An Acquired Taste: The Enduring Legacy of Progressive Rock

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to address the growing recognition that in the world of music appreciation, the voice of fans needs to be heard, so as to enrich our understanding of how and why popular music forms are valorized. The unspectacular fans of Progressive rock music have particularly been excluded from academic, scholarly, and journalistic discourse. Using Grounded Theory as a research basis, this thesis privileges and foregrounds the views of 51 Progressive rock *amateur* aficionados, and explores the motivations behind their lifetimes of enduring fandom. One-on-one interviews with each participant, and six six-person Focus Groups, provided over 100 hours of primary research, and enabled key findings to be analyzed, and new theories to be advanced. The heterogenous nature of Progressive rock was mirrored in these fans' perspectives. This research shed new light on how fans contextualize and define this musical meta-genre ('A Contextualizaton'). In their own words, and *contra* extant theories, their perspectives bring to life how and why they repeatedly immerse themselves in their preferred music, clearly delineating textual and contextual elements ('The Complexity Attraction'). The socio-cultural settings within which Progressive rock is listened to, engaged with, and enjoyed, signifies individual, rather than wider societal, approaches to understanding music appreciation and the valorization of music artefacts and history, giving rise to a notion termed *'mea cultura'.* Finally, the correspondences between participating fans' appreciation of Progressive rock's evolution, and their own reception of it, reveal some hitherto unrecognized paradoxes ('The Progressive Paradox'). Across a broad range of fields, this thesis advances our understanding of Progressive rock fandom through the eyes and ears of those rarely heard from.

Key words: Progressive rock; Music Fandom; The *Amateur*; The Complexity Attraction; *'Mea Cultura'*; The Progressive Paradox; Grounded Theory.

Acknowledgements

No undertaking such as this is the endeavour of only the author and the people recognized within this acknowledgment. Many others significantly contributed in a variety of ways, often without realizing it, and I am eternally grateful to them. No words, either to them, or those acknowledged below, would do adequate justice to the ways that I have been supported.

There are three specific acknowledgements that I would like to record:

'**Discipline**' – For being there at the genesis of the academic journey, for understanding when 4/4 was necessary, and likewise when some 13/8 was appropriate (and vice versa), and for ensuring that my Indiscipline was reined in, and given structure, I wish to acknowledge, and thank, Professors Chris Anderton, and Martin James.

'**Welcome Back My Friends…**' – This thesis would have been impossible without the contribution of 51 participants. Not only did they help turn the faintly discerned dream into a reality, they provided me with a richness, depth and breadth of informed views beyond that which I anticipated, or could have hoped for. My thanks to each and every one of them. I can only hope that I have done justice to their contributions. To all participants, I would like to say, "you are all in here!". For them, and for me, Progressive rock is '… a show that never ends'.

'**And You And I**' – Neither of us knew how a whim would turn into a project, which would turn into, let's face it, an obsession. I return various tables to their proper use, and pledge not to "just read a bit of this new book, paper, article, …" for at least a little while. For the support, for the understanding, for the Love, for being the 'heart of my sunrise', thank you Becca: my Love to you.

This Thesis is dedicated to Simon John Goodge (1966 – 1985).

Paul Goodge October 2022

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

> "It would have to do with just the breaking of boundaries […] it was genre-shaking music, it took from everything and created something different" (Charles)

> "the musical thoughtfulness, ambition and desire to push boundaries that has always characterised the best progressive rock" (Anthony 2012, p.295)

> "the combination of music and lyrics, the whole is very much more than the sum of the parts. There's some combination of a bit of complexity, a bit of non-standardization, a bit of virtuosity - it's like just a great chef taking basic ingredients and producing a wonderful dish, and only the great chefs can do that" (Fred)

> "it seethes with ordure, groans with junk, but also contains some of rock and pop's most glittering inspirations" (Stump 1997, p.4)

'Progressive rock', as we currently understand it, came to prominence in the late 1960s and reached its heyday in the mid-1970s. At that time, it had been critically acclaimed, and was commercially at its peak, equalling or surpassing many other rock music acts. The critical reaction became more mixed, and then all but vanished as other genres or styles came to prominence. The relatively few references from the 1980s onwards have been characterized by the long shadow that has been cast by the revisiting of the era, and 'prog' is frequently used as a pejorative term. This 'received wisdom' is being revised, albeit slowly, with some critical reappraisals. One of the early, leading authors on Progressive rock, Edward Macan states that "[f]ew styles of popular music have generated as much controversy as progressive rock" (Macan 1997, p.3). Jérôme Melançon and Alexander Carpenter go further, referring to it as being "the most hated of all pop and rock genres" (Melançon and Carpenter 2015, n.p.), and note that Stephen Skratt's review of 'Yes Is the Answer'[1] refers to how Progressive rock and its preeminent bands were seen as "uncool", "reviled" and "much-despised" (ibid. n.p.). Jay Keister and Jeremy Smith take the argument to its ultimate conclusion with the assertion that "Progressive rock of the early 1970s has been demonised as a nadir in the history of rock" (Keister and Smith 2008, p.433). John Peel, the doyen of DJs, famously referred to ELP's début performance as "a tragic waste of talent and electricity"[2].

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[1] Edited by Tyson Cornell and Marc Weingarten.
[2] John Peel, 1970, referred to in http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/reviews/9bvr/ accessed 2nd November 2020.

Chris Atton summarises Progressive rock as follows:

> "the dominant critical characterisation of progressive rock is of overblown, pretentious musicians in ridiculous garb surrounded by banks of keyboards playing bombastic, overlong compositions in time signatures that you couldn't dance to […]. This characterisation is only partly unfair" (Atton 2001, p.29)

With the arrival of punk in the late 1970s, which has been inaccurately regarded as a reaction to Progressive rock (see (Albiez 2003; Barnes 2020)), the music was deemed to have been consigned to the music crates of history, only to see a resurgence in the early 1980s (with what is frequently termed 'neo-prog') and is currently enjoying a healthy renaissance. Various authors refer to the life-course of Progressive rock. Terms such as 'period', 'wave', and 'era', are used by different commentators in different ways, and many bands straddle different 'periods', sometimes with stylistic developments. Further definitional complication arises via the number of other terms that are often used in conjunction with, or seen as synonymous with, Progressive rock, such as 'symphonic rock', 'art rock', and 'classical rock'. Genre theory itself is a problematic field, and whether Progressive rock should be considered a style (as Macan does below), a genre, a 'meta-genre' (Anderton 2010), or a 'sub-code' (Middleton 1990, p.174), only serves to muddy the waters around its definition and boundaries[3]. Anderton's 'meta-genre' is considered the most relevant (see Chapter 3, 'Contextualization'). The bands frequently cited as the leading ones, and who are authoritatively labelled, and hereinafter referred to, as 'the Big 6'[4], are Genesis, Yes, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, King Crimson, and Emerson, Lake and Palmer ('ELP'). Each of these bands have enjoyed considerable, enduring if variable, critical and commercial success and have a worldwide, loyal, even fanatical fanbase. They are routinely lauded for their influence on subsequent bands, by critics, scholars, fans, and musicians alike. This loyalty, along with something of a revisiting of Progressive rock's legacy, is resulting in a burgeoning degree of interest in its history and influence.

