, I suspect that even though Thailand's intellectual property law forbids literal reproductions of copyrighted recordings without permission (as the confiscated CDs on display in Bangkok's airport make clear), it probably allows for the kind of deceptive or "allosonic" recorded re-performance occurring in this recording. My basis for this assumption has to do with the traditional importance of karaoke and in Thai and pan-Asian culture in general—accompanying family gatherings and ceremonial events, marriages, showers, the celebration of the new year, and so on [Wienker-Piepho 1995]. Making karaoke remakes illegal would of course threaten this cultural tradition.

2.2.2: Imagined Forgeries

While I have established that phonographic forgeries exist, for the most part, the examples looked at in the present study will not contain a literal 1:1 relationship to a given source work (like my experience in Thailand). Rather, the sonic signature forgeries to be examined will reflect in their aesthetic the overall style of a specific author. These works are composed of intertwined approximations and mutations of key elements of a number of existing works by a given producer. Therefore, the forged work takes on the effect of seeming to have been produced by producer *X*, when it fact it was by producer *Y*.

Goodman acknowledges the existence of this genre of forgery, what he refers to as the forgery of an "imagined work," in the history of art. He describes, for example, how throughout his life, Dutch artist van Meegeren (1889-1940) was able to successfully pass off and sell his own paintings as those of his compatriot Vermeer (1632-1675), who lived two centuries earlier, but whose fame only manifested itself posthumously at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to art historian Goebel: "Van Meegeren was a painstakingly methodical forger [in that] the painting not only had to be executed in Vermeer's style and skill, it had to look ancient as well" (Goebel 2005: [1]). Hence, even though each piece van Meegeren painted was original in the sense that it did not literally copy an existing painting by Vermeer, his work employed rhetorical and thematic devices that convincingly called to mind the overall style of Vermeer, thus appearing to be genuine instances of previously unknown works by the increasingly celebrated seventeenth century artist.[57]

Although not acknowledged by Goodman, this kind of forgery is also possible in music. One example of this is found in John Schmab's well-known attempt to write Johannes Brahms' 8th Symphony.[58] Combining important thematic, melodic, harmonic, and orchestral material from a wide range of Brahms' orchestral and recital music and using period ink and manuscript paper, etc., Schmab tried to convincingly create what would

---

[57] This represents what Gérard Genette (1997) calls *serious pastiche*.
[58] See Griffel (1975/1989).

appear in every way to be a genuine instance of Brahms' work upon discovery. Interestingly, like Vermeer's forgeries of Van Meegeren, which were apparently produced to prove the ignorance of contemporary Dutch art critics, after announcing what he had done, Schmab claimed he intended his forgery as a message to the musical establishment illustrating that regardless of his preference for an antiquated style of composition, he was in fact capable of writing music that deserved serious attention. For Schmab, receiving this attention required attaching the prestige of Johannes Brahms' name to his own work.

Turning to popular music, it could be argued that the recordings of The Rutles also represent examples of imagined forgeries. In "The Rutles and the Use of Specific Models in Musical Satire" (1991), musicologist John Covach analyzes a collection of songs by the group created as a fictitious parody of The Beatles for the 1978 "mockumentary" *The Rutles: All you need Is cash.* In his analysis, the author illustrates how the group's compositions use a carefully designed analytic model to construct a simultaneous "congruity/incongruity dialectic" between their own songs and extant ones by the Beatles (Covach 1991: 4). While the visual imagery of the documentary renders this incongruity humorous, on a purely sonic level I would argue that no information is presented suggesting that it is not in fact the music of the Beatles. In other words, based on a strictly aural analysis, The Rutles music represents a kind of imagined forgery—something empirically confirmed by playing some of their music for an avid Beatles fan who was shocked by the fact that he had never heard "*this* Beatles' song before." Whether the Rutles' music represents a parody, as Covach's interpretation puts forward, or a forgery, as I have suggested above, depends, at least in *some* cases, entirely upon the circumstances of presentation: the music alone appears to be the work of The Beatles, while the music accompanied by the documentary's visual imagery transforms the music into that of a group making a spoof of The Beatles.[59] Thus, I would contend that how music is

[59] I have italicized the word *some* to acknowledge a convincing argument put forward by Serge Lacasse in *The Musical Work: Reality or invention?* (2000). In his discussion of the Rutles' music, Lacasse contends that one has to know that at least a few of the Rutles songs *derive* from actual and easily Beatles songs. Thus, according to Lacasse, such examples are not pastiches, but parodies—presenting a hypertextual relationship similar to what Genette (1997) calls "contamination."

interpreted, categorized, and judged, depends as much on the context of its reception as it does on the content and performance of the music itself.

The same paradox is explored specifically in relation to forgeries within the text of Jorge Luis Borges' "Pierre Menard, Author of Quixote" (Borges 1996). This short fiction tells the story of 19th century French eccentric Pierre Menard's attempt to (re) write the first chapter of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* having never read the actual text. In order to complete this seemingly impossible task, Menard set out to recreate the circumstances behind the original work's "history of production." Thus, Menard studied Cervantes biography, retraced his footsteps, read the same books he read, revisited the villages he lived in, and even attempted to fight in the same wars that Cervantes had (all of which had ended more than three hundred years earlier). At the end of this fantastic process of biographical immersion, Menard sat down and composed a text that is word for word identical to the first chapter of Cervantes' *Quixote.* "Pierre Menard, Author of Quixote" is written in the form of a book review, more specifically, a critique of the first chapter of Menard's *Quixote.* Interestingly, the reviewing author (Borges) concludes that Menard's work is utterly inferior to the original based on the fact that it was written 300 years later. In making this comment, Borges illustrates that the significance of even two identical works can be quite different, depending on the *perceived* context of their creation, as well as the *actual* context of their reception.

As these examples illustrate, a successfully imagined forgery must not only create a convincing aesthetic surface, but must also construct a similar contextual history of production to ensure that the work is interpreted according to the same paradigmatic parameters as the original. The importance of this highly contextual aspect of forgery is recognized in Goodman's ultimate description of the term, one that the present study will borrow as its final definition as well: "A forgery of a work of art is an object falsely purporting to have the same history of production requisite as the (or an) original of the work" (177).[60]

---

[60] This definition, as a side note, does a good job of separating the practice of "sampling," from sonic signature forgery. In the case of sampling, the borrowing is from another era, from another "circle of musicians" in traditional musicological terms. The new work is not purporting to have the same history as an

2.3: THEORIES OF MUSICAL MEANING

Previously, the text put forward the idea that imagined forgeries do not rely upon the literal reproduction of existing works, but are instead composed of a combination of reproductive mutations or approximations of key elements uniting the creative body of the forged author. While such stylistic approximations are not exactly identical to features in a particular source work, they are nonetheless often designed to take on a meaning analogous to specific events and features of existing works. For example, we might say that in the case of a painting intended as an imagined forgery, a distinct vase of flowers may be inserted to call to mind the significance of a number of potted plants that appear throughout the works of the artist attempting to be referenced. While a vase and a pot are not exact in likeness, as a result of their contextual positioning within the painting, they may come to assume the same significance—the latter recalling the meaning of the former in existing works.[61]

With its multiplicity of parameters and attributes, however, the sound recording represents an entirely more complex arena for such stylistic analogies to take place. For example, in addition to comparative references within melody, harmony, and orchestration, facets of the recording as specific and isolated as track amplitude, panning, processing, filtration, space, and frequency, may contain important information about production identity. Given the diverse parameters of the recording text for musical analogies to take place, it is necessary that the present study defines how, on a basic level, meaning is communicated in sound.

Semiotics, a field of study pioneered by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, is the "science that studies the life of signs within society" (Saussure 1916: 33). According to Saussure, meaning is formed and organized by signs—signs which contain two complimentary parts: signifier and signified. Today, while continuing to revolve around the

original; and, in fact, as a practice, the difference of history is generally emphasized through practices like lo-fi-ing, pitch-shifting, scratching, awkward looping, and so on—all helping to emphasize sampled material as such (part of how this practice creates meaning by situating old musical excerpts within new contexts). It is because of this, that sampling has created a canon for itself—old soul records, slow disco, and so on—which, as it is generally recognized within the community, has no sense of ownership, authorship, and so on. It is for this reason that the practice of sampling, heavily overemphasized in literature on hip-hop in general, should not be confused with forgery and the discussion that follows.

[61] This is similar to Barthes' previously discussed "semiotic matrices" in the language of fashion magazines.

study of the process of signification, semiotics has expanded far beyond its linguistic origins in both application and terminology, now integrated within fields as diverse as psychoanalysis and anthropology. In this process of expansion and transformation, various thinkers and schools have revised the original equation of "the signified and signifier… [as] components of the *sign*" (Barthes 1963: 35). Nevertheless, as a field, semiotics continues to be concerned with the semantic organization of meaning, "how everything in life sends out a coded message in a similar way" (Peck and Coyle: 145).

Semiotics represents an important analytical tool in understanding how meaning is communicated in works of art and literature. Critical theorists, for example, have used semiotic theory to explain the structures and codes of signification within different genres of storytelling and to show what systems of knowledge are needed to understand and decipher them. Some classical music scholars have also adopted a semiotic approach to analysis.[62] Within the framework of popular music studies, seminal works by authors Alf Björnberg (1992) and Phil Tagg (1999) have shown how a semiotic approach can prove especially valuable in the study of recorded music given the extent to which popular music is defined by cultural codes and social systems of interpretation.

As a basic example of how semiotic theory can be applied to the organization of meaning of non-verbal sonic material, Phil Tagg points out that the sound of a fire alarm represents a signifier that signifies, among other things, danger (Tagg 1999: [2]). For the present study, I will make one addition to this practical equation by including Umberto Eco's (1976) distinction between referential and emotive meaning. Applying these two subcategories of semantic meaning to the example of the fire alarm, it is possible to say that the ringing fire bell signifies the fact of fire while at the same time emoting 'danger!' For the present study, this distinction is important in that sonic signatures not only create referential meaning by calling to mind the name of a specific producer, but also emotive information relating to how a song is instinctively judged and evaluated in reference to this

---

[62] Classical music studies generally utilize Peirce's system of semiotics centered around the terms icon and index, as well as the work of Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1975)—in many ways is a continuation of Peirce's theory (examples include Agawu 1991 and Martinez 2000).

knowledge of production. Thus, Eco's work will serve throughout as an important additional theoretical ingredient to the analysis.

2.4: Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning"

2.4.1: Context

Having provided some theoretical background on the concepts of forgery and sonic meaning, the remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to analysis of the first two examples of sonic signature forgery looked at in this project. In doing so, as part of a rigorous musicological analysis, the text will incorporate various visual tools including charts, spectrographs, and screen shots from digital sequencers, all of which will help articulate the sometimes sonic relationship between the texts in question. In addition, some of the author's firsthand insight into aspects of the specific tracks, producers, and in some cases, individual sounds in question will also be incorporated.

The track "Keep This Fire Burning," performed by Swedish recording artist Robyn, was produced in 2004 by the Danish production team of Cutfather and Jo (C&J). This is the first recording to be examined as an example of sonic signature forgery in the present study. Specifically, I will argue in the following analysis that this recording was deliberately put together by C&J in such a way as to sound like a Rodney Jerkins production. Musicologist J. Peter Burkholder argues that the best way to begin making the case for what he calls "musical borrowing" is by providing whatever biographical evidence can be found linking the composers in question (Burkholder 2001). In this particular example, apart from a brief summary of producers C&J's work on their official website (<http://www.cutfather.com>), I am aware of no biographical information connecting the duo to producer Rodney Jerkins. This website, however, does appear to imply a strong link between the two musicians. To begin with the layout and formatting of C&J's site includes the use of lexical peculiarities that mirror the distinct formatting of the official Rodney

"Darkchild" Jerkins website (<http://www.darkchild.com>).[63] This connection is supported by the fact that one of the central images highlighted on C&J's homepage is the cover of Brandy's *Full Moon,* an album almost exclusively produced by Rodney Jerkins. Elsewhere in the site, the appearance of this particular image is explained by the fact that C&J made an unofficial remix of *Full Moon's* title track in 2002. C&J's decision to remix this track indicates that they have some knowledge of Rodney Jerkins' work. Moreover, the fact that *Full Moon* is one of four albums prominently displayed on C&J's homepage arguably represents an attempt to blur the distinction between their own productions and those of Rodney Jerkins. Such a hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the image of *Full Moon* on C&J's website is accompanied by the caption (and link): "Get the latest news on what's happening at the C&J studio and who's currently recording."[64] I am aware of no evidence suggesting Brandy has ever set foot in the Danish duo's studio, therefore, the validity of such a claim is dubious, if not outright questionable.

Having described some of the visually ascertainable information connecting C&J and Rodney Jerkins, as non-musical precedent to the analysis, let us turn to the music itself and consider the suggested example of sonic signature forgery at hand. Specifically, it is my contention that in their production of the track "Keep This Fire Burning," producers C&J borrowed a significant amount of material from two Rodney Jerkins produced tracks from the previously discussed *Full Moon* album, namely the recordings "I Thought" and "What About Us?." In the following analysis, I will focus primarily on two levels of this sonic modeling. In the case of "I Thought," I will address how a unique microrhythmic relationship evident in a number of Jerkins-produced recordings, including this one, have been deliberately and painstakingly recreated within the instrumental portion of "Keep This Fire Burning." In the case of a link to "What About Us?," I will attempt to convey how a unique orchestral string sound, associated with a good number of Jerkins' productions, and especially apparent in this particular song, has also been deliberately incorporated into C&J's production of "Keep This Fire Burning."

---

[63] The original Darkchild website (now revised) ran roughly from 2001 until the summer of 2005.

[64] Website: <http://www.cutfather.com> (visited 5 September, 2005).

2.4.2: Relation to Brandy's "What About Us?"

Beginning with the latter of these two intertextual reference points, consider the string sample that opens Robyn's "Keep this Fire Burning." This particular sound stands out in the recording, not only as a function of its anticipated rhythmic placement and accentuated amplitude, but also as a result of its unique intrinsic sonic character, which seems to fade in from far-away to close-by while simultaneously pitch-bending up in frequency. While this discordant string glissando is heard as significant because of its unique attributes as a sound, it is also interpreted as such based on the intertextual connection it makes with a number of Rodney Jerkins' productions. In the case of these so-called "Darkchild" productions, the string patch I am referring to can be heard in songs such as Brandy's "Full Moon" (2002), Deborah Cox's "Like I Did," (2002), Jadakiss' "J-A-D-A," (*Honey* [soundtrack] 2003).[65]

The presence of this sound in the first cited recording, "What About Us?," contains a history of production that helps explain not only how significant this particular sound is, but why, in general, specific sounds play an important role in creating sonic signatures—as well as in forging them.[66] To my knowledge, the string sound in question first appears in NSync's "Up Against The Wall" (*Celebrity,* 2002), a track produced, not by Jerkins, but by Orlando-based Canadian production duo, RipRock n' Alex G. (Greggs). Having also worked on the aforementioned 'NSync album (producing the title-track "Celebrity"), Rodney Jerkins came into contact with this production duo's work and, as my own conversations with Jerkins in 2002 revealed, was intrigued by the originality of their sounds—among them, the string patch in question. Near the end of 2000, Jerkins began working with Miami-based engineer, Fabian Marisciullo, who also was a friend of Alex Greggs; soon thereafter, Greggs was invited to collaborate with Jerkins on a number of productions over the course of the following year. However, rather than serving as a

---

[65] Interestingly, "What About Us?" and "Keep This Fire Burning" share the same key, which would suggest the possibility of (autographic) sampling. I would argue however that in the same way Thai knock offs of The Backstreet Boys albums get around local copyright laws by having the performance recreated. In this case the patch might have been created with alternate source sounds, but afterwards adjusted and modeled to mimic (and legally so) Jerkins' characteristic strings and arranged in the same key and register.