This wider interest, in terms of its fanbase, has been reviewed by Tim Dowd (Dowd 2014), who has identified over 30-prog-related festivals, featuring 'heritage' and contemporary bands. In terms of wider mainstream media interest, amongst other references, in 2009 the BBC commissioned the 'Prog Britannia' three-part series[5], and the affectionate mockumentary 'Brian Pern: A Life in Rock'[6], and the *Times* newspaper ran an article on Steven Wilson, "The man who

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[3] For an exploration of how these terms can be indiscriminately interchanged, see (Fabbri 1999).
[4] https://progarchy.com/2018/01/07/ricks-quick-takes-wonderous-stories-by-jerry-ewing/ accessed 2nd November 2020.
[5] 'Sub-titled, An Observation in Three Movements'.
[6] This ran from 2014 - 2017.

made prog rock cool again"[7]. Steven Wilson, whose relevance is discussed by participants, is seen as a standard-bearer and poster boy for 'modern day prog', with both his group-based activities, such as with Porcupine Tree, and solo work. Other bands such as Dream Theater, Marillion, Big Big Train, and The Flower Kings are amongst the many who are (relatively) thriving, in this Covid-impacted world.

The reasons for consumers to regularly and repeatedly listen to their preferred, or any, music is a matter of ongoing research and theoretical conjecture (see Chapter 2, 'Methods'). The broadest summation of which is that no definitive conclusion has been reached.

The Voices of the Fans

Fandom: a "set of 'unruly' consumption practices" (Hills 2002 p.36)

In her thesis, Laura Vroomen explained the etymological roots of the word 'fan', how it originally came to prominence in eighteenth-century Britain (Vroomen 2002), and is now in commonplace usage across a variety of cultural spheres. For Henry Jenkins, the word is:

"slippery and expansive enough to include a broad range of different kinds of relationships to media, from the highly individualistic to the highly social" (Jenkins 2013 p.xiv)

For an in-depth review of the evolution of the conceptualizations of fandom, see Cornel Sandvoss (Sandvoss 2005)[8]. Sandvoss argues that all these conceptualizations fail the test of recognizing the polysemic nature of the reading of fan texts. Matt Hills also criticizes the 'one-dimensional' definitions of fans, in that they do not do justice to how fandom is "fluid, multiple and dynamic" (Hills 2014 p.19), and Duffett draws attention to fandom's "highly personal, experiential, inner dimension" (Duffett 2013a p.30). Sandvoss defines fandom as "the *regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text*" (Sandvoss 2005 p.8 original emphasis), whereas Duffett's definition includes being "a person driven to explore and participate in fannish practices" (Duffett 2013 p.18), with a relatively deep "conviction", which has echoes of the perceived pathological dysfunction and deviance that Lisa Lewis is keen to argue against (Lewis 1992). These aspects will be addressed throughout this thesis.

Duffett contends that very little research exists on the process of becoming, and remaining, a fan and this is due to it being an "academically difficult area" (Duffett 2013 p.153). Whilst it is a growing area of academic interest, it has been largely dominated by "telefantasy" fandom

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[7] January 28th, 2021.

[8] Sandvoss covers John Fiskes' 'anti-hegemonic' stance (a means of empowerment); Jenkins's de Certeauian 'textual poaching' (acquisition of cultural capital); Nick Abercrombie and David Longhurst's 'Paradigms'; Melanie Klein's 'object relations theory'; and Hills's 'transitional objects' theory (a form of self-reflection) (ibid.).

(Zwaan and Duffett 2016; Duffett 2014). Lewis notes how music seems to be largely overlooked, which may well be a function of its particular and peculiar singularities. Henrik and Sara Linden, for example, devote just 14 of 200 pages to music fandom in their *Fans and Fan Cultures* (and of those 14 pages, six discuss The Smiths and Elvis Costello, with the remainder on Eurovision) (Linden and Linden 2017).

One of the questions posed in this field is "have fan studies neglected aesthetic values?" (Sandvoss 2007 p.20), and Vera Zolberg, too, has expressed the view that:

> "much scholarship in the sociology of art is vulnerable to accusations of reductionism for failing to address the specificity of the aesthetic and of the art object" (Zolberg cited in Born 2010b, p.174)

As Duffett notes, the reason why fandom is an interesting, and difficult, area of research is perhaps due to how it is "elusive when subjected to analysis" (Duffett 2013 p.18). Joli Jensen has commented about how:

> "[w]e know far too little about the nature and possibilities of varieties of affection, attachment, sentiment and interest, *as they are manifested in people's lives*" (Jensen 1992 p.25 original emphasis)

with the literature in this respect being 'sparse' (see (Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002; Hesmondhalgh 2013; Gans 1999; Gregory 2012; Driessen 2017)). With the scant research that does exist, Hesmondhalgh notes that whilst Crafts', Cavicchi's and Keil's *Music in Daily Life* has transcripts, there are no interpretations or analyses of them (Hesmondhalgh 2013 p.137, footnote 3). He also notes that research studies that lay claim to analysis fail to deliver on that count, citing David Riesman, and Fred and Judy Vermorel's works. Hesmondhalgh does recognize Sarah Thornton, Andy Bennett, Daniel Cavicchi, Lisa Lewis, and Susan Crafts for their non-structuralist approach, however, another failing for him is their concentration 'almost entirely' on the youth experience (Hesmondhalgh 2002 p.119). Hesmondhalgh praises DeNora's *Music In Everyday Life* for its empiricism, however it is criticised for its failure to say much about the value of music for people (Hesmondhalgh 2003 p.356). This thesis will address these issues.

Paul Booth and Peter Kelly (Booth and Kelly 2013), have drawn attention to how an undue musicological focus on the text can obscure the fan, and all vital associated cognitive, emotional, and social attachments, from scholarly view; whereas from a sociological perspective, Duffett suggests that a focus on subcultures and scenes has prevented analysis of fandom at the level of the fan (Duffett 2013b) [9]. This thesis straddles these fields: from a sociological base, participants' (unprofessional) musicological perspectives are foregrounded and analyzed.

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[9] Daniel Cavicchi is mentioned as an exception to this.

A number of areas have been excluded from fan study research[10], and Angela McRobbie has drawn attention to 'unspectacular fandom' (McRobbie 2000), albeit in relation to females (see (Duffett 2014 p.6) for a counter-argument). The backgrounding of the unspectacular is referred to as a "small shelf of books where people not ordinarily heard from get to have their say" (Keil, C., Cavicchi D., Crafts S.D. 1993 p.3). In recent years there has been a growing recognition that the voice of the fans themselves merits greater visibility, and that "the academic field is gradually shifting to include more about reception" (Duffett 2013 p.55). In Raphaël Nowak and Andy Bennett's recent book '*Music Sociology*', the authors note that scholars have learnt, over the years, "not to essentialise analysis of a cultural form *as a whole* and its consumers as *masses*" (Nowak and Bennett 2022, p.2 original emphasis), (see also (Biron 2008)). Nowak and Bennett acknowledge the relatively recent turn towards understanding the interplay with audiences, a thrust this thesis directly addresses. Further, they note that whilst the term 'sociology of music' makes for 'an odd couple'[11], it is a "rapidly developing and dynamic area of intellectual activity", fuelled in part by its ever-evolving form (ibid. p.13).

This turn addresses Lee Marshall's concern that historically 'the sociology of music' has not been sociological enough:

> "The sociology of popular music skirts around music as music, and as a result, contains remarkably little discussion on how music creates particular effects, and relatively little on the experience of listening to music" (Marshall 2011, p.157)

Marshall suggests that there is "not just an incomplete picture, but a picture with a big black hole in the middle" (ibid. p.157). Echoing the points above, Stanley Cohen notes that sociologists don't refer to the individuals within the groups they are theorizing about (Cohen 2011). They engage at an abstract level of interpersonal actions but not at an intrapersonal one, failing in their lack of asking and analysis of the experience at an individual level. There is a recognized need for more qualitative research in sociological music studies (Bennett 2008) with Marshall stating that "there is no alternative to asking or observing [listeners]" (Marshall 2011, p.162). This thesis is based upon listeners' perspectives, at an individual level, with emergent themes highlighted.

Various artist-specific articles have been researched. Theses directly relevant to this research and the themes arising, were relatively scarce, and the few in existence had limited utility to the

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[10] As well as the 'unspectacular', other areas cited are the aging mind (Harrington and Bielby 2010), offline interaction with new technologies (Booth and Kelly 2013), and Duffett's 'hard problems' (Duffett 2013).

[11] The authors state that a sociology of music embraces popular music studies, cultural studies, musicology and ethnomusicology, music psychology, gender studies, and music journalism.

scope of this thesis. Insights and correspondences were more evident in two theses: Tonya Anderson's exploration of boy-band fandom through the years (centred on Duran Duran) (Anderson 2012b), and Vroomen's work on Kate Bush fandom[12] (Vroomen 2002). Whilst *prima facie* it might appear that these have tangential utility, and might suggest an orientation towards gender-related issues, this was not wholly the case. Both theses had read-across benefits in terms of process, e.g., their engagement with fans via interviews and Focus Groups, and also in terms of findings, which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

In this thesis, I address Marshall's 'big black hole', and the various other calls to arms identified above, through the analysis of unique contributions made by participants to this research. Nowak and Bennett have stressed the merits of a constructivist sociological approach (Nowak and Bennett 2022) and this forms the basis of this thesis. They further argue for individuals being seen as reflexive and competent, with diverse traits, (and thereby oppose homological assumptions such as those of Paul Willis (Willis 1978)). Nowak and Bennett recognize DeNora's argument that the intangibility of music, an aspect agreed upon by musicologists and sociologists, leads to stabilization of meaning only occurring at the level of the individual. They argue that meaning also emerges from discussions between cultural intermediaries. However, a key missing aspect is that meaning is not necessarily fixed, rather, it is labile and subject to change under a variety of conditions, which may not stimulate a consistent cause and effect reaction. This research foregrounds and analyses the perspectives of 51 aficionados, with their unique views on fandom as related to Progressive rock. Their role brings into play the notion of '*amateur*', a term suggested by Antoine Hennion.

'The Amateur'

My research basis is Grounded Theory ('GT', see Chapter 2, 'Methods'), privileging the views of Participants, as *amateurs*. Nicholas Cooke has noted that "[w]hen we come down to the fundamental musical experience, the transformation of sound into emotion, the professional is as tongue-tied as the layman" (Cooke cited in (Frith 1998, p.261). Simon Frith has commented upon "the remarkable assurance with which academics describe other people's pleasure" (Frith 1991 p.103), and Richard Middleton has also commented that in the critical discourse, the views of:

> "critics and academics, for example - claim more attention than others, largely because they have access to the public ear; and, actually, surprisingly little is known about ordinary fans' interpretations" (Middleton 2001, p.213)

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[12] Kate Bush featured as 'progressive' in some Participants' discourses. She has been featured in *Prog* magazine.

Various researchers have concluded that there exists scant, or no, evidence that aesthetic judgement is significantly dependent upon musical training (Juslin *et al.* 2008; Juslin and Lindstrom 2010; Huovinen 2011). Nicolas Farrugia et al. state that:

> "recent evidence from music psychology studies point out that the perceptions of many aspects of harmony, timbre and melody do not require musical training, knowledge or expertise suggesting that naïve listeners can distinguish subtle/complex musical features even if they may not be aware of this ability" (Farrugia *et al.* 2016, p.198)

This under-researched 'naïve', or amateur, level of appreciation, is perhaps also under-appreciated in academic appraisals, yet participants in my research frequently, and with attention to detail, were able to draw out subtleties of favourite Progressive rock tracks. Alinka Greasley and Alexandra Lamont have drawn attention to the need for more explicit attention to be placed on specific pieces rather than generalized styles (Greasley and Lamont 2016, p.276). This point relates directly to participants' appreciation(s), and the variety intrinsic to the Progressive rock meta-genre renders analysis even at a band level reductive. Participants demonstrated a balanced and nuanced relationship to bands and albums: on the one hand, life-long attachment; and on the other, seemingly little hesitation in being constructively critical of certain works or career arcs when engaging in the level of analysis suggested by Greasley and Lamont. Differentiations were clearly articulated, if not in musicological terms, then certainly in affective ones. David Huron's review of Nicholas Cook's 'Music, Imagination, and Culture' suggest that both 'typical' and 'skilled' music listening occurs on a more 'shallow' or surface level than has previously been supposed (Huron 1995, p.173), obviating the need for formal education. Hennion has reacted against "the totally passive view of the amateur in Bourdieu's radical reformulation of the classic question of cultural inequalities" (Hennion 2005, p.131) as a 'cultural dope' or 'passive subject', and accords at least equal critical status to the amateur. He notes the:

> "often highly elaborate formats and procedures that amateurs employ and collectively discuss to guarantee their felicity, of the nature of the activity thus deployed, of the competencies involved and hence, above all, of creative and not only reproductive capacities." (ibid. p.131)

As will be seen (see Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'), participants' opportunities for collective discussion were limited, however, it was clear in their contribution to this research that most participants were able to demonstrate appropriate 'competencies'. Their general unawareness of theoretical constructs that lie behind music appreciation, and Progressive rock valorization by academics, obliged them to creatively, rather than reproductively, attempt to articulate their motivations. The utility of metaphor will be discussed later (see Chapter 2, 'Methods'): participants proved resourceful in being able to convey their underlying feelings and rationale, and are privileged as

a primary data source. Most of them proved themselves to be, in Roy Shuker's term, 'serious fans'. For Shuker, serious fans are aficionados, and they:

> "are characterised by what can be termed 'secondary' involvement in music (Straw 1990): the seeking out of rare releases, such as the picture discs and bootlegs, the reading of fanzines in addition to commercial music magazines, concert going; and an interest in record labels and producers as well as performers" (Shuker 2001, p.213)

Participants' attraction to, and appreciation gained through, these 'secondary' involvements will be made clear (see Chapters 4, 'Complexity' and 5, 'Mea Cultura').

Georgina Born comments on the need to place "stress on the enduring, long-term potential of amateur practices, of innumerable music 'attachments'" (Born 2005, p.14). In so doing, we have the opportunity, and, it can be argued, the obligation to treat the "roles of amateur and music lover in history as seriously as those of composer or professional musician" (ibid. p.14). The reasons for fans' valorization of any musical (meta-)genre have been subject to speculation, research, and theorization, for millennia. Amongst other academic fields, sociologists and musicologists have put forward many conjectures, which are intrinsically difficult to prove. This research, as noted above, straddles musicological and sociological disciplinary schools, and through the foregrounding of the perspectives of amateur participants, as aficionados, will shed new light on extant academic, scholarly, and journalistic theories.

1.2 Thesis Statement

In this thesis, I make a unique contribution to our understanding of Progressive rock's value to its fans, through direct interaction with a purposeful sample of them, via one-hour (or more) one-on-one interviews with 51 participants, and six six-person two-hour Focus Groups. Using Grounded Theory ('GT'), my research explores what fans of Progressive rock value about its particular styles and associations; the means by which fans ascribe meaning to Progressive rock, and why; and how and why fans' understandings and meanings have evolved over their lifecourses. These views are then compared to existing theories.