[66] The following narration of historical events is based on informal, first hand discussions in 2002 and 2003 with the personages involved.

producer, Greggs was utilized as a digital-effects specialist, rendering the elaborate digital vocal and instrumental processing found through Michael Jackson's album *Invincible* (2001) and Brandy's *Full Moon* (2002), as well as adding some of his own sounds to the finished productions. Interestingly, during Gregg's post-production work on the track "What About Us?," the sliding string sound in question was actually programmed into the recording by this producer and not Jerkins. Nevertheless, as the album's executive producer, Jerkins' received full credit for the song's production, and accordingly, for listeners around the world (unaware of this history), the sound was interpreted as a feature of Rodney Jerkins' sonic arsenal. Arguably producers C&J reached a similar conclusion in Denmark, and thus, copied it as part of a reference to Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature in their production of "Keep This Fire Burning." In fact, as I have illustrated, they are actually featuring in their attempted forgery a string patch that was itself borrowed by Jerkins from another producer.

2.4.3: Relation to Brandy's "I Thought"

In addition to the importance of discrete sound patches, the last chapter's survey of sonic signatures highlighted a broad range and diversity of other kinds of sonic material relating to authorship within the current field of mainstream record production. While in cases like that described above, individual sounds help imply a clear sense of individual production authorship (regardless of how they are sequenced into a track), in others, distinct rhythmic patterns also specify such an identity regardless of the actual sounds used in the sequences. Thus, turning to a second component of the sonic signature forgery within "Keep This Fire Burning," consider the following (Table 2.1) comparison of a number of broad stylistic features this track shares with another Jerkins' produced track, "I Thought," also from Brandy's *Full Moon*:

Table 2.1: Comparison, key features—"I Thought" and "Keep This Fire Burning"

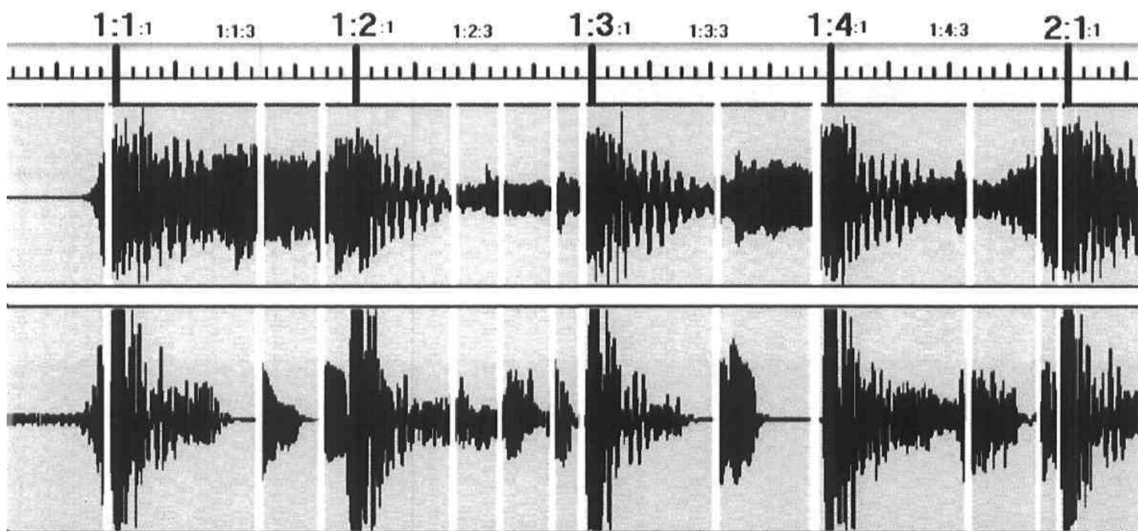
FEATURES \ SOURCE	BRANDY 'I THOUGHT' (2001) PRODUCER: RODNEY JERKINS	ROBYN 'KEEP THIS FIRE BURNING' (2003) PRODUCER: CUTFATHER & JOE
THE 'FEEL'	Swinging (32nd note anticipation before snare, snare comes too early)	Same as "I Thought"
DRUM PATTERN	Kick-Hat-Clap-Stop (no variation)	Same as "I Thought" (Kick occasionally doubles clap)
CHORD PROG.	Two measures: iv, two measures: I (no variation, typical Jerkins progression).	Same as "I Thought"
BASS PATTERN	'Cutting' synth bass—up octave on fourth beat; sounds 'bouncy'.	Same as "I Thought"
HANDCLAP	On off-beat in the breakdown	Off-beats throughout (excessive)
VOCAL ARRANGEMENT	Organized into independent 'sources' or clusters, some sampled; layering	Same as "I Thought"
TEMPO	101 Bpm	Same as "I Thought"
'FUNKY' ELEC. GUITAR	Only in "breakdown" section	Used throughout
'HIGH SYNTH'	Buzzy sounding, (repeats same note)	Same as "I Thought" (hovers around a few notes)
"INSTRUMENT" VOCAL EFFECT	Sampled vocalization "wooo," pitch-shifted to outline chords (beginning in second b-section)	Sampled vocal phrase "ohh-ohh-ohh-ohh-ohh," repeats exactly (in choruses)
SUCTION KICK	Bridges the 'phone call' interlude to the real song	Used throughout on every fourth kick (overdoing it)

As Table 2.1 suggests, a number of important concrete sounds and sound-patches found in "I Thought" have been recreated in the aesthetic of "Keep This Fire Burning." These include the quality of the synthesized bass, the 'funk' guitar, the mid-range lead, and the handclap, among others. A wide range of abstract and performative parameters are also shared, for example, a 16th note anticipation that precedes the handclap, de-quantification of snare placement, the 'kick-hat-clap-stop' drum pattern, the partially quantized bass-line alternating between simple and compound meter, and so on.

Having outlined some of the broad musical parameters, both concrete and abstract, uniting "I Thought" and "Keep This Fire Burning," I would like to focus on one abstract relationship in particular: the distinct rhythmic feel that both songs employ. This relationship is evident in the process of listening to both songs. Playing the songs back-to-back, then layering them on top of each other confirms that on a macro-rhythmic level, with regard to tempo and structural changes, the two songs are essentially identical. Moreover, a simple waveform comparison of the beginning of the two tracks shows that their peaks line up at precisely the same points—indicating that the individual phrases are themselves organized in similar patterns as well.

The sophistication of the rhythmic reproduction, however, only becomes fully apparent when a metered grid is applied to the two waveforms, revealing that while the peaks of both tracks consistently line up, there is a strong irregularity in the correspondence of these peaks to the metric grid itself. This suggests that the two recordings employ more than just an identical macro-rhythmic conformity in terms of their phrasing but an identical microrhythmic structure in relation to their pronounced deviation from the meter as well. This relationship is highlighted in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1: Waveform Comparison of "I Thought" and "Keep This Fire Burning"



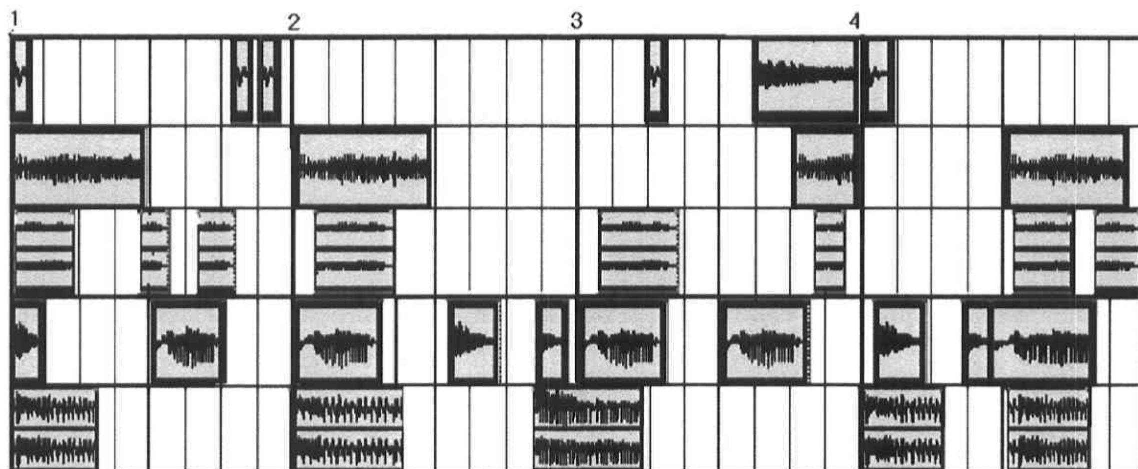
In the above (Figure 2.1), the higher waveform represents the introduction to "I Thought," the lower waveform the introduction to "Keep This Fire Burning." The white lines highlight common peak points (both ahead and behind tempo—indicated by the closest subdivision on the corresponding metric grid) observed in the two waveforms. These visually illustrate the microrhythmic deviation that the two tracks share. As both songs are loop-based, further diachronic analysis is not needed to convince that the microrhythmic parallels seen above repeat throughout the entirety of the two recordings. What is suggestive of an element of forgery within "Keep This Fire Burning," is that given that both songs were sequenced using digital sound sources and computerized recording tools, such microrhythmic variation would normally not occur in either track, let alone in *both*. Thus, to understand the sophistication of the forgery taking place, it is important to consider the two different "histories of production," recalling the words of Goodman, that it can be assumed were used in the production of an identical microrhythmic surface between these two tracks.

In one of my earliest conversations with Rodney Jerkins—more than a year before "Keep This Fire Burning" was produced—I specifically asked him what he used to create

such a unique rhythmic feel in his productions, referring to the example of Brandy's "What About Us?" in particular. Jerkins showed me how the Akai MPC 3000 could be used to filter play-recorded material through a series of "groove" algorithms to alter the timing of notes and consequently wobble the overall pulse of looped material. While these presets were originally designed to help create a live feel in manually programmed music, by tweaking their parameters and through repeated application, they could be combined to imbue an entirely unnaturally loose rhythmic feel to a piece of music.

Sometime after Jerkins' tutorial I decided to attempt to recreate the instrumental of "What About Us?," incorporating what I had learned into a somewhat different procedure. Specifically, I used MOTU's Digital Performer 3.0 (the digital sequencing software I was using on a computer in a different part of the studio) to *visually* reprogram the instrumental of "What About Us?," including as many similar real-time sounds as I could find in my computer's sample database. I soon discovered that more important than matching the quality of the sounds themselves in creating a convincing version of "What About US?" was recreating the unique microrhythmic relationships that gave the track its unique feel. Thus, I decided to import a mono-waveform of "What About Us?" into my computer's sequencer and to shift my own sounds slightly ahead and behind time in accordance with the microrhythmic variation in the peaks of the original track. Through this process I observed where (and tried to determine *why*) deviations from the metric grid occurred and slowly began to organize this information to form patterns and rules. Eventually, the song's microrhythmic code became clear to me; I began to understand, in visual terms, exactly how the strange groove of "What About Us?" had been created. To illustrate the results of the described procedure, I have included a four measure (indicated by numbering) cross-section of five out of the twenty-five or so instrumental tracks used in my own remake (Figure 2.2):

Figure 2.2: Sequenced excerpt from Brandy's "What About Us?"



As can be observed in Figure 2.2, many of the sequenced sounds fall off the indicated metric grid. Based on this experience attempting to recreate the de-quantized groove of Rodney Jerkins production, I would argue that C&J had no choice but to also attempt to recreate the microrhythmic relationships of "I Thought" in their production of "Keep This Fire Burning" using a technique similar to the one I have outlined above. This is arguably the only feasible approach because recreating the MPC groove functions as originally employed by Rodney Jerkins in the source recording would involve too many setting variables. Moreover, play-recording a likeness of "I Thought," track by track, would not yield the detailed microrhythmic similarities that the two tracks share. Thus, in order to preserve the exact feel of the original track, and yet present it within the context of a new song ("Keep This Fire Burning" is by no means identical as a song to "I Thought"), C&J must have completed a visual analysis to understand and subsequently recreate the groove of "I Thought" in their production of "Keep This Fire Burning."

The claim regarding what I see as an apparent contrast in the two track's histories of production is also supported, I would argue, by an overall difference in the aesthetic of the two recordings. As the previous waveform comparison illustrated, the peaks of "Keep This Fire Burning," while appearing in the same places as those of "I Thought," are more rigid and less gradual in their shape. In terms of the sound itself, it could be said that the instrumentation of "I Thought" flows smoothly and is even at times *pianistic*, while, on the

other hand, "Keep This Fire Burning" contains jerky instrumental melodies and awkward, unnatural intervals that sound individually placed. This description is consistent with the sound of visually programmed music in general and could be used to describe the music of a wide range of visual-based producers from BT to Alex Greggs. "Keep This Fire Burning" also sounds visually programmed because of the strange quality of its instrumentation, which is not based on stock keyboard presets, but sounds that appear distorted in ways reflective of the harsh transposition functions of visual sequencers like ProTools and Digital Performer, rather than the smooth pitch-shift function of the MPC.[67]

This last comment regarding differences in equipment, I would suggest, exposes an important flaw in "Keep This Fire Burning" regarding its ability to resonate with audiences. This is because Rodney Jerkins, like the majority of well-known urban producers (including Dallas Austin, Jermaine Dupree, Dr. Dre, Lil Jon, Jazze Pha, and Kanye West) uses a thoroughly hands-on approach to beat making centered around the Akai MPC 3000. In fact, based on the time I spent watching Jerkins in his studio, visually oriented software was only used during the recording and editing of vocals, representing the last stage of a song's production history. Danish software company Emagic offered the producer a lucrative sponsorship agreement in exchange for using their program AudioLogic to create some aspect of his instrumental tracks. However, considering the cultural veneration and consecration of the (now classic) Akai MPC 3000 among largely black American urban producers, Jerkins refusal of Emagic's offer could easily have been as motivated by his desire to continue to be perceived as an "authentic" hands-on urban producer, as by a personal unwillingness to deviate from a method of production that up until that point had worked well.

The discography of Danish producers C&J, on the other hand, which lists their first commercial success as the production of the Swedish dance hit "Cool Summer" (Ace of Base, *Cruel Summer,* 1998) situates the production duo within a larger European school of producers and remixers emerging at the late 1990s (including William Orbit, Aphex Twin, and the late Denniz Pop) known for pioneering the use of computer-driven, visually-based methods of production. An advanced knowledge of visual programming techniques, I

[67] This observation is based on my own experience using both production tools.

submit, was precisely what allowed C&J to recreate so many aspects of the performative aspects of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature in "Keep This Fire Burning." However, even though C&J's production on some level appears to share much of the same aesthetic surface as "I Thought," their process of visual production, evident in the sound of the recording itself, also serves to create an important difference between this production and Rodney Jerkins' music—not so much in terms of *who* the track appears to sound like stylistically (it does in fact sound like the work of Rodney Jerkins), but *what equipment* it sounds like was used to make the track (it does not sound like it was made using equipment associated with Rodney Jerkins' studio).

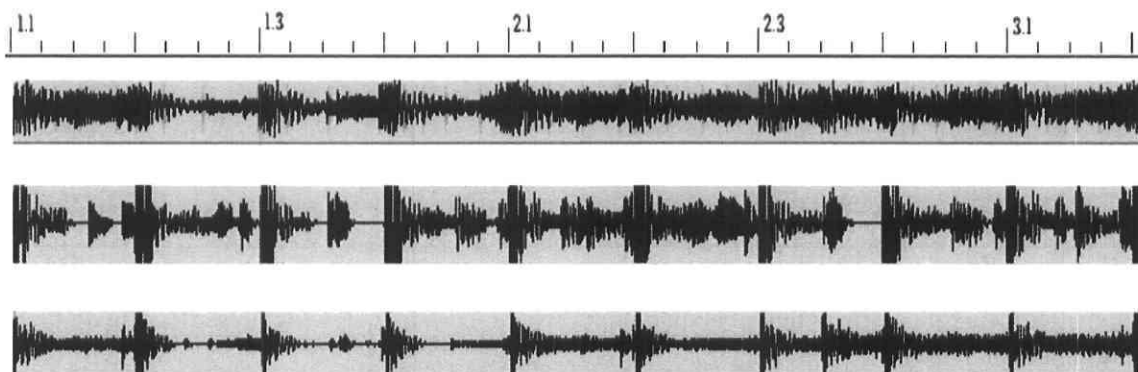
The above conclusion calls into question the larger issues of motivation and reception, both of which have not thus far been thoroughly addressed in exploring the sonic signature forgery at hand. What exactly were producers C&J hoping to achieve with their painstakingly reproductive production of "Keep This Fire Burning?" What would be gained by convincing listeners they were actually listening to the work of Rodney Jerkins? Borrowing semiotic theory, it could be suggested that in the example of the forgery at hand, the overall sound of this track represents a signifier intended to create the realization: "this is a Darkchild track." Recalling Eco's previously addressed theory, however, this only represents the middle step of a two-fold semiotic process that is supposed to evoke an emotive, value-based response, namely, "because this sounds like a Darkchild track, it is hip, cool, a definite hit, I like it."