Progressive rock, as shall be discussed, is difficult to define, and either suffers from, or enjoys, representation via a multitude of differing characteristics. It is highly heterogeneous in nature, and participants' perspectives illustrate the fault lines in generalized views. They also bring to life a wide range, and depth, of factors associated with its valorization, and respond to the challenge and invitation laid down by various commentators to understand fans' views. Inconsistencies exist, not only between participants, but also, on occasion, within an individual's own opinions. This lack of coherence is explored later, and helps to demonstrate how academic,

scholarly, and journalistic views are subject to challenge, and development. The willingness for fans of Progressive rock to talk, at length, about their passion in this regard was welcome and heartening. Almost all remarked that such an opportunity was relatively rare, and gives some indication of the socio-cultural aspects associated with being a fan of this music. This core aspect will be discussed later, at length.

In using GT, I have adopted a constructivist ontological stance, and an interpretivist epistemological approach. The utmost care was taken to ensure that 'theoretical agnosticism' was adhered to throughout the research. This was achieved through the use of abductive reasoning: the combination of inductive and deductive approaches as "a way of capturing the dialectical shuttling between the domains of observations and the domain of ideas" (Thornberg 2012, p.247). Given this methodology and approach, which is covered in greater detail in the 'Methods' Chapter which follows, a wide variety of theories came under scrutiny. A discussion of these at this stage would likely prove unwieldy, and foregrounding them at this juncture would be inconsistent with the GT research basis.

I do not set out to claim that the values and meanings ascribed by fans to Progressive rock are unique to this one style of music; neither do I claim that the participants' appreciations of this style are applied by them to no other. What I do achieve, is to give voice to fans of Progressive rock, providing a platform that has hitherto only rarely been offered, and to explore their reasons for fandom. In so doing I aim to provide a template for others to follow, one that is applicable to other genres, styles, and cultural fields.

In itself, the examination of the social uses of music, with reference to subcultural and associated theories, and the affordances provided by the music *per se*, and associated elements (a rich area for this style of music) provides a rich, broad and deep basis for theoretical advancement. With the specific examination of the reclaimed cultural affirmation of Progressive rock in relation to this backdrop, there emerges a multi-layered, multi-faceted rich picture. Progressive rock's definitional inexactness coupled with individuals' propensity for shifting, barely expressible articulations, offer factors that contribute to a field of research that is replete with meaning and possibilities. This range of possibilities includes perspectives drawn from, amongst many other authors: cultural theory (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Bennett and Peterson 2004; Willis 1978; Maffesoli 1996; Muggleton 2000; Shepherd and Wicke 1997; Bennett 1999); the practice of fandom (Duffett 2014; Duffett 2013; Hills 2002; Hills 2017; Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington 2007; Sandvoss 2005; Jenkins 2013); historiography (Thornton 1990; Sheinbaum 2008; Reynolds 2012; Fisher 2012; Albiez 2003; Jones 2006); genre theory (Fabbri 1999; Drott 2013; Holt 2007; Behr 2015; Lena 2012; Merlini 2020); band-, album-, artist, or sub-genre case studies (Kahn-Harris

2007; Walser 2014; Cavicchi 1998; Keil, Cavicchi and Crafts 1993; Ahlkvist 2011; Dowd *et al.* 2019; Hung 2005; Vroomen 2002; Anderson 2012a); sociology (DeNora 2000; Frith 1988; Hennion 2007; Born 2010a; Lahire 2008; Roy and Dowd 2010); and musicology (Moore 2003; Clarke and Cook 2004; Middleton 1990; McClary and Walser 2005).

Participants' discussions raised a significant number of areas for exploration. The major ones are reviewed in their own right, and by reference to extant theories, and scholarly, academic, and journalistic perspectives are covered at that point in the thesis. The GT nature of this research, which foregrounds all discussion in participants' views, obviates the need to review literature that is not germane to theories arising out of participants' reflections, nor does it seek to test hypotheses.

This research is based upon less spectacular fandom, and is focused on a meta-genre that has attracted less attention than other genres. Some of the perspectives arising from participants' perspectives were confirmatory of extant theoretical views. This thesis contributes to the body of knowledge by (further) grounding such theories in field-based research, drawn from a substantial number of interactions. It also identifies a number of aspects that warrant greater attention, and may attract further research, either within Progressive rock or other musical styles. At this stage, an in-depth discussion on these new findings is inappropriate; however, given the interwoven nature of the findings, some indication of them at this stage will aid the reader's navigation and understanding.

Within the Chapter 'A Contextualization', participants' views on Progressive rock's historiography, the major influences, and the utility of genre theory will all add to the existing corpus through its emphasis on the aesthetics (the 'text') over other socio-cultural and or musicological factors (the 'context') that have historically been privileged. The Chapter 'The Complexity Attraction' will highlight the limitation of theories associated with repeated listening, the nature of Progressive rock consumption, particularly in relation to other musical styles, and situate the importance of lyrics both in isolation and in conjunction with the musical accompaniment. The role of concept albums, and paratexts, will also assist in an enriched understanding of the role they play in Progressive rock fandom, bringing out aspects hitherto underplayed or ignored. The Chapter 'Mea Cultura' will bring to light new perspectives on socio-cultural aspects of music appreciation, in particular the nature of unspectacular fandom, which has been, almost axiomatically (as will be explained), ignored. These perspectives will be seen through the lens of both private and public consumption, and will include how aspects of collecting are appreciated at a more personal level than typically understood, and how elements of display are seen through participants' eyes. Finally, the Chapter 'The Progressive Paradox' will

reveal how participants react to new musical opportunities and illustrate a number of internal inconsistencies. Throughout this thesis, the dynamic interplay between the text and the context will be brought out.

In the remainder of this Introduction, the definition of Progressive rock, as defined by various authors, will be discussed. As will be made clear, this is not an easy, nor a conclusive, matter; however, the issues and difficulties associated with this aspect are germane to the discursive matter advanced later. Participants' views on this problematic matter will conclude the discussion. Having thus situated Progressive rock I shall then review its critical reception, which will demonstrate the polarizing effect it has had over the years, and thereby set the scene for the wide scope of elements under review. The Introduction will conclude with an outline of the subsequent chapters.

Progressive rock has provided me, and its fans, many reasons over the years to reflect: upon ourselves, our relationships, upon the nature of the world we live in, and in so doing, to grow. This thesis is submitted as a further movement to aid our appreciation of the value of Progressive rock.

1.3 Definitions of Progressive Rock

> "Only gluttons for punishment dare try their hands at the definition of 'progressive rock'" (Romano 2010 p.1)

> "This genre of popular music, contentious and notoriously difficult to define" (Adamczewski 2018 p.181)

Having set out a broad overview of this thesis's background, I will address how Will Romano's, and Tymon Adamczewksi's, challenge has been addressed. They are not the only authors, scholars or academics to draw attention to the inherent difficulties associated with this definitional quest. Many, if not all, bands can lay claim to 'progression' in some form, so attention needs to be paid to which elements define Progressive rock music, bands and musicians.

Edward Macan, Paul Stump and Bill Martin are recognized as the early authors on this aspect, and their book-length studies released in the late 1990s[13], set a baseline for others. Macan refers to:

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[13] Edward Macan's *Rocking the Classics*, Paul Stump's *The Music's All That Matters*, and Bill Martin's *Listening To The Future*.

"a style that sought to expand the boundaries of rock on both a stylistic basis (via the use of longer and more involved structural formats) and on a conceptual basis (via the treatment of epic subject matter), mainly through the appropriation of elements associated with classical music." (Macan 1997 p.26)

Macan's analysis of Progressive rock is frequently based upon a duality-based schema or 'dichotomies'; masculine/feminine, electric/acoustic, patriarch/matriarch, organic/pastoral, modern/ancient. Such a schema appears to fall into the trap of homogeneity (at the levels of both 'genre' and band), something Macan himself warns against. Macan, in referring to the varying terms applied to Progressive rock, defers to the *Rolling Stone Encyclopaedia of Rock and Roll*, which, as cited by Stephen Lambé, states that Progressive rock:

"denotes a form of rock music in which electric instruments and rock band formats are integrated with European classical motifs and orchestrations, typically forming extended, intricate, multi-sectional suites" (Lambé 2011 p.7)

Stump notes that "Progressive rock is a vague and pejorative term, a kind of virtual category, most commonly associated with the ambitious rock experimentalism of the 1970s", thereby adding the notion of a 'virtual category' (Stump 1997 p.8-9). This aspect will be examined in the sub-section 'Genre theory' in the next Chapter. Stump cites Steve Hackett's characterization of King Crimson: "the balls of rock, the fluidity of jazz, the form of the classics, and the technology of combining a small group of people in an orchestral sound" (ibid. p.180). Of these early authors, Martin (Martin 1998) spends longer in trying to achieve definitional exactness, perhaps benefitting from being the third to publish. His opening view is that ""Progressive rock" is visionary and experimental music played by virtuosos on instruments associated with rock music" (Martin 2015 p.39). After some exploration of these elements, a 'reformulation' is reached, whereby five specific traits are identified:

1) "it is visionary and experimental;

2) it is played, at least in significant part, on instruments typically associated with rock music, by musicians who have a background in rock music, and with the history of rock music itself as background;

3) it is played, in significant part, by musicians who have consummate instrumental and compositional skills;

4) it is a phenomenon, in its "core", of English culture;

5) relatedly, in significant part, it is expressive of romantic and prophetic aspects of that culture" (Martin 1998 p.121)

These elements will be explored later; at this stage, attention is drawn to two elements. Firstly, what is, in my opinion, an under-emphasis by Martin upon the 'rock' part of Progressive rock.

The 'history', is clearly evident; however, with regards to the 'background' element, the bands that have been, and will be mentioned, all foregrounded rock music in their compositions, and crucially, their live performances, to a degree that is at times underappreciated. This latter point is one that was repeatedly borne out by participant comments. Secondly, the 'romantic' aspects make clear reference to the Romantic era of European history, which is regarded as a key influence on the musicians, with many parallels drawn, relative to the defining characteristics of Romanticism[14], and also its genesis, its lifecycle, and its definitional slipperiness. Martin uses utopian language and imagery repeatedly in his analysis, which is contestable[15]. The relevance of these elements for participants will be made clear.

Adamczewksi, rising to his own challenge of providing a definition, offers that:

> "it was associated with what might in general terms be regarded as attempts at broadening the rock conventions through perfecting the extended musical forms of concept albums, rich and varied instrumentation, or a deliberate merging of styles to include European or Eastern traditions" (Adamczewski 2018 p.181-2)

Given the difficulty identified by him, it is not surprising that he seems to somewhat hedge his definitional bets and cover a range of bases. The role of concept albums will be explicitly addressed later, (see Chapters 4, 'Complexity', and 6, 'Paradox').

An alternative perspective, more in keeping with expressing Progressive rock's nature, rather than the manner of album output, can be seen in a concatenation of *ProgArchives*' definition:

> "Progressive rock (often shortened to prog or prog rock) is a form of rock music that evolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of a "mostly British attempt to elevate rock music to new levels of artistic credibility." [...] Progressive rock bands pushed "rock's technical and compositional boundaries" by going beyond the standard rock or popular verse-chorus-based song structures. Additionally, the arrangements often incorporated elements drawn from classical, jazz, and world music. Instrumentals were common, while songs with lyrics were sometimes conceptual, abstract, or based in fantasy. Progressive rock bands sometimes used "concept albums that made unified statements, usually telling an epic story or tackling a grand overarching theme.""[16]

The website defines its 'musical characteristics' (form, timbre, rhythm, melody and harmony, texture and images) and its 'other characteristics' (technology, concepts, lyrical themes,

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[14] www.britannica.com/art/Romanticism defines these as emphases on the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental (accessed 26th May 2022).

[15] See Allan Moore for a refutation of this argument: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/music-and-protest-in-1968/british-rock-the-short-1968-and-the-long/676B82E56ED508A42402C357148E614A, viewed 30 August, 2022.

[16] http://www.progarchives.com/Progressive-rock.asp#definition accessed 27th May 2022.

presentation, stage theatrics). Also, a considerable degree of attention is paid to the sub-genres, with a sense of boundary policing. The relevance of this aspect to participants will be explored.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, few musicians from the era have attempted to add clarity around this point. Music journalist Mike Barnes (2020) notes, in his sweep across British 1970s Progressive rock, that part of its defiance of easy categorization is due to the fact that it is a term that "according to the majority of the musicians that I spoke to, was rarely used to describe the music as it was made in the Seventies" (Barnes 2020 p.1). One such exception is Gary Green, guitarist with Gentle Giant, who, as cited by Balázs Alpár stated that it was:

> "a term for something a little bit different, maybe there were odd time signatures and weird harmonies and then it is progressive […] ideally it is music that expands a little bit the frontiers of music, and it's thoughtful, it makes artistic sense" (Alpár 2016 p.95)

Kevin Holm-Hudson's anthology refers to Jerry Lucky's view, ("perhaps the best definition" (Holm-Hudson 2002 p.3)) which has frequently been used, directly or as a base, by other authors. It too is worth repeating *in toto*: "Progressive Rock is music that incorporates:

- Songs predominantly on the longish side, but structured, rarely improvised.
- A mixture of loud passages, soft passages, and musical crescendos to add to the dynamics of the arrangements.
- The use of a Mellotron or string synth(esizer) to simulate an orchestra backing
- The possible inclusion of a live symphony orchestra backing.
- Extended instrumental solos, perhaps involving some improvisation.
- The inclusion of musical styles from other than a rock format.
- A blending of acoustic, electric and electronic instruments where each plays a vital role in translating the emotion of compositions which typically contain more than one mood.
- Multi-movement compositions that may or may not return to a musical theme. In some cases the end section may bear little resemblance to the first part of the song
- Compositions created from unrelated parts." (Lucky cited in Holm-Hudson 2002 p.3)

Holm-Hudson himself, somewhat curiously given his view above, does offer his own definition within the same anthology:

> "a style of self-consciously complex rock often associated with prominent keyboards, complex metric shifts, fantastic (often mythological or metaphysical) lyrics, and an emphasis on flashy virtuosity" (Holm-Hudson 2002 p.2)

Comparing just these two definitions from within the same book, identified by the same individual, it is immediately apparent that not just different emphases are stressed, but that

differing elements are foregrounded and or articulated. Further, precision is clearly consciously avoided, so as to allow for a broad range of musical, and musicological, interpretive possibilities. The definition of Progressive rock is manifestly an extremely difficult and contentious area, on which definitional agreement continues to elude commentators.

Given the difficulties these definitions expose, perhaps a more generalized approach offers a firmer foundation. Rather than 'the' definition *per se*, attempts have repeatedly been made to add clarity through exploration of its style. The variety of authors within Holm-Hudson's anthology offer a range of views, although the eclectic nature of Progressive rock, which is recognized, leads to such views being strained by generalizations, and are musicologically based. Any academic or scholarly definition at the 'macro' level, is likely to fall short because, as Allan Moore stresses "as a movement it was highly heterogenous, and to identify it wholesale as 'progressive' is a mistake" (Moore and Martin 2019 p.73). This is echoed by Richard Middleton who refers to:

> "the sheer eclecticism of progressive rock, both in terms of the variety of sources on which it drew and the range of styles contained within the genre. By the mid-1960s the rock code as a whole was hardly a monolithic one; but progressive rock was a particularly heterogeneous genre. […] Is progressive rock, then, a single phenomenon at all? If so, what makes it such?" (Middleton 1990 p.28)

Neither Middleton, nor any of the other authors, are able to conclusively answer this question. The Focus Groups, particularly when debating the question "Is Progressive rock still progressing?", brought new perspectives into play (see Chapter 6, 'Paradox').