Reviews, however, suggest that "Keep This Fire Burning" does not complete this semiotic two part semantic equation. On the one hand, referentially, "Keep This Fire Burning" succeeds in recalling the work to Rodney Jerkins. This is expressed in one reviewer's comment that the "single is an original song with a slinky 4/4 Rodney Jerkins-esque production" (Anonymous 2005b). On the other hand, the song is interpreted as an approximation of Jerkins' work, rather than as an example of it. As another review explains: "The beat sounds *almost* like a Darkchild-production" (Anonymous 2005c). A criticism of the work in the Swedish daily newspaper *Aftonbladet* (1 December 2005) even hints at the intended deception of the track, proclaiming: "That the producers [of 'Keep This Fire Burning'] listened to Brandy's or Michael Jackson's latest albums is directly

recognizable in the music. The sonic influence strongly resembles the formula of hit-maker Rodney Jerkins" (Anonymous 2005d).

Thus, while it is apparent that "Keep This Fire Burning" succeeds in calling to mind the productions of Rodney Jerkins, it is also clear that it fails to convincingly transform itself into an actual example of his work in the minds of listeners. Perhaps most indicative of this failure is the fact that after the C&J-produced version of "Keep This Fire Burning" (sung by Robyn) was largely ignored after its domestic release in Sweden, the song was remade (both in terms of production and performance) and subsequently appears on for British R&B singer Beverly Knight's album *Affirmation* (2004). What is significant about this remake for the present study is that the second track's producers (not C&J) intentionally shied away from creating a strong resemblance to "I Thought," "What About Us?" or any other work by Rodney Jerkins, as found in the original production. In the second version the instrumentation is completely altered—the string sound is properly tuned and live sounding, the bouncy synthesizer patches mixed at a substantially lower volume, and so on. Similarly, the rhythmic patterning is entirely redone, with most of the microrhythmic variation removed or at least downplayed. In the end, this second version of "Keep This Fire Burning" contains a generic sounding R&B aesthetic and does not, I would argue, recall any specific features of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature in its production. In the following waveform comparison (Figure 2.3), this differing resemblance between C&J's production and the Beverly Knight remake to the alleged source text is highlighted.

Figure 2.3: Differences between two versions of "Keep This Fire Burning" in terms of microrhythmic resemblance to "I Thought"



In the above graphic, the highest observed wave-from represents Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning," the lowest, the Beverly Knight remake, and the middle waveform, Brandy's "I Thought." While the Beverley Knight remake does employ a few of the microrhythmic features present in "I Thought" (i.e., the hiccup before beat 1.2), in general, the "slinky 4/4 Rodney Jerkins-esque" feel of the C&J production is markedly less pronounced in this version of the song. From 2.4 to 3.2, for example, the Knight remake does not include the subtle microrhythmic particularities observed in the other two tracks.

I would suggest that the fact that the Knight remake of "Keep This Fire Burning" resembles "I Thought" to a much smaller degree than the original C&J-produced version of the song highlights three important points pertaining to the analysis of sonic signature forgery in the latter. First, the deliberate omission of modeling from the second version reveals how real and intentional the sonic modeling was in the first. Second, the lack of this modeling in the remake shows how superficial and ornamental it was insomuch as the Beverly Knight recording does not contain these features and yet retains the compositional identity of the song itself (the two versions of "Keep This Fire Burning" clearly sound like the same song). Finally, since C&J's version of "Keep This Fire Burning" needed to be

remade in the first place, it is fair to say that as an attempted sonic signature forgery, the work failed to achieve its desired goal.[68]

Why did it fail? For one, we have already examined how and why the track sounds visually sequenced—a feature not easily reconcilable with Rodney Jerkins' work. At the same time, we also know from the previous analysis that the C&J production duplicated, with a great deal of sophistication, a significant amount of material from Rodney Jerkins' "sonic signature" as observed in relation to the two songs looked at from Brandy's *Full Moon.* Perhaps, the failure of the attempted forgery has to do with the context of its creation and reception; Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" was released over two years after *Full Moon*—an eternity in the fast-paced world of pop music. It was, as we have already seen, this same issue that denigrated Pierre Menard's version of *Quixote* as vastly inferior to Cervantes' perceptibly identical text.

I would propose, however, that temporality is not the main factor revealing the forgery in "Keep This Fire Burning." Rather, I would suggest that the failure of the attempted forgery has to do with musical aesthetic. Specifically, there are two fundamental discrepancies between the surface of Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" (from this point I will only refer to the Robyn version unless stated otherwise) and the well-known attributes of Rodney Jerkins' sonic-signature that render the former an unconvincing representation of the latter. The first of these shortcomings has to do with an important element of Jerkins' sonic signature, only briefly discussed up to this point in the text, markedly *absent* from the aesthetic surface of "Keep This Fire Burning." The second failure has to do with elements of Jerkins' sonic signature that are altogether *too present* in "Keep This Fire Burning."

Beginning with the second of these shortcomings, it is plausible to propose that "Keep This Fire Burning" is not a convincing Rodney Jerkins production as a result of the fact that it sounds too much like one. I have already illustrated how C&J's work combines many stylistic elements from a number of extant Jerkins productions, including "I Thought" and "What About Us?." While each of these sonic references alone would seem to

---

[68] As a caveat, it could also be suggested that the producers of the third version were simply unable to emulate Jerkins' sound.

represent important features of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature, I contend that through an indiscreet and overdone combination of these sounds and patterns, C&J unintentionally gave away the forged text as such.

In *Palimpsests: Literature in the second degree,* author Gérard Genette argues that "saturation gives away the apocryphal text as such: i.e., as a failed apocryphal attempt" (Genette 1997: 161). For example, examining *La Chasse spirituelle,* a text that surfaced in 1949 and was at first assumed to be the work of Rimbaud but later discredited, Genette notes that the evidence in the work used at first to draw the conclusion that it was by Rimbaud, is, on closer inspection, precisely used as the evidence against its authenticity. According to Genette, the book is "too much like Rimbaud to be by Rimbaud," or, in other words:

> The strongest argument in favor of the unity of the author (between two works) is precisely the fact that the second work is not a mere mimicry of the first, which it would quite naturally have been had it been penned by a follower or competitor. Only the author himself could have the energy and good taste to avoid such self-imitation, being more tempted by an entirely different work, and one whose relation to the preceding work can be seen to be rather oblique (1997: 179).

In addition to what may be stylistic saturation, I have suggested that a second pitfall of the attempted forgery of "Keep This Fire Burning" is quite the opposite and rests in the fact that the work fails to reproduce one specific element central to Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature. To understand the importance of this element within Jerkins' work, however, I will first analyze a second recording that will shed light on this. Specifically, I am referring to Another Level's "What You Know About Me" (*Another Level,* 2003), a work that I will argue represents a quite contrasting attempted forgery of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature than "Keep This Fire Burning," and, accordingly, reveals the one element of Jerkins' sonic signature that is lacking from forgery I have presented thus far.

2.5: Another Level's "What You Know About Me"

2.5.1: Context

In 2002, production duo The Underdogs (Harvey Mason Jr. and Damon Thomas) composed, sequenced, and recorded the track "What You Know About Me" for the British boy-band Another Level. This track was to appear as the first single of the group's self-titled album, *Another Level* (2003).[69] Honoring Burkholder's suggestion to begin constructing the case for musical borrowing by providing some biographical evidence linking the musicians in questions, it must be stated that while The Underdogs have recently become household names in the world of mainstream R&B (producing a string of tremendously successful singles for artists like Omarion, Mario, Ray-J, and Justin Timberlake since 2003), early in his career, founding member Harvey Mason Jr., spent some time working as an assistant producer under Rodney Jerkins. A personal relation between these two figures, in fact, allegedly acted as the basis for the sonic signature forgery present in the track at hand. An explanation of how this happened and the exact circumstances of the track's production have been laid out in a first hand account by Rodney Jerkins. According to Jerkins, "I was on my way to [Heathrow] airport when I was called in [to a nearby studio] by [producer] Harvey [Mason Jr.] to speak on the finished track [of "What You Know About Me?"]. All I said was "Darkchild, Darkchild" [and got paid]. I had not even seen Another Level before."[70]

Bearing in mind this history of production, I would now like to turn to the context of the alleged forgery in question, Another Level's "What You Know About Me." The song itself begins as an instrumental beat featuring 32nd note hi-hats and irregular snare hits (elements more characteristic of R&B produced during the late 1990s than in 2003). Against this outdated and, I might add, very un-Darkchild-sounding introduction, Rodney Jerkins voice is heard, processed through the same telephone EQ used in his own productions, asking a number of questions: "What'ch ya know about Darkchild? What'ch

---

[69] Coincidentally, aforementioned Danish producers C&J also contributed a number of tracks to this album.

[70] "News for 27/10/03" Website: http://www.darkchild.50megs.com (visited 20 November, 2003)

ya know about Fats? What'ch ya know about Another Level and how Darkchild cuts tracks? Harvey Mason doing the what? Darkchild doing the low."

A few months after this track was released, Jerkins initiated a lawsuit against Another Level's record label, claiming that his voice had been deceitfully edited and processed within the recording as part of a false attempt to make him sound like the track's producer. In making this case, Jerkins cited that during recorded interviews and promotional appearances, the group had consistently embellished his involvement with the single, often referring to him as its "co-producer" and "co-writer" hand in hand with The Underdogs. The group's record label responded to Jerkins with the statement, "We can only apologize that due to the hype surrounding your name the media has exaggerated your involvement." It is clear, however, that such a response was not an exaggeration, but a perfectly logical and anticipated reaction by the producers, Harvey Mason of The Underdogs, to the appearance of Rodney Jerkins' telephone-EQed voice on a recording, making a number of ambiguous statements about the song's production and using the word "Darkchild" throughout. Thus, the one element of Jerkins' sonic signature "borrowed" for the introduction of "What You Know About Me?," and consequently the basis of the entire attempted forgery taking place in it, has nothing to do with record production in the traditional sense, but instead is based on a performative feature: the sound of Jerkins' voice referring to himself by name ("Darkchild, Darkchild") within a recording.

2.5.2: Comparison with Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning"

Returning now to the previous example of sonic signature forgery discussed in the preceding section, C&J's production of "Keep This Fire Burning," it is clear that the one element of Jerkins' sonic signature clearly missing from this song's carefully designed soundscape is the presence of Jerkins' own voice saying the word "Darkchild." In other words, while C&J made an intelligent and sophisticated attempt to conjure up a Jerkins' production identity through the inclusion of various key stylistic features of his work, the attempt lacked the one simple element required to tie the stylistic features to a single person and complete the two-fold process of referential and emotive signification intended by the

sonic signature forgery. Not surprisingly, C&J's approach to this forgery mirrors the spirit of their website, where, in as much as an image of Brandy's *Full Moon* is prominently displayed next to the words "in the studio," no photos of the actual studio or producers C&J are themselves presented. This feature, or lack thereof, represents a marked contrast to the original Darkchild website which began with a full page animated spread of a jewel-encrusted Rodney Jerkins in the studio. In other words, C&J's pattern is arguably that they do not claim false authorship outright but instead attempt to imply it through a combination of stylistic references that carefully avoid attaching specific names or labels to these clearly referential messages and meanings.

The Underdogs, of course, used the opposite approach in their intended forgery—relying exclusively on the practice of "name dropping." On the one hand, this feature could be likened to the signature in art. On the other hand, the record producer generally works behind the mixing board and not as a performer in the vocal booth. In this sense, Jerkins' voice would seem to represent a performative rather than a productive aspect of the recording. Yet, interestingly, this seems nonetheless to represent a quintessential aspect of Jerkins' production technique.

2.5.3: Analogy to Film

To better understand the significance of Jerkins' voice, consider an analogy from the world of film. In *Looking Awry: Lacan explained through popular culture* (1991), theorist Slajof Žižek describes two important stylistic traits of Alfred Hitchcock's work, the "object gaze" and the "authorial gaze." The latter represents a particular shot, present in nearly all of Hitchcock's movies, where the director himself appears briefly as an actor in a scene. While standing in-front, and not behind the recording camera would seem to out-step and confuse the bounds of the director's commonly understood role, for viewers familiar with Hitchcock's work, this represents a defining moment in which his role as director is instead most apparent. The ability of a role-reversal to become role confirming, in both the cases of Hitchcock and Rodney Jerkins, is drawn from the fact that the meanings involved are connoted, rather than denoted. This is to say that the recognition of the significance in

these acts is not inherent to them but is part of a contextual pattern established over time through repetition and familiarity. Thus, as an important element of Jerkins' sonic signature, his "authorial gaze," (i.e., the sound of his voice) is not a manifestation of his actual function as producer but as a symbolic representation of the creative authority this function implies.

In a second comparison to Hitchcock's work, it is also possible to suggest that Jerkins' name-signature represents what Žižek refers to as the "object gaze." According to Žižek, the object gaze occurs in a film during "that point at which the very frame (of my view) is already inscribed in the 'content' of the picture viewed... [and] marks the point in the object (in the picture) from which the subject viewing it is already *gazed at*, i.e., it is the object that is gazing at me" (Žižek 1991: 125). As an example, Žižek points to the turning point of Hitchcock's film, *Rear Window* (1954), when the antagonist (an unknown villain seen across the street through a bedroom window) turns and looks directly into the binoculars of the protagonist (Jeff) and, consequently, as a result of the angle of the shot, directly into the camera and the eyes of the home viewers. What is significant to this aspect of Hitchcock's films is that it inverts the hierarchy of reception by allowing the "caught" object of focus to transform, for a split second, from the movie's protagonist to the movie viewer instead.

As a parallel, I would suggest that the insertion of Rodney Jerkins' voice intervenes into a recording, upsetting the normal hierarchy of musical reception. For example, in the introduction of "I Thought," Jerkins repeatedly interrupts Brandy's singing, asking her to speak up, repeat certain phrases, and finally, satisfied, proclaims he likes the way she is singing. Turning the volume up and down, pressing repeat, making comments about the quality of the music—these are all functions that have traditionally been restricted to the space of the listener. Like the antagonist staring out of the TV screen in "Rear Window," Jerkins voice takes the volume knob right out of the listener's hand, hits the repeat button, and provides commentary on the recording.

2.6: SUMMARY

The analysis of the two previous examples of the forgery of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature have demonstrated, in both broad and specific terms, how the same sonic signature may be referenced in two contrasting ways. In the first case, we saw how producers C&J worked to imply that "Keep This Fire Burning" was a Darkchild production by the skillful pastiche of a number of stylistic elements that seem to define Jerkins' recordings, all the while carefully never mentioning any producer (either themselves or Rodney Jerkins) by name. In the second example, The Underdogs spliced bits and pieces of Rodney Jerkins' recorded voice throughout the introduction their alleged forged recording, "What You Know About," as part of an outright claim that the track represented a Darkchild production, all the while neglecting those stylistic features that define Rodney Jerkins' works as such. In the end, the sonic signature forgery in both works is revealed through these markedly different shortcomings.

Returning to Goodman's idea of a work's "history of production," in the examples of the sonic signature forgery at hand, it could be said that C&J's forgery takes elaborate measures at both macroscopic and microscopic levels within the recording to induce the perception of a false history of production while, on the other hand, The Underdog's attempted forgery claims to have a very particular and name-specific history of production (we even hear Jerkins own voice discussing the track's production as if he had something to do with it) without supporting the claim at any level in the musical text itself. Through their contrast, these two examples help to illustrate how sonic signatures—or at least Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature—work both implicitly and explicitly to create a sense of production identity within a recording. To this extent, the two examples of forgery examined are also complementary; each lacking what is emphasized in the other.

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate how musical forgeries represent important tools in analyzing and understanding sonic signatures and how they work in the field. Accordingly, analyzed in tandem, "Keep This Fire Burning" and "What You Know About Me" have revealed diverse information about the nature of Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature, and by extension, sonic signatures in general. Many questions, however, remain. Do the

forgeries examined help bolster or, in Bourdieu's terms, "consecrate" Rodney Jerkins' position in relation to other producers? Or, by saturating the market with sonic references to his identity, do they instead act to cheapen and normalize his own exposure as a producer? In broader terms, what larger role does the practice of sonic signature forgery play within the field of production? How does this practice affect the shape and form of sonic signatures, and, in turn, the composition and layout of contemporary sound recordings at large? Perhaps more specifically, based on the examples looked at thus far, has Rodney Jerkins' own sonic signature been at some level altered, perhaps even reshaped, as a result of the forgeries in question? These are all questions raised by the present chapter to be examined and explored in the remaining portion of this Thesis.

Chapter 3: Sonic Signature Forgeries by Rodney Jerkins

3.1: INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explored the makeup and function of sonic signatures through an in-depth analysis of two recordings modeled after Rodney Jerkins' productions. Specifically, the text highlighted how these two recordings, Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" and Another Level's "What You Know About Me," employed the deliberate recreation or re-approximation of a few key elements of Jerkins' sonic signature. The text illustrated how these borrowed features both related to and differed from their apparent source models in each of the two examples. This analysis subsequently showed Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature to be composed of a combination of implicit (distinct rhythmic figures, discrete sounds) and explicit (the sound of Jerkins voice, the presence of the word "Darkchild") sonic references to production identity.

Having looked at Jerkins' own sonic signature and outlined some broad hypotheses about the nature of sonic signatures in general, the present chapter tests this framework by looking at two more examples of sonic signature forgery that are in many respects opposite from the previous two. Specifically, these two recordings do not represent attempted forgeries of Jerkins' sonic signature; rather, I submit, they represent attempts made by Jerkins himself to pass off his own work as the work of other well-known producers in the field, namely producers Kanye West and The Neptunes.

The purpose of including this additional analysis in the present study is twofold. Firstly, it allows the project to revisit and test some of the conclusions previously drawn about sonic signatures. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, by looking at examples of sonic signature forgery done by Rodney Jerkins, rather than of him, this chapter explores the larger role that sonic signatures and sonic signature forgeries play in the field. To this extent, the text explores the ability of sonic signatures to form meaningful networks, not only among recordings created by an individual producer, but also among competing producers. In other words, this chapter will illustrate how a producer whose own sonic

signature is at times forged by other producers, may at other times chose to forge the sonic signature of other producers as well.

3.2: Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You"

3.2.1: Context

For this chapter's first phonographic analysis, I will show how Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You" (2005), produced by Rodney Jerkins, represents a recording designed to recreate key aspects of producer Kanye West's sonic signature. More specifically, I will argue that the track in question is modeled after a number of features found in the West-produced recording of Janet Jackson's "My Baby" (2004). This will be illustrated through a sequence of instrumental, waveform, spectral, and vocal analyses, followed by a discussion of similarities this example has to the world of designer fashion.

Before beginning this analysis, however, it is imperative to consider the biographical evidence available relating the two musicians in question. While Kanye West and Rodney Jerkins are both currently well-known figures in the world of mainstream record production, West's success occurred much later than that of Jerkins and in many ways eclipsed the latter between the years 2003 and 2005.[71] This overshadowing was evident, for example, in 2004 when R&B singer Brandy decided to enlist West rather than Jerkins to produce her fourth album, *Afrodisiac.* Prior to this, Jerkins had worked with Brandy on all three of her previous albums, and their history together represented one of the few longstanding artist/producer collaborations in urban music, along with Michael Jackson and Teddy Riley's partnership, Janet Jackson's with Jimmy Jam, Faith Evans' with P. Diddy, and Usher's with Jermaine Dupri. In 2000, for instance, Jerkins remarked about his unique working relationship with the singer, "I love working with Brandy 'cause I got the chance to build the whole album" (Anonymous 2005e). Bearing this in mind, I would suggest that Brandy's decision to contract West and not Jerkins to produce her fourth

[71] West received 10 nominations at the 2005 Grammy Awards, making him the most nominated musician of the year, producer or otherwise. In addition to reflecting the previously discussed increase in public interest in and awareness of record production, this figure also highlights the individual accomplishments and fame of West during that year.

album provided a logical impetus for Jerkins' alleged attempt at modeling the track in question on the sonic signature of a producer who, at least in one instance, took over his position in the field.

3.2.2: Analysis

3.2.2.1: Instrumentation

In this following musical analysis, I start by looking at more general features relating the two recordings at hand, for example similarities of instrumentation, harmony, and structure. After this, I turn to more specific and less obvious relationships between the two recordings, for example, spectral and vocal. To begin with, it is clear upon listening to Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You" that the track is not a typical Rodney Jerkins production. While Jerkins' voice is heard in the song's introduction, along with the previously discussed "Darkchild" detuned string patch, all of the other Jerkins-specific phonographic material looked at in the text of Chapters 1 and 2 are markedly absent from this recording. Instead, the track bears close resemblance to many of the performative, technological, and abstract features found in Janet Jackson's single, "My Baby," produced by Kanye West.

As noted in Chapter 1, West is a sample-based producer and, as such, splices together bits of extant sound extracted from vinyl records to organize the beats, loops, and patterns that form the basis of his recordings. In addition to using discrete sounds in his productions, West also incorporates long sampled passages and phrases that possess, in addition to recognizable timbral qualities, important melodic and harmonic components.[72] Thus, in contrast to Jerkin's technique of what could be called *morphemic* sequencing, that is to say composition based solely on the organization of isolated discrete sounds, West's style of production may instead be described as *syntagmatic* in the way his sound sources possess a temporal character that evolves over time.[73] The overall result of West's

---

[72] In discussing the aesthetics of "sample-based" production and its relation to culture, I would like to reference the work of Kyra Gaunt (2006), who has devoted much needed literary attention to the subject.
[73] Here I have chosen the term "syntagmatic" rather than "diachronic" to stress that the significance of this form of sequencing is not based so much on constructing temporal relationships as it is with construction

production technique is a markedly lo-fidelity, "grainy" aesthetic that imbues his tracks with a sense of authenticity in the historical sense—the rough "phonographic" sound of the production recalling the classic period of hip-hop and R&B.[74] Bearing this in mind, the following table (Table 3.1) compares the key stylistic characteristics uniting the recording text of "I Got You" with "My Baby":

Table 3.1: Comparison of key stylistic features in "My Baby" and "I Got You"

Source / Feature	**Janet Jackson "My Baby" (2004) Produced by Kanye West**	**J. Lopez "I Got You" (2005) Produced by Rodney Jerkins**
MELODIC INSTRUMENT	Stepwise (downward moving) electric guitar	Stepwise (downward moving) acoustic guitar
HARMONIC INSTRUMENT	Electric guitar chords strum on down beats	Piano roll on down beats
BASS	Live bass, arpeggiated	Same as "My Baby"
PROGRESSION	IV7 - v7 - iv7 (no resolution to i)	iv7 - V7 (no resolution to i)
TEMPO	96 Bpm	89 Bpm
HI-HAT	Lo-fi, steady pulse, 16 hits in a two snare phrase	Same as "My Baby"
CHORUS INSTRUMENT	Entry of "Classic" 70s Rhodes patch with tremelo	Entry of "Classic" 70s sounding flute with vibrato
CLAP/SNARE	Mid range, "rip"-sounding clap/snare combo	Same as "My Baby
OVERALL APPEARANCE	"Real"-sounding, or sampled-sounding instrumentation (not sequenced)	Same as "My Baby"

Table 3.1 points to the ways "I Got You" share a number of abstract and performative features with "My Baby." For example, the melodic pattern and instrumentation of the descending lead guitar are comparable in both tracks. It is important to note that while the guitar heard in "I Got You" was recorded specifically for the song

where the building blocks (phrase samples) are large units that posses a temporal quality in and of themselves (in contrast to the "morphemic" approach which sequences sound units of minimal duration).

[74] There are also some "unlikely samples" in West's music: i.e. sounds that have come from out-of-genre recordings (Kistner 2006).

and not sampled from an extant recording (as the guitar in the West production undoubtedly was), the recording has nevertheless been "chopped" and obviously processed with grain to simulate the appearance of a "cut" sample. In terms of harmonic character, the guitars in the two songs emphasize the 7th and 9th extensions of the accompanying chordal framework. This, in addition to the live bass featured in both tracks, helps to lend the music a "classic," soulful feel.[75] Therefore, the sonic character of many of the instrumental patterns in "I Got You," in addition to resembling samples, has been arranged in a manner reflective of the performative idioms of 1970s soul, funk, and slow disco—the generic source of sample-based production.

There are also a number of instrumental parts in both songs that, while not identical, are nonetheless analogous in terms of the meaning they instill within the recording. In the chorus of "I Got You," for instance, a sampled-sounding vibrato flute line parallels the entry of a Rhodes keyboard at the same point in "My Baby." While these two instruments possess a very different timbre, they occupy the same spectral register within the music and, in terms of significance, are part of a broad genre of archetypal mid-range instrumental sounds from the 1970s. Similarly, although the rolling guitar chords heard in "My Baby" do not closely resemble the upper-register piano chords of "I Got You," these two parts occupy the same harmonic space within the music of each song and work in complimentary ways to create the appearance of a richly textured, analogue-sounding musical environment.

Having illustrated how the Jerkins-produced "I Got You" shares certain instrumental features with "My Baby," both of identical and analogous proportion, as a caveat, it must also be pointed out that a few sounds found in the former are entirely out of place within the context of the sample-based style production apparently being referenced. For example, "I Got You" features the detuned string patch already discussed as a recognizable component of Jerkins' sonic signature in Chapter 2. However, while this sound alone has a synthetic quality, when combined with the other lo-fidelity, live-sounding instruments present throughout "I Got You," remarkably, this patch begins to take

---

[75] Here I am referring to the similarity of this harmonic treatment to recordings by "classic" African-American artists like Stevie Wonder, Earth Wind and Fire, and Parliament.

on the quality of a genuine string sample. Thus, as a result of the rest of the song's apparent realism, the detuned strings come to be interpreted as a "real" instrument when in fact they are not.

3.2.2.2: Waveform Analysis

Turning specifically to percussion, many of the drum sounds used in "I Got You" replicate the quality of specific patches heard in "My Baby." For example, not only do the hi-hats and claps sound identical, they are organized in similar patterns within the two songs. Additionally, "I Got You" employs a number of performative features that suggest the percussion has been sampled, as it has in "My Baby." For example, the opening phrase of "I Got You" is looped three times before the actual song begins, evoking the sense of a record being scratched. This feature at the song's beginning creates an immediate perception of the beat as a pre-existing, sampled entity, when in fact its various parts have been entirely written, recorded, and sequenced independently. While the scratching is aurally convincing in this regard, graphical analysis reveals that the sound heard is not really a genuine loop but part of a linear sequence that evolves over time. The actual inexactness of this repetition is observed in Figure 3.1 (*Waveform analysis, opening beats of Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You" [0:00-0:04]):*

Figure 3.1: Waveform analysis, opening beats of Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You"

As Figure 3.1 illustrates, the apparent loop heard in the introduction of "I Got You" (0:00-0:04) is not a true record scratch. In fact, each of the three starting hits of the loop (i.e., the three fuller alternating waveforms above) is quite different from one another in terms of waveform shape. This would not be the case with sampled material where repeated

passages would normally look identical. The differences in waveform, however, are inaudible and the scratching sounds convincing, working in conjunction with the other instrumental and performative qualities of the music addressed in this chapter to support the interpretation of "I Got You" as the work of a sample-based producer like Kanye West.

3.2.3.2: Spectral Analysis

The previous waveform analysis (Figure 3.1) revealed on a technical level that "I Got You" does not in fact represent a true sample-based production. At this point, however, a spectral analysis of the same recording will illustrate precisely how "I Got You" was designed to sound like one. As mentioned, perhaps the most identifiable feature of Kanye West's sonic signature is the overall lo-fi aesthetic of his productions which lacks the extreme high and low frequencies of most digitally sequenced music. Partially a function of the source-material used in sample-based production (extracts from old records), this aesthetic is also the product of an ideological mindset; West's lo-fi production sound reflects the limited play-back capabilities of equipment like the portable boom-box—one of hip-hop culture's earliest and most important means of musical transmission (Derry 1990: 90). Hence, sample-based music, even if produced by a successful mainstream producer like Kanye West with access to the latest in production technology, generally does not include high-frequency sonic material above 14 kHz, with the bulk of sonic material occurring in the 4-7 kHz range. Bearing this in mind, Figures 3.2-3.4 (below) illustrate an important relationship in both frequency range and concentration between three recordings: (1) Brandy's "I Thought," which was used in the previous chapter to represent a typical Rodney Jerkins-production, (2) Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You," also produced by Rodney Jerkins, whose composition arguably represents a forgery of the third example, (3) Janet Jackson's "My Baby," the alleged source of the sonic signature forgery taking place.

Figure 3.2: Spectral analysis of Brandy's "I Thought" (0:00-0:13)

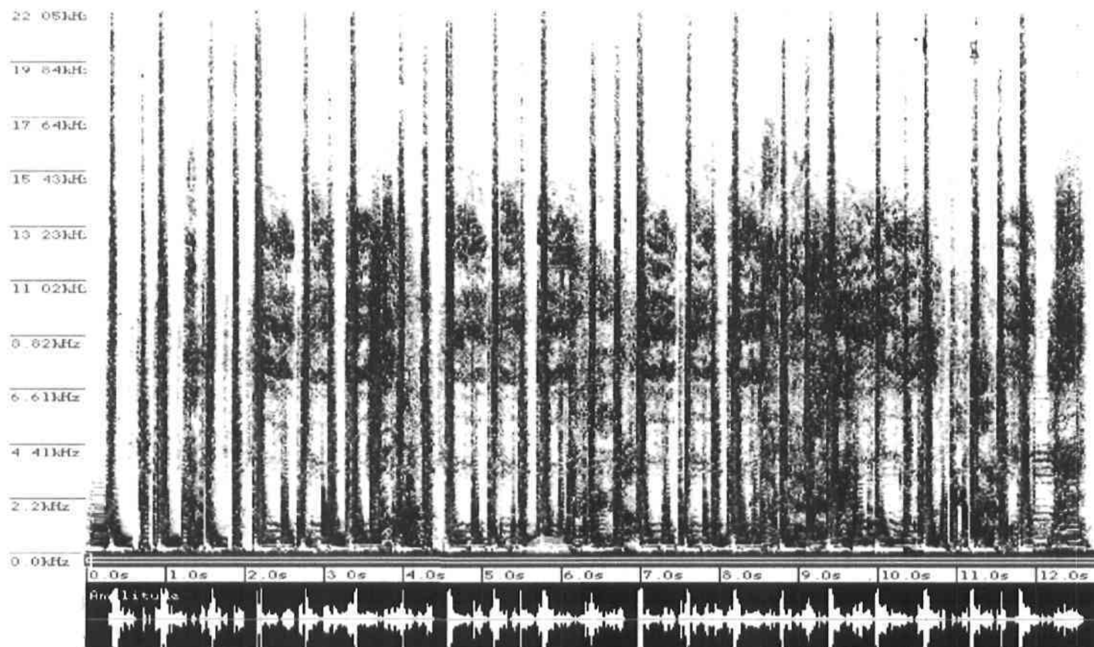


Figure 3.3: Spectral analysis of Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You" (0:00-0:16)