As far as the popular music press were concerned, in their review of the three leading music magazines in the UK in the early 1970s[17], Chris Anderton and Chris Atton noted that:

> "[t]hroughout the three papers discussed in this article there is little clarity or consistency in the use of the term "progressive" by musicians, journalists or readers, and little sense of it constituting a recognized genre" (Anderton and Atton 2020 p.19)

Ongoing attempts at definitional precision continue to this day. Robert Sivy's definition, as he notes, draws heavily on Lucky's, Macan's and John Covach's work. In adding additional detail, I believe that he, also, lapses into unjustified generalization. Sivy's definition is:

1) "Complex arrangements featuring intricate keyboard or guitar playing; and

2) Lengthy songs (over six minutes); and

3) Use of Mellotron, Hammond organ, and Moog synthesizer; and

4) Extended and virtuosic solos; and

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[17] *The New Musical Express, Melody Maker,* and *Sounds.*

5) Inclusion of musical styles other than rock (e.g., jazz, folk, etc.); and

6) Blending of acoustic, electric, and electronic instruments; and

7) Use of "classical" forms (e.g., sonata, canon, song cycle)" (Sivy 2019 p.1)

This definition is interesting, although more for its range of exceptions rather than its empirical accuracy. For instance, much of King Crimson's work, and to a lesser extent Genesis's and Yes's, is 'complex' due to the musicianship of the 'back line', the interplay between drums/percussion and bass guitar. Stipulating 'lengthy' as over six minutes, in my opinion, seems to be laying oneself open to difficulties. The empirical base for this is not clear. Taking Gentle Giant as an example, which Sivy himself frequently does (Gentle Giant were progressive "for a variety of reasons, including unique instrumentation, virtuosity, and interesting/unconventional musical attributes" (Sivy 2019 in abstract n.p.)), one can find plenty of examples that are highly representative of Progressive rock that fall under six minutes in length. Adding 'etc.' to the short list of parenthesized musical styles adds little, if anything, to the point that is made. The recurring references to 'classical form' through these definitions are evident. Mark Spicer, a keen student of Genesis, noted that their fame, along with other members of the 'Big Six' arose from the creation of:

> "rock pieces of much greater scope and complexity, compositions in which the multiple shifts of texture, affect, and tonality echo those typically found in a nineteenth-century symphonic poem" (Spicer 2007 p.31)

The relevance of this association, and its implications are explored later. In Martin Johnes's more recent article, he offered the following:

> "a form of music based around complex and often long songs, virtuoso musicianship, classical influences and surreal or intellectualised lyrics and artwork" (Johnes 2018 p.116).

Given the difficulties discussed above, there is a commendable brevity to this. Given the difficulties associated with any extension, extrapolation, or exploration of its constituent elements, then this relative conciseness is for the better.

All of the preceding definitions correspond to some degree with participants' views, whilst inevitably not wholly aligning with any of them (which are not coherent in any case). An alternative means of achieving an understanding was proposed by Martin. He posited that the better route may be a '*via negativa*' – "we can see better what progressive rock is by trying to understand what it is not" (Martin 1998 p.103).

In concluding this section, and avoiding the clear pitfalls that have beset the authors referred to above, it is most important to, briefly, reflect on the views of the participants. Participants' responses covered all the various bases, and more, covered above. However, when pressed for

something more precise, their views, which will be expanded upon later, fall broadly into two categories.

Firstly, with regards to semantic definition, it was clear that, generally speaking, most participants had not given the matter much consideration, nor were they able to confidently and eloquently provide their own description. There was little, if any, existential angst, associated with this. I believe this is borne out of two key factors: the social groupings within which they enjoyed Progressive rock music (as distinct from other musical preferences), as we shall see, were relatively small, to the point of non-existence, and the matter of definition was rarely, if ever, a point of discussion or *intrinsic interest*. Secondly, it was of little *material utility*, and considered unimportant (which raises clear issues around the validity of genre theory, as well as Bourdieusian notions of capital).

The second category is one that aligns to Martin's *via negativa*: when asked for a description (in the interviews, I would position the question along the lines of "how would you explain it to a man from Mars?") participants were considerably more articulate about what it wasn't. This left open a wide area for possible 'genre inclusion', something with which participants were philosophically at ease. In this respect, Progressive rock can be seen as a 'greedy genre'. For interest, a 'word cloud' of participant responses is included at Appendix A. Contextualizing participants' comments by using their collective ten most-used words, in summary terms it can be seen to read as follows: "Progressive rock does what it says on the tin, it is progressive, with no boundaries, and it rocks. It is different from all other styles, not least because of it is always interesting, largely due to the musicianship, the playing abilities, the instrumentation, and the storytelling".

In conclusion, Progressive rock, despite a number of attempts over some decades, by a variety of experts in journalistic, academic and scholarly fields (sociological, musicological, and other), clearly defies easy definition. The absence of such is more a matter for 'armchair critics' than for the *amateur* fans themselves. At this stage, for the purpose of these introductory remarks, an understanding is established that is broad and deep enough, despite its intellectual flaws, upon which to base further discussion. It is against this backdrop that Progressive rock's reception can be appreciated.

1.4 Progressive Rock - Its Popular Reception

In this Section, the popular reception of Progressive rock will be briefly explored, so as to provide further contextualization prior to a discussion of the insights provided by participants.

Progressive rock music (as we now term it) was, in its early days, regularly reviewed by music critics, Of course, their journalistic motivations were not necessarily aligned to personal views, and could be influenced by editorial guidelines (both aspects being subject to change over time). The role of these critics will be explored later (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'); their views are briefly reflected upon here. This Section is not intended to provide a history of Progressive rock; this, from the perspectives of the participants, will be provided in the Chapter, 'A Contextualization'.

Early Reviews and Praise

Early reviews, from the late 1960s, were generally positive, perhaps due to the music's perceived difference from that which preceded it, and the emphasis on musicianship and quality. In 1967, Nick Jones commented that Steve Howe was a "a guy with his own mind, his own influences, and a speedy playing style which is just too much"[18] and in 1968 an uncredited review of *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* suggested that it was a "bold and imaginative crossbreeding of classical, jazz and rock and roll music" [19] . By 1969, Mark Williams was remarking upon Yes's brilliant musicianship, their feel for complex arrangements, and their vast potential "as a vanguard of the new wave of progressive pop/rock bands". 'Visually impressive live slickness', as evidenced by Yes, King Crimson, and 'possibly' the 're-vamped' Jethro Tull, was also being commented upon[20]. Williams also referred to 'Ian Anderson's music' as having "a strange inconsistency that's almost its strength"[21], while Loyd Grossman highlighted Yes's 'emotional intensity, tastefulness, imagination and excellence in performance'[22]. David Hughes, via a review of Jethro Tull, referred to the scene's "ever-growing progressive minority"[23], indicating its emergence as a noteworthy cultural form. In the USA, critics were less convinced. For example, John Mendelssohn of the *LA Times* noted King Crimson's ability as:

> "shrewd manipulators of myriad rock and other techniques. And they are boring almost beyond description […] Groups like this […] will surely bring the [rock] idiom to its knees in arthritic agony long before its time"[24]

Into the early 1970s, Progressive rock was still being routinely, although not universally, lauded in the UK. Chris Welch was a long-term champion of Progressive rock. Of *Time And A Word* he

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[18] Nick Jones, 'Tomorrow Are Saying It Today', in *Melody Maker*, 9th September, 1967.
[19] Album review, *New Musical Express*, 9th November, 1968 (Anon.).
[20] Mark Williams, *Yes* Album Review, in *Rolling Stone*, 26th July, 1969.
[21] Mark Williams *Stand Up* Album Review, in *International Times*, 15th August, 1969.
[22] Loyd Grossman review of *Yes* album, in *Fusion*, 3rd October, 1969.
[23] David Hughes, Jethro Tull: "The Only Thing We Have in Common is the Music", in *Disc and Music Echo*, 8th November, 1969.
[24] John Mendelssohn, review of KC live gig at the Whisky a Go-Go, in the *LA Times*, 5th December, 1969.

believed that it was 'stunning', and to not realize that you'd have to have your "ears filled with suet pudding"[25]. Richard Williams praised Van der Graaf Generator's *The Least We Can Do Is Wave to Each Other* [26], and Robert Fripp as an artist:

> "Admirable as is a large proportion of current pop music, few practitioners can claim a place in the hierarchy of music as a whole […] but I have a feeling that before long Robert Fripp will be demanding such a position. Who can blame him if he'd rather be Sibelius than Elvis"[27]

The allusion to 'high art' became something of a prevailing discursive theme. Jon Tiven's review of *Aqualung* suggested that Jethro Tull were "genuine philosophical contributors"[28], and Chris Salewicz was wondering if it was accidental that King Crimson's début comprised five pieces, making it identical to one of Shakespeare's 'five act problem plays'?[29]

Opinion Becoming Divided

Others were not convinced: of Jethro Tull's status of 'philosophical contributors', Dave Marsh suggested that rather than making art, they were "only making ultra-sophisticated lounge music for the post-lunar space age"[30]; and John Swenson viewed the album as "clever, very, and complicated enough to sustain interest", and one that would undoubtedly impress "an awful lot of dull minds with the superficial grandiloquence of its scope"[31]. It should be noted that both these critical views originated in US-based publications, just as Jethro Tull began to attract very significant commercial interest in that country.

In this country, Yes were beginning to divide opinion. For Ian MacDonald, *Close to the Edge* was a demonstration of structure over content, remarkable yet lacking in aesthetic substance in its 'Meaningless Magnificence' [32], whereas for Richard Cromelin, such fears over 'emotional destitution' arising due to a focus on technicality were ill-founded, and Yes's music bore comparison to the beauty of a 'Monet canvas'[33]. For MacDonald, *Larks Tongues in Aspic* had echoes of a symphonic movement in its use of 'elaborately engineered crescendos and decrescendos', and its 'complex and almost classical concept or organisation' [34], however,

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[25] Chris Welch, review of *Time and a Word*, in *Melody Maker*, January, 1970.
[26] Richard Williams, review of *The Least We Can Do Is Wave to Each Other*, in *Melody Maker*, 28th February, 1970.
[27] Richard Williams, 'Reincarnation of King Crimson', in *The Times*, 2nd December, 1970.
[28] Jon Tiven, review of *Aqualung*, in *Fusion*, 23rd July, 1971.
[29] Chris Salewicz, 'In the Court of the Crimson King', in *Let it Rock*, September, 1973.
[30] Dave Marsh, review of *Thick as a Brick*, in *Creem,* August, 1972.
[31] John Swenson, review of *Thick as a Brick*, in *Crawdaddy*, August, 1972.
[32] Ian MacDonald, 'Meaningless Magnificence' review of *Close to the Edge*, in *New Musical Express*, 2nd September, 1973.
[33] Richard Cromelin, review of *Close to the Edge*, in *Rolling Stone*, 11th September, 1973.
[34] Ian MacDonald, review of *Larks Tongues in Aspic,* in *New Musical Express*, 10th March, 1973.

Duncan Fallowell bemoaned Robert Fripp's "penchant for Tchaikovsky-cum-Mancini climaxes in the Lawrence of Arabia tradition"[35], although noting a level of imagination rarely seen in pop.

Very quickly the appellation 'progressive' itself began to provoke comment, questioning, or even derision. Mendelssohn, in reviewing MacDonald and Giles's eponymous début album, noted how 'progressive' had become 'Progressive':

> "This might be just as well another King Crimson album. It's that clever (consistently) and ingenious (occasionally). It's that terribly intelligent, even cerebral. It's that technically intimidating, the two musicians' expertise virtually oozing from the grooves […] MacDonald fantasizes himself as a progressive (sorry, Progressive) McCartney"[36]

John Peel, a DJ regularly associated with progressive music views, opined in 1971 that:

> "the one distinguishing feature of successful Progressive music with a capital P, is that under no circumstances should it progress an inch, because if it does people don't want to know. As long as it isn't progressive then they'll buy it"[37]

The use of 'progressive' as a marketing rubric, as early as 1971, was also noted by Mike Saunders, who ironically referred to:

> "[how] great it was to be living in the days of "progressive" rock. Or so the record companies, hip record stores, and groups themselves would have us believe"[38]

ELP likewise were dividing opinion at this stage. In 1971 alone, Michael Gray congratulated them on being a 'rare phenomenon', for their music that was: "intricate, complex and powerful, musicianship that can take that music and make it understandable, and inspiring"[39]. However, Mendelssohn found their 'shotgun wedding' of musical styles to be impressive but "calculated to the point of sterility"[40]. With *Tarkus*, Richard Green appreciated that there were some 'nice passages', however these were far outweighed by the "overall cacophonous ostentation"[41]. Simon Frith bemoaned the lack of any message, and rhetorically asked "How many ELP songs can you whistle?"[42]

The 'press darlings' at this time became Yes, and Genesis, although both were not without some critics. Straddling the Atlantic, Chris Welch and Barbara Charone were two of the more prominent cheerleaders. By the mid-1970s, criticism of the familiar 'Big 6' groups was beginning

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[35] Duncan Fallowell, in *The Spectator*, cited by Chris Salewicz in 'In the Court of the Crimson King', *in Let it Rock*, September, 1973.
[36] John Mendelsohn, review of *MacDonald and Giles,* in *Rolling Stone,* 18th March, 1971.
[37] John Peel interview with Michael Watts, "John Peel: Unpeeled", in Melody Maker, 24th April, 1971.
[38] Metal Mike Saunders, 'Rock Has Nowhere to Go', in *Rag*, 15th February, 1971.
[39] Michael Gray, 'Emerson, Lake and Palmer Ascending', in *Crawdaddy*, August, 1971.
[40] John Mendelssohn, review of ELP at Hollywood Bowl, in *LA Times*, 21st July, 1971.
[41] Richard Green, review of *Tarkus*, in *New Musical Express*, 12th June, 1971.
[42] Simon Frith, "Top of the Polls with Twin Guitars" in L*et it Rock*, May, 1973.

to grow. Even Charone, in praising Genesis, would comment upon other 'so-called progressive groups'[43]. Jethro Tull continued to act as a lightning rod for negative reviews. Welch was very disappointed by the *A Passion Play* album and tour, referring to the 'pain he had to endure', and suggesting that "[if] this is where ten years of 'progression' have taken us then it's time to go backwards"[44]. Andrew Tyler's review remarked upon how 'gravely dull' it was, and referred to how the 'rock intelligentsia' felt the need to perform "the musical equivalent of a triple reverse somersault every other bar"[45]. MacDonald's review of King Crimson at the Rainbow, at around this same time, is also noteworthy in its reference to 'ritual'[46] (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura' on communal aspects):