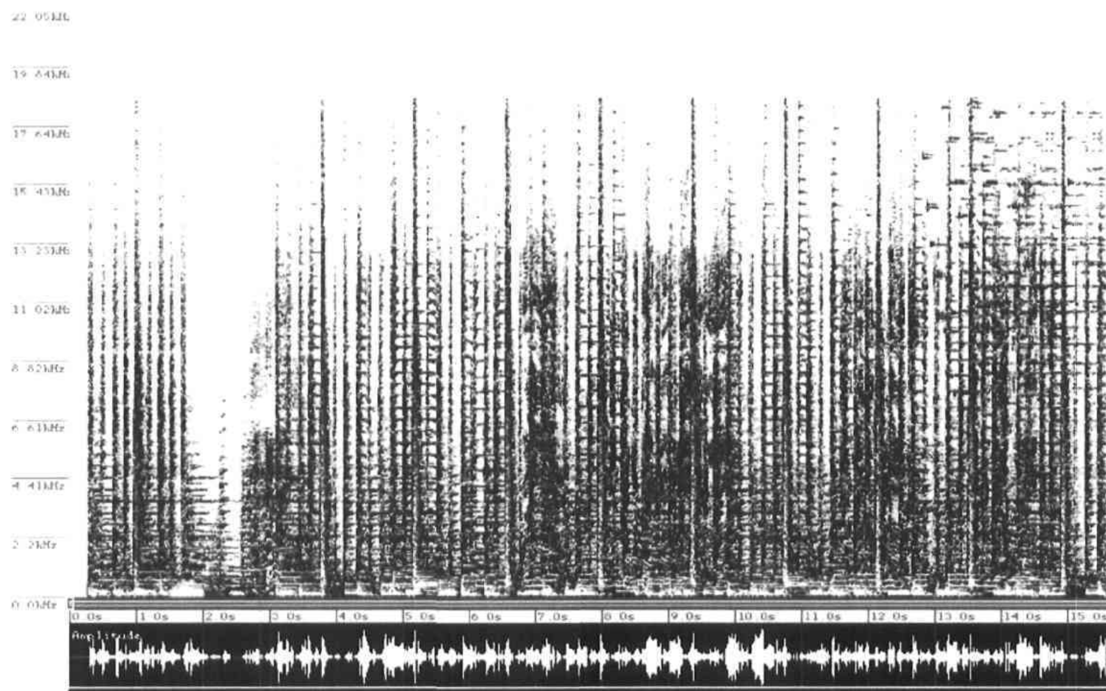
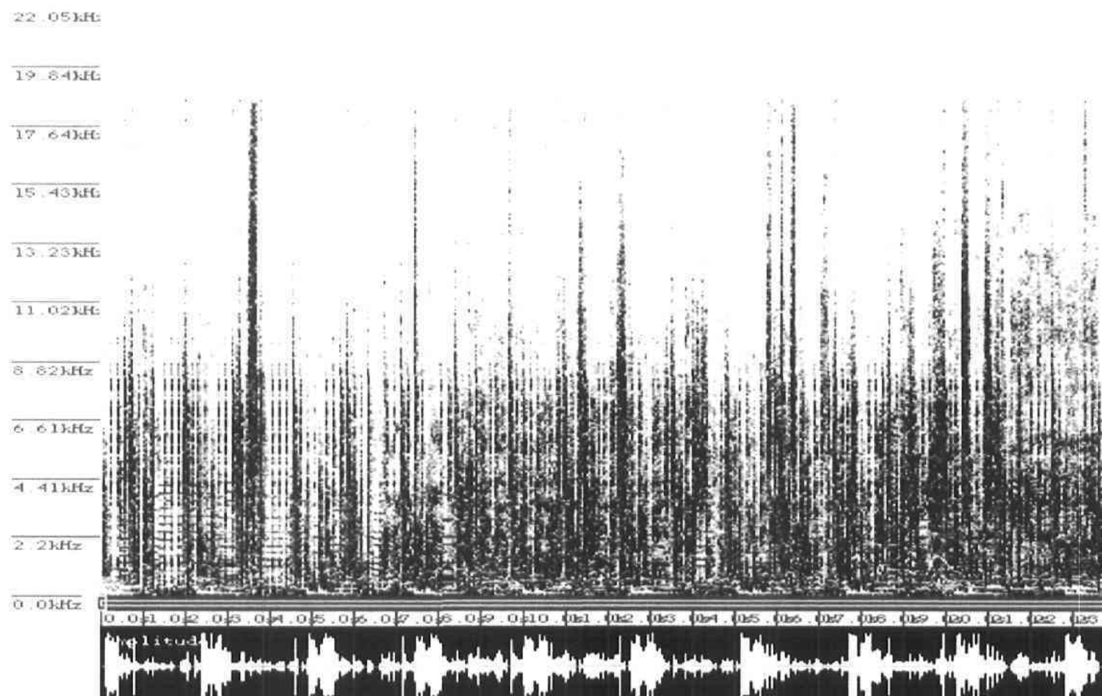


Figure 3.4: Spectral analysis of Janet Jackson's "My Baby" (0:00-0:24)



In the above spectral comparison, Figure 3.2 highlights the frequency-range of a typical Rodney Jerkins production (expressed vertically), which the chart shows contains sonic material up to 22.05kHz in frequency. While these frequencies are inaudible, their presence in the phonograph reflects a method of production using up-to-date 24-bit sound sources and hi-fidelity sequencing equipment. In terms of audible sound, it is also important to point out that the bulk of the sonic material contained in this example is distributed within the 7 kHz to 13 kHz range, with very little content between 4 and 7 kHz.

This represents a marked contrast to Figures 3.3 and 3.4, which feature an 18 kHz cut-off, with the bulk of their sonic material concentrated in the 4-6 kHz-frequency range. Remembering that Figure 3.2 highlights the spectrograph of a typical Darkchild production, this three-way comparison illustrates not only how "I Got You" (represented in Figure 3.3) is *not* a typical Jerkins' production in its emphasis on mid-range rather than hi-frequency sonic material,[76] but also how its spectral range has been filtered so as to appear to have

[76] This aesthetic, of course, is tied to the sonic character of LPs in the same sense that production aesthetics in the "digital era" of the 1980s tended to feature boosted high-frequency material, in part, because this range is naturally boosted within digital sound in general.

been built from lo-fi phonographic sound-sources. In light of this contrast, and given the clear visual resemblance Figures 3.3 and 3.4 share, the above spectrographic analyses illustrate in spectral terms the phonographic forgery contained in "I Got You"—a point not otherwise easily discernable.

3.2.2.4: Vocal Analysis

In addition to discrete sound, waveform, and spectral analyses, a comparison of the vocal introductions of "I Got You" and "My Baby" helps reveal the sonic signature forgery contained in the former. Unlike the examples looked at in the previous chapter, here the actual host-producer, Rodney Jerkins, includes his own voice in the introduction, even making reference to himself with the word "Darkchild." While this would seem to dispute the idea that this track represents a sonic signature forgery, in fact, I would suggest that on a deeper level Jerkins' words are sending mixed messages about the track's production identity. To understand what this means, it is useful to compare the content of Jerkins' spoken introduction in "I Got You" to West's in "My Baby." Consider the following two introductory excerpts:

> Producer Kanye West speaking in the introduction of Janet Jackson's "My Baby": *Uh, you see, I go by the name of Kan, the "Louis Vuitton Don." I want my home-girl for her to hook me up with some of her home-girls. Uh-huh. Janet Jackson, we back baby!*
>
> Producer Rodney Jerkins speaking in the introduction of Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You": *Ha-ha! Right here, this is another "Darkchild Classic." Something you can lean to, something you can ride to, something you can step to. And we back!*

Although the introductions to both songs are different in terms of the actual words being used, it is evident that they share a similar organization of content—beginning with the name of the track's producer, followed by a set of instructions, and concluding with the phrase "We back!" On a deeper level, turning to Jerkins' wording in particular, it could be argued that his language actually supports the false interpretation that the track is a sample-based production. For example, Jerkins describes the song as something "you can step to,"

the term "stepping" representing an outdated, predominately African-American word for dancing, as well as "something you can ride to," Jerkins' slow inflection of the word "ride" calling to mind the image of a vintage "low-rider" automobile. These sonic markers refer to scenes and themes from a period of African-American musical history, the 1970s, most commonly borrowed by contemporary sample-based producers. Thus, in conjunction with the previously addressed sample-based feel of the music itself, Jerkins' wording works on a metaphoric level to uphold the belief that "I Got You" is a sample-based production.

Especially revealing for the analysis of "I Got You" as an example of sonic signature forgery is the fact that Jerkins refers to the track, in its introduction, as "another Darkchild classic." On the one hand, this seems to be a strange comment for Jerkins to make, considering the extent to which the previous analysis has shown the recording in question to be anything but the usual Rodney Jerkins-production. However, I would suggest that while, in literal terms, Jerkins' words are intended to cover up the stylistic borrowing taking place in the music, in another sense, his description actually upholds the borrowed character of the music. By calling the track a "classic," Jerkins is arguably relating the track not to his own history as a producer but to the "old-school" practice of sample-based production and to the contemporary producer most associated with this practice in the present day—Kanye West.

3.2.3: Analogue to Fashion

Turning from Jerkins' words in the introduction of "I Got You" to West's in the introduction of "My Baby," cited above, it is significant that the latter refers to himself as the "Louis Vuitton Don." In one sense, by calling himself the "Louis Vuitton Don," West is referring to his well-known penchant for wearing the clothing of French designer Louis Vuitton. At the same time, however, I would suggest that he is also using this nickname as a metaphor for the symbolic and economic power of his sonic brand by describing himself as the "Louis Vuitton" of record producers. Moreover, considering the fact that Louis Vuitton represents a "classic" force in fashion (known for its line of handbags and luggage

that has changed little over the past forty years), West may also be likening his "old-school" brand of sample-based production to the vintage of Louis Vuitton's product design.

Previously, the text described similarities between the sonic signature in music and the written signature in art, as well as in the world of film where an analogy for the sonic signature was examined in the work of director Alfred Hitchcock. At this point, a third analogy will be made to the world of designer fashion. More specifically, stemming from West's description of himself as the "Louis Vuitton Don," I will attempt to highlight an important resemblance between the forgery of Louis Vuitton handbags and the forgery of the sonic signatures looked at in this study.

As background to this discussion, it should be noted that commercial links between consumer brands and urban music have a long history, dating from Run DMC's "My Addidas" (*Raising Hell,* 1986—which landed the group a $1.5 million contract with the German shoe company [Parker 2002]) to the present (the mid-2000s) when Petey Pablo raps, "Now I got to give a shout out to Seagram's Gin—'Cause I'm drinkin' it and they payin' me for it" ("Freek-a-leek," *Still Writing In My Diary: 2nd Entry,* 2004).[77] Recently, a large number of urban artists have established their own fashion lines (many of them distributed through big-name North American department stores like Macy's and Nordstrom's),[78] which they actively advertise and promote in recordings.[79] Yet, the overwhelming majority of brand names referenced in urban music are European "luxury" brands that involve no commercial relationship or sponsorship whatsoever. For example, a 2004 Agenda Inc. study (Anonymous 2004b) found that the top five brands mentioned in *Billboard's* Top-20 during 2003 were Mercedes (112x), Lexus (48x), Gucci (47x) Cadillac (46x) and Burberry (42x). A similar study (Anonymous 2005f) established that rapper Kanye West "dropped" 19 brand names in singles released during 2004, including

---

[77] I would like to acknowledge my colleague Gavin Kistner for bringing quite a few of the tracks referenced in the following survey to my attention.

[78] These include (among others) Sean "Puffy" Combs (Sean Jean), Pharrell Williams (Billionaire Boys Club), Roc-A-Fella Records (Rocawear), Eminem (Shady Ltd.), Nelly (Vokal), Outkast (Outkast Clothing) Snoop Dogg (Snoop Dogg Clothing), Russell Simmons (Phat Farm), Ice-T (Ice Wear) and 50 Cent (G-Unit Clothing).

[79] For example, in Ms. Jade and Jay-Z's "Count it off (2002, *Girl Interrupted*)" Jade raps "I'm from the land of white tees, Vickie's and *Rocawear*" (my italics)—plugging the clothing-line of Jay-Z's Roc-A-Fella Records.

references to high-end French jeweler Cartier and upscale fashion houses Versace and Louis Vuitton.[80] These statistics speak to the cultural, and largely metaphoric, connection that urban music has created with the lifestyle associated with designer fashion.[81]

Designer fashion, interestingly, also represents one of the most "faked" or "forged" product fields in existence. Aforementioned designer Louis Vuitton, who West likens himself to in the introduction of "My Baby," for example, only became a household name in the late 1990s in large part as a result of the proliferation of *fake* purses, carryalls, and luggage bearing the "LV" logo that flooded the market during these years and continue to do so in the present (Wilson 2005). To the extent that there are now more knock-off Louis Vuitton luggage and handbags floating down airport conveyor belts and American streets than real ones, I would submit that the recent and widely publicized increase in Louis Vuitton's symbolic and economic value (now even being referenced in the introduction of hip-hop songs), has been driven as much by the exposure of forgeries of its products as by sales of the "real" thing.

Considering this facet of Louis Vuitton's success, it could be argued that by taking the nickname "Louis Vuitton Don," West is not only comparing his recognizable production sound to the recognizable products of Louis Vuitton, but is also acknowledging, perhaps even encouraging, the forgery of his sonic brand by other producers. Such a case is supported by what I see as striking parallels between the fake Louis Vuitton handbags presently sold on North American street-corners and the two examples of sonic signature forgery previously looked at in Chapter 2. Recalling how the text illustrated Robyn's "Keep This Fire Burning" as based on a kind of stylistic regeneration of Rodney Jerkins' sonic

---

[80]These Kanye West singles are all from *The College Dropout* (2004). In "Last Call," West says: "I'm Kan, the Louis Vuitton Don; bought my mom a purse, now she [is the] Louis Vuitton Mom." In "All Falls Down," he expresses the "awkwardness" surrounding black culture's fixation on European "status" objects, rapping: "Rolies and Pashas (Rolexes and Cartier's "Pasha" watch) done drove me crazy; I can't even pronounce nothin'—pass that Versace-y" (mispronouncing "Versace" in such a way as to make it rhyme with "crazy"). Later in the song, he says "I remember Lenny S, he had some Louis Vuitton sneakers on, he think he fly."

[81] This metaphor is largely the subject of Kanye West's "All Falls Down," in which he says "I promise, I'm so self conscious; that's why you always see me with at least one of my watches," and, "I even spent four hundred bucks on this, just to be like 'nigga you ain't up on this'," and later, "floss 'cause they degrade us, we tryin' to buy back our forty acres—and for that paper, look how low we a'stoop; even if you in a Benz, you still a nigga in a coop/coupe." With regards to this last line, the lyrics in the liner notes say "coop/coupe" to emphasize the play on words—coop meaning being trapped in a cage, and coupe referring to a sports car.

signature that intentionally left out references to the producer himself, this could be compared to the kind of knock-off Louis Vuitton handbags that meticulously duplicate the shape and form of their source with regards to lining, fabric, stitching, and so on, but omit or corrupt, as the case may be, the actual Louis Vuitton monogram—changing the "LV" to "LLV," "VL," or some other mutated derivative.[82] Likewise, Another Level's "What You Know About Me," which we saw by contrast included outright verbal references to a false producer track without supporting this claim on any stylistic level within the music, appears to be emblematic of those Louis Vuitton forgeries that feature the "LV" logo prominently strewn across their surface (i.e., hats, scarves, and shoes) yet in every other stylistic respect bear no resemblance to the products of the French designer.[83] Hence, in both record production and fashion, forgeries may take opposite approaches—one rooted in generic reactivation while neglecting logo, the other in reproducing logo without providing accompanying stylistic support. The first category of forgery avoids crediting the source of a product's design where it is clearly due; the second gives credit for this design when in fact it is not warranted.

Returning to the alleged sonic signature forgery at hand, the case of Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You," it is important to note that this example is different from the previous two examined in Chapter 2 in that the forged track's producer, Rodney Jerkins, is well-known and has a previously established symbolic value in the field. Thus, in addition to recreating the discussed phonographic features of Kanye West's sonic signature, Jerkins also references his own identity as a producer in the recording as part of what appears to be an attempt to imbue the track with the duel significance of these two contrasting sonic signatures—one style-based, the other logo-based. In attempting to connect this unique example to the different types of Louis Vuitton forgery I am aware of, I would suggest that this recording is analogous to a series of handbags introduced by American designer Ralph Lauren in 2003 that are clearly modeled on Louis Vuitton's "Murakami" line, but feature the initials "RL," standing for "Ralph Lauren," instead of "LV," as part of a logo that in all other regards is the same (see Swift 2003). Thus, by inserting the phrase "another Darkchild classic" into the introduction of "I Got You," and recalling the structural

[82] For more on the type of handbag forgeries I am referring to, see Wilson 2005.
[83] For a history and description of the actual Louis Vuitton product logo, see Ihara 2004.

similarity he Jerkins words bear in this section to those of West in the introduction of "My Baby," he has simply replaced West's "monogram" with his own initials—"Darkchild."

3.2.4: Conclusion

The sonic signature forgery examined in Chapter 2's analysis of "What You Know About Me" presents an interesting connection to the text at hand, Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You." Namely, both tracks prominently display Rodney Jerkins' voice and the word "Darkchild" in the introductions of recordings that otherwise do not represent typical Rodney Jerkins-sounding works. What separates these two examples, and consequently what makes their comparison interesting, is an important distinction regarding the specific function of Jerkins' voice in each. Because Jerkins did not produce "What You Know About Me," the sonic forgery in the recording is communicated through the presence of this vocal element alone. In the case of "I Got You," which he did produce, the sonic signature forgery (this time of Kanye West) is contained in all aspects of the music except the sound of Jerkins' voice, the only feature of the recording's "true" production identity.

Previously, the text described Jean Baudrillard's theory of the *simulacrum,* and more specifically, in relation to Los Angeles' MGM studios. For Baudrillard, in the process of condensing typically American themes and scenes based on the real world into movie sets, MGM studios has slowly transformed a secondary portrayal of American life into a primary source, enabling Americans to understand and interpret their own rituals. I would suggest that similarly, by proclaiming "I Got You" to be a "Darkchild classic," Rodney Jerkins has arguably come to interpret his own sonic signature from the viewpoint of secondary observers. Given the fact that the rest of this recording's production bears little resemblance to Jerkins work, the upfront insertion of these words are as irreconcilable with the surface of the track as they were in Another Level's "What You Know About Me"—an established forgery of Jerkins' sonic signature.

Thus, the sonic signature forgery in "I Got You" is twofold: on the one hand Jerkins is attempting to forge the sonic signature of a competitor (Kanye West), while on the

other, he is replicating the simulation of his own signature as portrayed by producers C&J in "What You Know About Me." This raises the question of whether or not sonic signatures evolve through combined processes of forgery in the field followed by a reinterpretation of this forgery by the source producer. Based on what has been illustrated in "I Got You," for example, will Kanye West in turn come to interpret, modify, and reference his own sonic signature in future recordings according to its portrayal in forgeries by producers like Rodney Jerkins? It is evident that, in addition to serving as a marker of identity, the sonic signature, by way of its forgery, also becomes a means of familiarizing producers with both the sounds and practices of competitors in the field, as well as with their own sounds and practices as seen through the eyes of competitors. In other words, sonic signatures serve a more complex and integral function in the field than simply enabling listeners to recognize and distinguish the work of one producer from another.

3.3: Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath"

3.3.1: Context

The fourth and final example of sonic signature forgery examined in this project is Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath" (2004), produced by Rodney Jerkins. This recording, I contend, like "I Got You," has been deliberately produced by Jerkins to sound like the work of another producer, this time production duo The Neptunes. However, unlike "I Got You" which featured a surface-level regeneration of Kanye West's sonic signature, in the following analysis I will illustrate how in the case of "Loose My Breath," it is not the aesthetic of The Neptunes' sonic signature but the *meaning* associated with this aesthetic that has been reproduced. In clearly illustrating this semiotic connection I will focus on connecting "Loose My Breath" to one Neptunes' production in particular, more specifically, Justin Timberlake's "Like I Love You" (2003).

Before moving to the analysis, once again we follow Burkholder's advice to provide preliminary biographical evidence linking the musicians implicated in the alleged case of borrowing (Burkholder 2001). It is important to point out that as teens in the mid-1990s,

Rodney Jerkins and Pharrell Williams (of The Neptunes) worked together in Virginia Beach under producer Teddy Riley, who acted as a mentor to both producers throughout their early professional development.[84] In addition to this early biographical connection between the two producers, I suggest there is also a strong musical one. During the time I spent working with Jerkins in the studio, for example, I witnessed the producer on numerous occasions extracting instrumental sounds (mostly kicks and snares) from extant Neptunes-productions and programming these sounds into his own tracks. This observation, while anecdotal, nonetheless provides clear evidence of musical borrowing from The Neptunes on the part of Jerkins.

Turning to Jerkins' specific contact with the alleged source of the borrowing in question, Justin Timberlake's "Like I Love You," incidentally, it was I who first brought this recording to Jerkins attention in July of 2002. Having heard the track played as a pre-release over the radio on the way to work one morning, I knew Jerkins would be interested in hearing a description of it because he was at the time in the process of completing an album for a young artist, Jay Mathis, slated to compete with Timberlake. In describing the recording to Jerkins, having heard it only once, I focused on three elements: the unusual Spanish-style guitar of the song's introduction, the fast tempo of the song, and the apparent "live" quality of the drum track. Interestingly, as will be explored in the following analysis, Jerkins' production of "Loose My Breath" borrows each of these features, not necessarily in relation to their aesthetic surface but more in proportion to their meaning and significance within the recording.

3.3.2: Analysis

3.3.2.1: Introduction

On first listen, Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath," produced by Rodney Jerkins, does not bear an immediate or obvious sonic resemblance to Justin Timberlake's "Like I

---

[84] While it is widely known that Jerkins and Williams worked together for Teddy Riley, my own knowledge of the details of this history is based on the first-hand recounting of it to me by Jerkins.

Love You," produced by The Neptunes. While the latter, as noted, features as its principal harmonic instrument a Spanish-style acoustic guitar, the former features a cutting synthesizer that doubles the lead vocal melody throughout. I would argue, however, that the sonic signature forgery contained in "Loose My Breath" is not rooted so much in the actual sounds used but in the common meanings that the sounds and patterns contained in both songs create. To explain what this means it is necessary to compare each song's key sonic features to the norms and expectations of the urban music as a whole, first examining those elements that conform to expectation and then those that defy it.

3.3.2.2: Generic Conformity

In the following, I will illustrate how both "Loose My Breath" and "Like I Love You" feature three main sonic elements that imbue them with a sense of generic "authenticity" and firmly couch them within the sphere of urban music. To begin with, assuming the snare drum falls on the third beat of a given measure, the two recordings employ a kick-drum composed exclusively of dotted quarter-note sequences. This particular kick-drum pattern, which the text previously highlighted in Figure 1.1, is one of the most pervasive rhythms used in contemporary hip-hop and R&B production and helps establish an urban feel in both recordings. Secondly, both tracks feature Phrygian mode, employing i-bII progressions throughout. This mode has been commonly used in rap since the late 1990s and its predominance in this field I would argue is in part a function of the fact that historically it has been easiest for producers to pitch-shift sampled material (i.e., a bass note) by a semi-tone.[85] I would also propose, however, that this particular harmonic progression has recently become especially ingrained within urban production as a result of a trend in referencing the sound of Middle Eastern/Indian music within the genre, exhibited in songs like Eric Sermon's "React" (2002), Timbaland's "Indian Flute" (2003) Kardinal's "Belly Dancer" (2003), Beyoncé Knowles' "Baby-Boy" (2004), to name only a few. Hence, the Phrygian modalities of "Loose My Breath" and "Like I Love You" conform to generic expectation on a number of historical levels.

---

[85] This observation is based on my own experiences as a producer.

Finally, both recordings include a breakdown section in which a spoken voice replaces the lead singer,[86] representing a quintessential structural feature of urban music. Furthermore, the two recordings feature the presence of a name-signature in this section. In the alleged source text, "Like I Love You," rapper Clipse states, "[I was] swerving in the lane, pumping N.E.R.D. in the [cassette] deck, listening to a joint called' 'Brain.'" In addition to Clipse referencing producers The Neptunes in "Like I Love You" by mentioning N.E.R.D.'s "Brain" (2003), produced by The Neptunes, singer Justin Timberlake also vocally recreates an excerpt from the mentioned recording by singing part of the chorus of "Brain" in the background (more specifically, the line—"I just love your brain"). Likewise, in the breakdown of "Loose My Breath," Rodney Jerkins voice enters the soundscape (02:40) and draws attention to himself as the track's producer, instructing listeners to "come on and breath with me" and including the word "Darkchild."

3.3.2.3: Generic Non-conformity

While the two tracks in question feature a number of parallel sonic elements that help establish generic authenticity in relation to the field of urban music, three of which I have highlighted above, I would also suggest that these recordings contain a series of corresponding phonographic elements that do not conform to this generic expectation and, ironically, help both tracks to stand out as unique, if in similar ways. To help explain this difference, I will begin by discussing what is meant by "generic non-conformity" in painting.

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis,* author Jacques Lacan describes an encounter with Dutch painter Hans Holbein's (1497-1543) work *The Ambassadors* (cited in Žižek 1991: 90). Between two depicted ambassadors, the subject of the painting, Lacan describes a peculiar "spot" that seems to stand out on the surface of the canvas. According to Lacan, this element, which upon first glance appears to simply be a mass of dried paint, on anamorphic inspection begins to extend into the viewer's three-

---

[86] In "Like I Love You," the breakdown section occurs between 02:47 and 03:20. In "Loose My Breath," it is between 02:33 and 02:50.

dimensional space, forming the resemblance of a human skull. In Lacan's analysis of the overall meaning of *The Ambassadors*, he describes this feature as outside the generic expectations of both Holbein's corpus and his school of art. To this extent, he dubs the feature a "signifier without signified" in the sense that it does not carry with it any automatic interpretation or easily decoded significance. According to Lacan:

> It is the element that, when viewed straightforwardly, remains a meaningless stain, but which, as soon as we look at the picture from a precisely determined lateral perspective, all of a sudden acquires well-known contours (...), rendering all its constituents "suspicious," and thus opens up the abyss of the search for a meaning—nothing is what it seems to be, everything is to be interpreted, everything is supposed to possess some supplementary meaning (quoted in Žižek 1991: 90-91).

Returning to the discussion of the two musical texts at hand, I would suggest that both "Like I Love You" and "Loose My Breath" contain in their introductory passages musical "spots" that stand out and defy generic interpretation in the same way as the blot in *The Ambassadors* and, in doing so, "open up the abyss of the search for meaning" within the two works.

To begin with, one of the most unusual features found in the two recordings in relation to urban music is the presence of what sounds like "live" drums in both—i.e., performed by actual musicians playing on drum kits for the recordings, rather than sampled from extant sources or sequenced using discrete sound sources. In reality, neither song's drums are "live;" both tracks feature percussion composed of a combination of extant samples and discrete sounds. To understand how the quality of "live" is nonetheless achieved in the drum tracks of these two recordings, however, we must again recall Eco's distinction between referential and emotive signifiers.

Applying Eco's semiotic equation to the integration of sound, it could be said that sonic interpretation begins with the question, "what am I hearing—what Eco calls the "referential" stage of meaning formation, followed by the question "what [subsequently] does it mean"—in Eco's terms, the formation of "emotive" significance (Eco 1976). For the following analysis, let us consider Eco's two stages of meaning interpretation (referential

and emotive) to represent the "first" and "second" degrees of a basic auditory process.[87] As an addition to this semiotic framework, I would add the somewhat obvious point that resolving the "first-degree" of meaning requires answering the basic question "what am I hearing." More specifically, I mean to here point out that forming this referential level of interpretation requires the perception and organization of strictly sensory elements (the sounds themselves) that themselves exist, prior to interpretation, as simple "ingredients" in what could be called a "zero-degree" state. To explain more concretely what is meant by "ingredients" in the zero-degree and why distinguishing this from the first-degree of sound interpretation (and in turn the second-degree) is important to the following discussion, let us momentarily reconsider the analogy between urban music and the field of designer fashion products. A few minutes of empirical testing in any American pharmacy can convincingly illustrate that it possible for two fragrances (one a genuine brand-name product, the other a pharmacy-sold knock-off composed of inferior ingredients) to contain very different ingrediants in degree-zero and yet smell nearly indistinguishable. In other words, two products with very different zero-degree elements may be interpreted referentially as one and the same in the first-degree (i.e., "these are both 'Paris' by Yves Saint-Laurent," when in fact one is not and has entirely been produced using synthetic extracts rather than natural essential oils).[88]

Turning to urban music, as a sonic example of the same phenomenon I have just described, I would propose that the drum tracks in both "Like I Love You" and "Loose My Breath," while composed of very different "ingredients" or sound elements in degree-zero, nonetheless, become interpreted as the same thing, i.e., "live drums," in the first-degree—an important indication of the forgery taking place. Beginning with the former, although the

---

[87] Though not presented in exactly the same context, the idea of using these terms in semiotic discussion has first, to my knowledge, been put forward by Slavoj Žižek (1991).

[88] Turning from smell to sound, an acquaintance recently told me the story of a somewhat parallel experience that occurred while he was working as a film editor for National Geographic Film and Television. He was editing a scene from a documentary on walrus communities in the Antarctic in which the original sound recording had been lost. Lacking the appropriate walrus sounds in his sample databases, he was forced to inter-splice the groans of a Bactrian camel throughout the film instead. Upon viewing the finished product this substitution is convincing and, while in degree-zero the viewer is actually hearing the sound of a camel, in the first-degree he or she believes that they are hearing the sounds of walruses. Here I would suggest that, like the example of The Rutles' recordings addressed in Chapter 2, this specific interpretation is largely based on the accompanying visual imagery.

drums in "Like I Love You" are upon close inspection actually a looped sample of four-bar phrase (that can clearly be heard repeating every eight measures), upon casual listening the drums appear to be live throughout the recording because the snare drum cycles through eight different sounding "hits" in the course of its loop. This timeframe is long enough that the repetition of snare sounds in the loop is arguably not detected by the sonic memory of casual listeners and thus the drums are continuously interpreted as a linearly evolving experience.[89]

Turning to the second example, the alleged forgery, the drums of "Loose My Breath" also appear to sound live in the first-degree, however, through a somewhat different makeup at degree-zero. In this case, it is not the drum hits themselves that evolve over time (based on the synthesized, rigid quality of the snares, kicks, and hi-hats, I would argue that these instruments have all been sequenced using unchanging individual sound-sources); rather, it is the sonic "noise" or "filler" in between these drum hits provided by the previously discussed looped marching band sample (which introduces the track and continues throughout the recording) that camouflages the sonic sterility of these individual drum sounds by obscuring their exact repetition. Thus, although the zero-degree "ingredients" contained in the drum patterns of these two recordings are neither live nor are they similar to one another, their elemental ingredients nonetheless combine to produce the same referential signification in the first-degree: the recognition of "live drums."

While this similarity between the drum tracks of both "Like I Love You" and "Loose My Breath" helps illustrate the sophistication of the first-degree modeling in the latter, the non-conforming generic congruence also found in both tracks, which I have suggested serves the function of a Lacanian "spot," does not have to do so much with a similarity in the first-degree of interpretation, but with the second-degree interpretation of the meaning—or lack thereof—in both works. Beginning with the alleged source text, "Like I Love You" features an eight-bar introduction in which the only instrumental sound heard is flamenco-style guitar strumming. Prior to the entrance of the drum-track in measure 9 of the recording (00:16), the meter of the song is unclear; the jerky, syncopated

---

[89] This is similar to the bubbles of a typical "babbling-brook" preset on a sleep-machine where the loop is long enough not to be detected by unfocused short-term listening memory.

phrasing of the guitar creates a kind of metric suspension that is not immediately resolved. In addition to this rhythmic ambiguity, the guitar track also raises question-marks in terms of genre because this instrument is atypical of urban music, and, even more so, of productions by The Neptunes who are known primarily as sequence-based producers and do not often employ live-sounding instrumentation. Thus, before the entrance of the drums, while the listener recognizes "flamenco guitar" in the first-degree, in the second-degree he/she is arguably left wondering what exactly this sound means and whether or not the song being heard is really Justin Timberlake's "Like I Love You" produced by The Neptunes.

Turning to "Loose My Breath," this recording begins, not with acoustic guitar strumming but with an isolated rolled-drum pattern that is clearly meant to evoke the sound of a military marching band.[90] While this sound is very different in the first-degree from the guitar strumming in "Like I Love You," I would suggest that in the second-degree it is actually modeled on the former sound, both in terms of its rhythmic ambiguity and by the fact that it lies well outside the characteristic sonic repertory of urban production (having never been used in any other Rodney Jerkins production of which I am aware).[91]

It is my contention that the two above-described features, the rhythmic and generic ambiguity, serve a function analogous to that of the "tracking shot" as commonly used in film (definition provided in Žižek 1991: 94-97). Typically, the tracking shot presents the viewer with an up-close, moving, subjective detail of an object that momentarily creates a strange and uneasy sensation, for example, by panning over the grooves of what appears to be an imposing and ominous hand.[92] Like Lacan's "spot," the tracking shot presents the viewer an apparent "signifier without signified." Normally, this shot is followed by a wide-angle depiction of the same object from a more objective viewpoint that allows the viewer to then reinterpret it within a more appropriate context. For example, in our hypothetical

---

[90] The liner notes indicate this sample to have been recorded specifically for the track by the New Jersey State Marching Band.

[91] I would suggest the presence of this instrument is related to the hype surrounding marching bands in high school and college athletics.

[92] An actual example of a tracking shot used in film can be observed in the opening scene of *American Psycho* (2001), which begins with a close-up of an imposing knife slicing an unidentifiable object. This if followed by a wide-angle view of busy chefs working the kitchen of an upscale restaurant.

illustration of the imposing hand, the close-up may be followed by a more distant shot of the same hand that reveals the fingers to in fact be those of a small and harmless child. In other words, the tracking shot confuses the viewer momentarily by isolating a particular object that first presents a confusion of meaning—one that is subsequently properly interpreted when later seen in relation to the rest of the narrative's diegetic space.

Comparing the characteristics of the tracking shot to the introductions of "Like I Love You" and "Loose My Breath," I would argue that the isolation of both the flamenco-guitar in the former and the drum-roll in the latter represent details of uncanny and uncommon musical features (in terms of both rhythmic and generic integrity) that raise question-marks and, citing Lacan's description of Holbein's spot, "open up the abyss of the search for meaning" in both recordings. It is only in measure 9 of the two pieces, with the entrance of additional instrumentation (analogous to the typical secondary objective shot described in film), that these opening features are put into proper perspective and the rhythmic and generic coherence of the tracks assured in the minds of listeners.

While the analogy to the tracking shot works well for the present analysis, as a caveat, comparing the uncanny detail in Holbein's "Ambassadors" to the abrupt introductions of the two musical examples at hand presents an important ontological and semiotic difference. This is because in Holbein's painting, the viewer only becomes aware of the detail after close inspection, which necessarily presupposes viewing the rest of the painting *first*, whereas in both "Like I Love You" and "Loose My Breath," the listener is presented with the uncanny introductory passages (the sound of the marching-band and flamenco-guitar representing "spots") *prior* to being introduced to the rest of the work *through* these features. [93] Thus, given that the flamenco-guitar and the marching band are the first instruments heard in "Like I Love You" and "Loose My Breath," their importance as "spots" is not so much in relation to the rest of the actual work (indeed, both elements blend into the overall aesthetic of the two pieces); rather, these sonic features are "spots" because they are out of context in terms of the generic anticipation of what these tracks are

[93] From a theoretical point of view, it could be argued simply that what happens in the painting is on a synchronic level, what it occurs diachronically in the music; or, to put it another way, painting is synchronic, while music is diachronic (develops in time).

supposed to sound like in the imaginations of listeners familiar with the production work of The Neptunes and Rodney Jerkins.

Remembering how Chapter 1 demonstrated that the anticipation of what new urban music will sound like is largely based on the knowledge of which producers have worked on specific tracks, the defiance of sonic signature expectation that both these singles present is the root of what makes each one immediately memorable in the minds of listeners—memorable in the same way while managing to sound nothing alike. Thus, it is not their common sound, or even their common meaning, but the common "search for meaning" instigated by these two instrumental introductions that identifies the sonic signature forgery present in the latter. Hence, in "Loose My Breath," Rodney Jerkins does not forge The Neptunes' sonic signature, rather he forges the significance of the absence of a sonic signature from what has become one of The Neptunes' most memorable productions, "Like I Love You."

3.3.3 Conclusion:

In the end, the sonic signature forgery contained in "Loose My Breath" is based on borrowed meaning rather than on borrowed surfaces. The purpose of "Loose My Breath" as a sonic signature forgery is not to recall the meaning of The Neptunes' sonic signatures, but to recall the meaning of a specific recording produced by The Neptunes, "Like I Love You," that specifically avoids referencing their sonic signature. To this extent, the forged meaning of "Loose My Breath" has to do with how the track deals with the anticipation of a given signature, both in the ways it conforms to and defies expectation of, in this case, Rodney Jerkins' own sonic signature rather than The Neptunes'.

To conclude, let us recall Burkholder's call for context by considering, now that we have a theory for what has been done, why Rodney Jerkins' apparent decision to produce a forgery in the ways highlighted above makes sense in this particular production. I would suggest that Jerkins' motivation in recreating the "anticipation-based" sonic signature deviation of "Like I Love You" in his own production of "Loose My Breath" has to do with

the nearly identical circumstances of reception of the two tracks, even though the latter was released two years later. To begin with, "Like I Love You" was the first single to come out from Justin Timberlake's debut album as a solo artist, *Justified* (2003), which as a result of Timberlake's highly publicized decision to split from his former group, 'Nsync, was extremely anticipated. Similarly (if through inversion), "Loose My Breath" was the first single released from Destiny's Child's reunion album, *Destiny Fulfilled* (2005), its three members having previously disbanded to pursue solo careers prior to this homecoming. Moreover, in light of Chapter 1's illustration of the public's interest in producer credits as a means of anticipating what a given album will sound like, there were clearly specific expectations of what, given the producers involved, each of these tracks would sound like long before they were actually released. It is from this point of contextual congruence, I would argue, that Jerkins chose to use "Like I Love You" as a success model for his own production of "Loose My Breath." Thus, the "live" military drums in the introduction of the latter mimics the function of a "live" flamenco guitar in the introduction of the former in that because both Rodney Jerkins and The Neptunes are known primarily as sequence-based producers, these elements represent a marked defiance of their expected sonic signatures. The same could be said for the unusually fast tempo, the rhythmic juxtaposition of the two introductions, and a number of the other elements I have examined in both recordings.

In other words, the sonic signature forgery in this fourth and final example has to do with the recreation of a specific producer's approach to problem solving: in this case, how to make a highly anticipated "breakthrough" track defy sonic expectation. This example of forgery is therefore essentially the opposite of the archetypal instance the text looked at in Borges' *Menard, Author of Quixote*. While the Borges' fiction told of two aesthetically identical texts whose contexts and in turn meanings rendered them different, the example at hand features two recordings that sound different on the surface, but through the employment similar production "strategies" within nearly identical contexts of reception, end up creating what is arguably the same meaning. Thus, while the least obvious example of sonic signature forgery looked at, in terms of parallel meaning and reception—the ultimate aim of all the examples we have looked at—this last one would appear to be the most successful.

3.4: SUMMARY

In Chapter 3, the text explored two additional examples of sonic signature forgery, in these instances done by producer Rodney Jerkins (and not of him, as in Chapter 2). In the first case, the study investigated how Jennifer Lopez' "I Got You," produced by Jerkins, recreated a number of different stylistic elements associated with producer Kanye West's identifiable sample-based aesthetic. In particular, it illustrated how the Jerkins-produced recording appeared to share a number of aesthetic similarities with West's production of Janet Jackson's "My Baby." Unlike the two sonic signature forgeries looked at in Chapter 2, in this case the text illustrated how "I Got You" contained, in addition to stylistic or "style-based" references to the sound-signature of the source or "forged" producer, verbal references to the name-signature of the host producer, Rodney Jerkins, which the text called "logo-based." The presence of this duel-level sonic signature referencing in the host recording, along with the producer Kanye West's description of himself as the "Louis Vuitton Don" in the source recording, allowed for a comparison of the practice of sonic signature forgery in record production to the manufactured forgery of designer handbags in fashion. More specifically, the text looked at three different examples of Louis Vuitton-inspired products, comparing them to the three recordings previously looked at in the analysis, as a means of illustrating how the practice of forgery may have a beneficial effect for a source producer by helping to consecrate his or her work. Thus, the analysis of "I Got You" helped reveal how the practice of sonic signature forgery represents at least in some cases an accepted, if not encouraged, practice in contemporary urban record production.

In its second example, this chapter exposed how the recording of Destiny's Child's "Loose My Breath," produced by Rodney Jerkins, attempted to recreate the meaning of Justin Timberlake's "Like I Love You," produced by The Neptunes. Unlike the previous recordings looked at, in this case the sonic signature forgery did not involve the recreation of a specific aesthetic; rather, it had to do with the aural *anticipation* of a sonic signature and how "Loose My Breath" both conformed to and defied generic expectation in the same ways as "Like I Love You." Thus, in addition to solidifying the argument that sonic signatures serve an important function in enabling listeners to anticipate the sound (and in turn success) of a given recording, this specific analysis also pointed to the ways that sonic

signatures work together to establish the larger musical practices and patterns that define musical genre and generic expectation as a whole.

Conclusion

In this project I have demonstrated and clarified, with examples, the original premise that sonic signatures exist in record production. I have endeavored to address at all levels, from discrete individual morphemic sounds to syntagmatic organized patterns, from the processing of vocals to the verbal information contained therein, the diversity and breadth of sonic signatures as they currently appear in the field of urban music. In particular, the focus of this Thesis has been one urban record producer, Rodney Jerkins, and his relation to sonic signatures in the plural—examining how Jerkins' signature is copied by other competing producers, as well as his own attempts to copy other producers' sonic signatures. Specifically, through an analysis of a number of Jerkins-related productions, the text has revealed, among other things, the various levels at which sonic signatures communicate meaning in a recording. Within this diversity, I have attempted to further highlight an important difference between the implicit "style-based" components of the sonic signature, and its explicit "logo-based" derivatives.

For this study, I have focused on Jerkins because he is an exemplary urban producer, representing one of the most influential and well-known producers presently working in the North American field. However, the examples of intertextuality looked at in relation to Jerkins are not meant to suggest that sonic forgery is representative of the majority of borrowing that occurs in the field of urban music. To the contrary, it is evident that not only urban music, but many areas of popular music have long established and well-documented traditions of culturally accepted musical borrowing (observed in, for example, the practice of sampling in hip-hop). Instead, this project has dealt with a different kind of borrowing altogether, forgery, a practice that to my knowledge has not yet been addressed by musicologists or cultural theorists in relation to urban music. The project focused on deliberate and sophisticated attempts made by three producers, Cutfather & Jo, The Underdogs, and Rodney Jerkins, to deceive listeners for symbolic and economic purposes into believing they are hearing the work of one producer, when in fact they are hearing the work of another.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the original premise that sonic signature forgery has played a key role in the development of Rodney Jerkins' specific sonic signature. On the one hand, by having his sonic signature forged, as we have seen, Jerkins appears to have gained insight into his own sound. This newfound perspective is arguably reflected in his production of "I Got You " which seems to include a "caricature" of his sonic logo influenced by the forgeries of his productions examined in Chapter 3. At the very least, the text made clear that Jerkins is both aware of forgeries of his own sonic signature and that these forgeries have added an important symbolic and economic power to his sonic brand. In turn, by revealing Jerkins' attempts to forge the sonic signatures of other producers, I have tried to demonstrate that his production sound is not only influenced by other sonic signatures but is in some ways part of a broad collective reception process within the field whereby sonic signatures (and by extension urban music and musicians as a whole) are defined, positioned, redefined, and repositioned by forgeries of them.

Thus, I would assert that the examples of sonic signature forgery looked at in relation to Rodney Jerkins' sonic signature can be interpreted as a microcosm of the organization of the field of production as a whole. Given that the theme of stylistic reproduction is a recurring one in many areas of art, not just music, analogies to subjects as diverse as film theory, painting, the history of literacy, and designer fashion have proved useful in illustrating this point. Additionally, in relation to the larger implications of the project, it is also valid that the text's argumentation has taken into account broad theoretical frameworks such as Baudrillard's simulacrum and Bourdieu's field of production. This Thesis has illustrated that sonic signatures are an important element within the symbolic economy of the field of record production. They help consecrate and establish producers, define and negotiate individual sonic positions, and carry with them a symbolic value. As this symbolic value becomes connected to an actual economic one, the practical motivations for sonic signature forgery arise.

This project did not address the issue of copyright except at length. Questions of intellectual property are becoming increasingly relevant to the discussion of contemporary record production and, as such, present a worthwhile topic to include in future studies. Additionally, by restricting this project's scope to primarily urban production, its

conclusions are naturally limited in their range of application. It would be interesting, for example, to look at the possibility of sonic signature forgery in a non-urban context. As brief references to non-urban producers like The Matrix, John Shanks, and Max Martin suggested in Chapter 1, sonic signatures appear to be endemic to the production practices and aesthetics of a broad range of contemporary music genres.

In this Thesis, I have based my conclusions on musical analysis, published interviews and reviews, and firsthand experiences with producers. Considering the extent to which sonic signatures are designed to impart specific meanings (both conscious and unconscious) to everyday listeners, another suggestion for future research would be the inclusion of survey-based response evaluations. While the framework of the present study did not permit the assimilation of this approach, I suspect that it would provide further insight into many subjects touched upon in this Thesis.

Reference List

A. Writings

Agawu, V. Kofi. 1991. *Playing with Signs: A semiotic interpretation of classical music.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Allen, Graham. 1999. *Intertextuality.* London: Routledge.

Anonymous. 2001. "Jessica Simpson's *Iressistable.*" Website: <http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/music-records/irresistible-jessica-simpson/273036> (Accessed 8 March 2002).

Anonymous. 2002a. "BMI Urban Music Awards." Website: <http://www.bmi.com/news/200208/20020807a.asp> (Accessed 15 March 2003).

Anonymous. 2002b. "Britney Spears' *In The Zone.*" Website: <http://www.mtv.com> (Accessed 26 February 2002).

Anonymous. 2003. "Britney Spears." Website: <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Britney-Spears> (accessed 18 October 2003).

Anonymous. 2004a. "R&B Krazy Producers." Website: <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Park/7904/RandBKrazyProducers.htm> (Accessed 16 June 2004).

Anonymous. 2004b. "American Brandstand 2003." Website: <http://www.agendainc.com/brandstand03.pdf> (Accessed 12 April 2005).

Anonymous. 2005a. "The King Of Crunk." *Source Magazine* (August). Website: <http://www.thesource.com> (Accessed 15 August 2005).

Anonymous. 2005b. "Discussion Board." Website: <http://ilx.wh3rd.net/thread.php?msgid=5602763> (visited 8 October 2005).

Anonymous. 2005c. "Top 40 Charts." Website: <http://top40-charts.com> (visited 8 October 2005).

Anonymous. 2005d. "Review of 'Keep This Fire Burning.'" Website: <http://www.aftonbladet.se/vss/noje/story/0,2789,195740,00.html> (my translation, visited 8 October 2005).

Anonymous. 2005e. "Rodney Jerkins Interview." Website: <http://www.classicwhitney.com/newsfile/reports/misc/rodneyjerkinsinterview_26apr2000.htm> (Accessed 10 October 2005).

Anonymous. 2005f. "American Brandstand 2004." Website: <http://www.agendainc.com/brandstand04.pdf> (Accessed 12 April 2005).

Barthes, Roland. 1963. *Elements of Semiology and Writing Degree Zero.* Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. Boston: Beacon Press.

Barthes, Roland. 1983. *The Fashion System.* Trans. Mathew Ward and Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulation.* Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 2003. *Mass Identity Architecture: Architectural writings of Jean Baudrillard.* Ed. Franco Proto. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Björnberg, Alf. 1992. "Music Video and the Semiotics of Popular Music." Paper presented at the Secondo Convegno Europeo di Analisi Musicale. University of Trento.

Bloom, Harold. 1975. *A Map of Misreading.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Blum, Stephen. 2001. "Composition." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd edition. Ed. Stanley Sadie. New York: Grove Press. Available online: <http://www.grovemusic.com> (Accessed 11 December 2003).

Boogie, Aqua. 2005. "Dirty, Rotten Scoundrels: An interview with Lil Jon." *Remix Magazine* (January): 30-35.

Borges, Jorge Luis. 1996. *Ficciones.* Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Emicé.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production.* Ed. Randal Johnson. New York and London: Columbia University Press.

Burkholder, Peter J. 2001. "Borrowing." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd edition. Ed. Stanley Sadie. New York: Grove Press. Available online: <http://www.grovemusic.com> (Accessed 11 December 2003).

Burns, Gary. 1987. "A Typology of Hooks in Popular Records." *Popular Music* 6, no. 1 (January): 1-20.

Cartledge, Frank. 1999. "Distress to Impress: Local Punk Fashion and Commodity Exchange." In *Punk Rock: So What.* Ed. Roger Sabin, 143-154. London: Routldege.

Cashmere, Paul. N.D. "Britney Recruits for her New Album." Website: <http://www.undercover.com.au/news/2003/20031113_britney.html> (Accessed 16 November 2003).

Chanan, Michael. 1995. *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music.* London: Verso.

Clark, William and John Hogan. 2003. *Temples of Sound: Inside the great recording studios*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Cogan, Brian. 2003. "What Do I Get? Punk rock, authenticity, and cultural capital." *Counterblast: The e-journal of communication and culture* (May). Website: <http://www.nyu.edu/pubs/counterblast/punk.htm> (Accessed 18 August 2005).

Cohn, Nik. 1970. *Market.* New York: Penguin.

Collingwood, Robin George. 1938. *The Principles of Art.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Covach, John R. 1991. "The Rutles and the Use of Specific Models in Musical Satire." *Indiana Theory Review* 11: 119-144.

Cunningham, Mark. 1999. *Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production,* 2nd ed. London: Sanctuary Publishing.

Davies, Stephen. 1987. "Authenticity in Musical Performance." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 27: 39–50.

Derry, Mark. 1990. "Public Enemy: Confrontation." *Keyboard* (September): 81-96.

Dutton, Dennis. 2003. "Authenticity in Art." In *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Ed. Jerrold Levinson. New York: Oxford University Press.

Eco, Umberto. 1976. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press.

Eisenberg, Evan. 1988. *The Recording Angel: The experience of music from Aristotle to Zappa.* New York: Penguin.

Ewen, Stewart. 1988. *All Consuming Images: The politics of style in contemporary culture.* New York: Basic Books.

Fabbri, Franco. 1999. "Browsing Musical Spaces: Categories and the musical mind." Paper presented at the IASPM International Biennale Conference (UK) 1999. Website: <http://www.tagg.org> (Accessed 15 June 2005).

Frith, Simon. 1986. "Art Versus Technology: The strange case of popular music." *Media, Culture, & Society* 8, no. 3: 263-279.

Frith, Simon, ed. 2004. *Popular Music: Critical concepts in media and cultural studies.* London; New York: Routledge.

Ganz, Nicholas. 2004. *Graffiti World: Street art from five continenets.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Gaunt, Kyra. 2006.*The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the ropes from double Dutch to hip-hop.* New York: NYU Press.

Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Palimpsests: Literature in the second degree.* Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Gillespie, Mark. 2004a. "Miss-Match: Aesthetic problems in Britney Spears' 'Overprotected, the Darkchild Remix.'" Paper presented at Musicking: the seventh annual CUNY graduate students in music conference, GSIM Conference Center, City University (CUNY), New York, NY 24 April 2004.

Gillespie, Mark. 2004b. "Mixing Cultures through Genre: Hybrid authorship and record production." Paper presented at Sur la bonne piste : Le rôle du studio d'enregistrement en musique populaire et dans les medias, Colloque annuel de l'IASPM-Canada Carleton University, Ottawa, 15-17 May 2004.

Gillespie, Mark. 2004c. "De la spécificité de la réalisation phonographique suédoise." Paper presented at Le(s) Nord(s) imaginaire(s) : Colloque scientifique international, Centre culturel suédois, Paris, France, 11-12 June 2004.

Gillet, Charlie. 1980. "The Producer as Artist." In *The Phonograph and Our Musical Life: Proceedings of a centennial conference, 7-10 December 1977.* Ed. H. W. Hitchcock. 51-57. New York: CUNY/Institute for Studies in American Music.

Goebel, Greg. 2005. "van Meegeren" In *Wikipedia.* Website: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_van_Meegeren> (accessed 10 Dec 2005).

Goodman, Nelson. 1976. *Languages of Art: An approach to a theory of symbols.* 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Gottinger, Berndt. 2005. "From Lo-Fi to 5.1: Recording technology, philosophy and change." Thesis Project. New York University.

Griffel, L. Michael. 1975/1989. "The Strange Case of John Schmab: An Aesthetic Puzzle." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34, no. 1. Reprinted in *Puzzle s about Art: An Aesthetics Casebook.* Eds. Margaret P. Battin, John Fisher, Ronald Moore, and Anita Silvers. Bedford: St. Martin's Press.

Gross, Jason. 2002. "Interview with Simon Frith." Website: <http://www.furious.com/perfect/simonfrith.html> (Accessed 2 February, 2006).

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The meaning of style.* London: Routledge.

Hebdige, Dick. 1990. "Style as Homology and Signifying Practice." In *On Popular Music: Rock, Pop and the Written Word.* Eds. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin. 56-65. London: Routledge.

Hennion, Antoine. 1983. "The Production of Success: An anti-musicology of the pop song." In *Popular Music* 3. Eds. R. Middleton and D. Horn. 159-194. Cambridge University Press.

Hugo, Chad. 2003. "Interview with The Neptunes." *Sound & Recording Magazine* (December). Website: <http://www.futureproducers.com/forums/showthread.php?threadid=49206&highlight=neptunes> (Accessed 6 December 2004).

Ihara, Hiroko. 2004. "Exhibition Explores History of Louis Vuitton Motif." *The Daily Yomiuri* (Kyoto) 21 October 2004.

Katz, Mark. 2004. *Capturing Sound: How technology has changed music.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kawashima, Dale. 2003. "Superhot Trio The Matrix Delivers Breakthrough Hits with Avril Lavigne, Hilary Duff & Other Artists." *Songwriter Universe Magazine.* Website: <http://www.songwriteruniverse.com/matrix.htm> (Accesssed 10 December 2005).

Kistner, Gavin. 2006. "Hip-hop Sampling and Twentieth-Century African-American Music: An analysis of Nas' 'Get Down' (2003)." MA Thes. Univeristé Laval.

Kivy, Peter. 1995. *Authenticities: Philosophical reflections on musical performance.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Klein, Naomi. 2001. *No Logo.* New York: Flamingo Publishers.

Kristeva, Julia. 1998. 2nd ed. *Desire in Language: A semiotic approach to literature and art.* Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lacan, Jacques. 1978. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W. W. Norton.

Lacasse, Serge. 2000. "Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music." In *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* Ed. Michael Talbot. 35-58. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Lacasse, Serge. 2002. "Ontological Misunderstandings in Music Analysis." Paper presented at the CUMS Conference 2002, University of Toronto.

Lacasse, Serge. 2005. "La musique populaire comme discours phonographique: fondements d'une démarche d'analyse." *Musicologies*, no. 2: 23-39.

Martinez, Jose Luis. 2000. "Semiotics and the Art Music of India." *The Online Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 6, no. 1 (January). Website: <http://www.societymusictheory.org> (accessed 10 May 2006).

Meyer, Leonard. 1967. "Forgery and the Anthropology of Art," from his, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas,* represented in Denis Dutton (ed), *The Forger's Art,* pp. 131-152. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Millard, Andre. 2003. *America on Record: A history of recorded sound.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mirigliano, Rosario. 1995. "The theoretical bases of musical semiotics." In *Musical Signification: Essays in the Semiotic Theory and Analysis of Music.* Ed. Eero Terasti. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Moore, Allan F. 2001. *Rock, The Primary Text: Developing a musicology of rock.* 2nd ed. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers.

Morton, David. 2002. *Off the Record: The Technology and Culture of Sound Recording in America.* Newark: Rutgers University Press.

Moylan, William. 2002. *The Art of Recording, Understanding and Crafting the Mix.* 2nd ed. Boston: Focal Press.

Muikku, Jari. 1990. "On the Role and Tasks of a Record Producer." *Popular Music and Society* 14, no. 1: 25-34.

Nattiez, Jean-Jacques. 1975. *Fondements d'une semiologie de la musique.* Paris: Union General d'Editions.

Neff. 2006. "Darkchild: Unofficial fan website." Website: <http://www.50megs.com> (accessed 20 October 2006).

Negus, Keith. 1993. *Producing Pop: Culture and conflict in the popular music industry.* New York: Routledge Press.

Parker, Erik. 2002. "Hip-Hop goes Commercial: Rappers give Madison Avenue a run for its money." *The Village Voice,* 11 September 2002. Available online: <http://www.villagevoice.com> (Accessed 10 May 2006).

Peck, John & Martin Coyle, Eds. 1984. *Literary Terms and Criticism.* London: Macmillan.

Rooksby, Rikky. 2001. *Inside Classic Rock Tracks: Songwriting and recording secrets of 100+ great songs.* London: Backbeat Books.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1916. *Course in General Linguistics.* Trans. W. Baskin. Reprint. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.

Shepard, John, Ed. 2003. *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World: Performance and production.* London: Continuum.

Sherburne, Philip. 2005. "Lil Jon Sidebar." Website: <courses.dce.harvard.edu/~musie145/pdfs/sherburne-lil-jon.pdf> (Accessed 1 October 2005).

Shuker, Roy. 1998. *Key Concepts in Popular Music.* London and New York: Routledge.

Smith, Jonathan. 2005. "Lil Jon." *Scratch Magazine* (March/April). Website: <http://www.scratchmagazine.com> (Accessed 7 June 2005).

Strauss, Neil. N.D. "Growing up: Britney did it again." Website: <http://www.geocities.com/goawayzine/18.html> (Accessed 8 November 2003).

Swift, Elizabeth. 2003. "High Anxiety: Class, consumption, and collections of Polo Ralph Lauren." MA Thes. University of New Mexico.

Tagg, Philip. 1992. "Towards a Sign Typology of Music." In *Secondo convegno europeo di analisi musicale.* Ed. R. Dalmonte & M Baroni. 369-378. Trento: University of Trento.

Tagg, Philip. 1999. "Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music." Website: <http://www.tagg.org> (Accessed 15 July 2005).

Tankel, Jonathan D. 1990. "The Practice of Recording Music: Remixing as recording." *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 3: 34-46.

Théberge, Paul. 1997. *Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making music/consuming technology.* Middleton, CT.: Wesleyan University Press.

Vignolle, Jean Pierre. 1991. "Mixing Genres and Reaching the Public: The Production of popular music." *Social Science Information* 19, no. 1: 75-105.

Wilson, Ana-Maria. 2003. "Vuitton's Murakami Bags Inspire Canal St. Copies." *Women's Wear Daily* 24:1 (April): 24-29.

Wienker-Piepho. 1995. "Karaoke: Singing beyond national boundaries." *Ballads and Boundaries: Narrative singing in an intercultural context.* Ed. J. Porter and E. Sinatra. 307-312. Los Angeles: UCLA Press.

Zak, Albin J. III. 2001. *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting tracks, making records.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1991. *Looking Awry: An introduction to Jacques Lacan through popular culture.* Cambridge: The MIT Press.

B. Audiovisual Documents[94]

Abracatabla (Sample CD). 1994. Published by Zero-G Ltd (No ASIN).

Ace of Base. 1998. *Cruel Summer.* Arista B000008UUI.

Aguilera, Christina. 2002. *Stripped.* RCA B00006CXXU.

A-Ha. 1990. *Hunting High and Low.* Warner Brothers B000002L7Y.

Another Level. 2002. *From the Heart.* Arista B0000631RC.

Ashanti. 2002. *Ashanti.* Def Jam B000063UMO.

B2K. 2003. *You Got Served.* Sony B0000YTPES.

Bad Boys II (Soundtrack). 2003. Bad Boy B00009V7UR.

Backstreet Boys, The. 1999. *Millenium.* Jive B00000IOOE.

Backstreet Boys, The. 2000. *Black & Blue*. Jive B00005056C.

Backstreet Boys, The. 2005. *Never Gone.* Jive B0009GJGEG.

Beyonce. 2003. *Dangerously in Love.* Sony B000099T2L.

Blige, Mary J. 2001. *Family Affair.* MCA Int'l B00005NU1Y.

Bon Jovi. 2000. *Crush.* Island B00004TQX0.

Bowie, David. 1975. *Young Americans.* Ryko B0007MUS4O.

Branch, Michelle. 2003. *Hotel Paper.* Maverick B00009LI14.

Brandy. 1998. *Never Say Never.* Atlantic B000006OB0.

Brandy. 2002. *Full Moon.* Atlantic B00005V5TD.

Brandy. 2004. *Afrodisiac.* Atlantic B0001Z4P32.

Brown, Chris. 2005. *Chris Brown.* Jive B000BDGWIU.

Ciara. 2004. *Goodies.* La Face B0002SPPWS.

Clarkson, Kelly. 2004. *Breakaway.* RCA B00064ADRK.

[94] The number provided at the end each audiovisual listing refers to the ASIN (Amazon Standard Identification Number).

Clipse, The. 2002. *Lord Willin'.* Arista B0000665WR.

Cox, Deborah. 2002. *Morning After.* BMG Int'l B00007DPIY.

Destiny's Child. 1999. *The Writing's On The Wall.* Sony B00000JQFH.

Destiny's Child. 2004. *Destiny Fufilled.* Sony B000643A5M.

Deepest India (Sample CD). 1998. Published by Zero-G Ltd. (No ASIN).

Dr. Dre. 1999. *Chronic 2001.* Interscope B000023VR6.

Eminem. 1999. *The Slime Shady LP.* Interscope Records B00000I5JQ.

Fat Joe. 2005. *All or Nothing.* Atlantic B00064LOQO.

Honey (Sountrack to the film). 2003. Elektra B0000DD78C.

Houston, Whitney. 1998. *My Love is Your Love.* Arista B00000DFRS.

Jackson, Michael. 2001. *Invincible.* Sony B00005Q4JH.

Ja Rule. 2005. *Exodus.* Def Jam B000BY827I.

Jay-Z. 1999. *Volume III: The life and times of Sean Carter.* Roc-a-Fella B00003NHAR.

Jay-Z. 2000. *The Dynasty.* Roc-a Fella B000050HS9.

Jay-Z. 2003. *The Black Album.* Roc-a-Fella B0000DZFL0.

K-Ci & JoJo. 2002. *Emotional.* MCA B00007E8RX.

Knight, Beverley. 2005. *Affirmation.* Parlophone B0002852GM.

Lohan, Lindsay. 2004. *Speak.* Casablanca B00065JTB0.

Lopez, Jennifer. 2001. *J.Lo.* Sony B00005N83M.

Lopez, Jennifer. 2005. *Rebirth.* Sony B00079GCEC.

Ludacris. 2003. *Chicken N Beer.* Def Jam B0000AQS1A.

Ms. Jade. 2002. *Girl Interrupted.* Polydor B00006LWRO.

My Baby's Daddy (Soundtrack to the film). 2004. Bungalo Records B0001906N6.

Nelly. 2004. *Suit.* Umvd Labels B0002MPQIW.

N.E.R.D. 2002. *In Search of...* Virgin Records B00005RGFX.

'Nsync. 2000. *No Strings Attached.* Jive B00004NRPZ.

'NSync. 2001. *Celebrity.* Jive B00005LD1A.

Petey, Pablo. 2004. *Still Writing In My Diary: 2nd entry.* Jive B00006RZ44.

P. Diddy. 2003. *Show Me Your Soul.* Universal B0000WMZX8.

Ray-J. 2001. *This Ain't A Game.* Atlantic B00005KGL7.

Ray-J. 2005. *Raydiation.* Sanctuary Records B0009S2TJ8.

Robyn. 1997. *Robyn is Here.* BMG B0009S2TJ8.

Robyn. 2003. *Don't Stop the Music.* BMG International B0000E6994.

Run DMC. 1986. *Raising Hell.* Profile Records PRO-1217

Simpson, Jessica. 2001. *Irresistible.* Sony B00005K404.

Snoop Dogg. 1993. *Doggystyle.* Priority Records B000003AEB.

Snoop Dogg. 2004. *R&G (Rhythm & Gangsta): The masterpiece.* Geffen B000675KH0.

Spears, Britney. 2001. *Britney.* Jive B00005OM4N.

Spears, Britney. 2003. *In The Zone.* Jive B0000DD7LB.

Stefani, Gwen. 2004. *Love, Angel, Music, Baby.* Interscope Records B00064AEJW.

Timbaland. 2003. *Under Construction, Part II.* Umvd Labels B0000C7PVB.

Timberlake, Justin. 2002. *Justified.* Jive B00006JO4Q.

TLC. 2003. *3D (Bonus DVD).* Arista 787786.

Trice, Obie. 2003. *Cheers.* Interscope Records B0000BWVLM.

Usher. 2001. *8701.* Arista B00005LKGT.

West, Kanye. 2004. *The College Dropout.* Roc-a Fella B0001AP12G.