> "their exceptionally efficient performance of much technically complex and interpretively demanding music [...] it is as if a ritual has been completed"[47]

Declining Attention and Going Out Of Fashion

As the mid-1970s moved into the late 1970s, and into the 1980s, bands less frequently mentioned began to attract positive attention. Among the bands that found champions in the 'punk era' were National Health and Gentle Giant, although others such as Henry Cow found themselves generating some press attention, albeit the overall level was relatively scarce. Both *Sounds* and the *NME* praised National Health, with Miles referencing both their physicality, their 'state of the art modern progressiveness', and how the interplaying parts can suddenly come into 'glorious focus'[48]. Phil Sutcliffe praised them for being experimental, bold, brave, progressive and being at the intellectual vanguard[49], and later in the year, after favourably comparing them to punk bands, noted their live viscerality as opposed to cerebrality[50]. Jim Green's review of Gentle Giant says as much about the then-received wisdom of other Progressive rock bands as it does of Gentle Giant themselves. Green refers to how they:

> "do not mangle the high classics; they don't indulge in excesses of melodrama; they don't proliferate preachments about cosmic forces and the Nature of the Universe; they don't act onstage as though complex musical ideas preclude a sense of humor; they don't substitute emotionless and sterile demonstrations of alleged musical virtuosity for the integrity of musical creation"[51]

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[43] Barbara Charone, review of *Selling England by the Pound*, in *New Musical Express*, 29th September, 1973.
[44] Chris Welch, review of *A Passion Play*, in *Melody Maker*, 21st July, 1973.
[45] Andrew Tyler, review of Jethro Tull at Wembley, in *Disc,* 30th June, 1973.
[46] The relevance of this, e.g., with regards to Victor Turner's *communitas*, will be addressed later.
[47] Ian MacDonald, live review of King Crimson at the Rainbow, in *New Musical Express,* 1973 [n.d.].
[48] Miles review of National Health at the LSE, in *New Musical Express*, 28th February, 1976.
[49] Phil Sutcliffe, 'National Health: Carrying the Flag Close to the Edge', in *Sounds*, 17th April, 1976.
[50] Phil Sutcliffe, review of National Health at Newcastle University, in *Sounds*, 30th October, 1976.
[51] Jim Green, 'Acquiring the Giant Taste', in *Trouser Press*, April, 1976.

Welch and Charone continued to sing the praises of Genesis and Yes (including band members' solo works) through the late 1970s, with their live shows and both *Wind and Wuthering*, and *Going for the One* receiving positive reviews. However, at this stage, Miles was noting that a Genesis live concert was akin to:

> "watching a movie in a foreign language – a movie that you have been assured is brilliant, progressive, sexy and all that is good and wonderful and yet being unable to follow the action"

and felt that he and others had been "refused admission to the clubhouse because we didn't know the password"[52]. Jethro Tull continued to attract negativity, with Welch finding himself unmoved by the 'plaintive laments' of *Too Old to Rock and Roll, Too Young to Die*, and being "too ear-bashed to care"[53]. Sutcliffe, too, was finding the 'Tull stereotype' wearing thin[54]. At this stage, reviews of Pink Floyd's live shows were tending on the negative (see Ed Jones with regards to Wembley, 1977 [55], and Sylvie Simmonds, and Mark Leviton regarding the LA performances of *The Wall*[56] [57]).

The popular press reception to Progressive rock was clearly changing, although albums now frequently derided, such as *Tormato* and *Love Beach*, would still attract some positive comment[58] [59] [60]. Such reviews demonstrate that Progressive rock, or albums released by bands associated with Progressive rock, were not routinely dismissed as new musical fashions took hold. Rush, via *Farewell to Kings, Hemispheres*, and subsequent albums, were being viewed in much the same light as earlier generally well received Progressive rock bands[61].

A (Not-so) Gradual Decline and Slow Re-recognition

The tide was clearly turning, however, as the 1980s were reached. The leading 'Pompous Soloists', and creators of 'masturbatory rococo bilge' were held to be Patrick Moraz, Rick Wakeman and 'Vangelis Papthingy'[62]. With the move to more immediately accessible music, Yes

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[52] Miles, review of Genesis at Hammersmith Odeon, in *New Musical Express*, 19th June, 1976.
[53] Chris Welch, review of *Too Old to Rock n Roll, Too Young To Die,* in *Melody Maker*, 1st July, 1976.
[54] Phil Sutcliffe, Jethro Tull at Newcastle, in *Sounds*, 12th February, 1977.
[55] Ed Jones, review of Pink Floyd at Wembley, in *The Spectator*, 26th March, 1977.
[56] Sylvie Simmonds, review of Pink Floyd at the Memorial Sports Arena Los Angeles, in *Sounds*, 23rd February 1980.
[57] Mark Leviton, review of Pink Floyd at the Memorial Sports Arena Los Angeles, in *BAM*, 7th March, 1980.
[58] Phil Sutcliffe, review of *Tormato, i*n *Sounds*, 16th September, 1978.
[59] Chris Welch, review of *Tormato,* in *Melody Maker*, 16th September, 1978.
[60] Ian Penman, review of *Love Beach,* in *New Musical Express*, 25th November, 1978.
[61] It is highly likely that Rush was afforded a more positive reaction due to their crossover status with Heavy Rock/Metal, which endeared them to a wider audience base.
[62] Andy Gill, 'The Concise *NME* Guide To Electronic Music & Synthesised Sound PART TWO — Synthesisers', in *New Musical Express*, 12th January, 1980.

found praise for *Drama*, even from Mendelssohn who praised its accessibility over 'Yes paradigms of pretensions and self-importance'[63]. In some respects, Robert Fripp, and his ongoing work with King Crimson, could be seen as a microcosm of Progressive rock's evolution, status, and reception. Lynden Barber noted the contradictions inherent in his views[64], and Richard Grabel drew attention to how the band's virtuosity might sound like "two Jeff Becks engaged in a cat fight", yet the audience was uniformly highly pleased[65]. A couple of years later, Fripp was still being portrayed as the 'schizoid man', full of contradictions, and able to:

> "toss off poignant tearjerkers like 'Mary' (*Exposure*) and on the same record, ear-blistering headbangers like 'Disengage'. He is a man of heavy mannerisms and much metaphor, at once serious and profoundly silly. The founding father of progressive rock, he cut the die for punk"[66]

Whilst the occasional review of 'first period' bands' new releases could be seen in the music press of the 1980s, more attention was turned to the 'second period', with Marillion as the standard-bearers. Phil Bell, referred to the 'neo-progressive upsurge thingy', with its grass roots popularity, exaggerated musical ability, and whilst not demonstrating progression from their 'forefathers' they, along with Pallas, were "blowing the new progressive clarion"[67]. *Script For a Jester's Tear* was described as a 'rare stunning classic of a first album', suggesting that it "could instigate a new musical awareness among the whole post-punk generation"[68]. Others, though, aligned themselves more with the lack of originality and progression. Lucy O'Brien lamented how "the same old groove signals stasis rather than surprise"[69], and Mick Brown expressed surprise at their popularity as they represented the "quintessential extinct English group of the mid-70s"[70].

Into the late 1980s, and through the 1990s, press attention waned dramatically, and comments lacked the passion previously noted. Critical attention only began to slowly grow at the beginning of the new millennium, with Porcupine Tree, in particular, receiving positive comment. The *LA Times*, previously largely unenthusiastic about Progressive rock, published an extensive article by Marc Weingarten in late 2002. Within it, Weingarten welcomes back fans to 'the show that never ends'. He stated that due to an enduring underground, which had:

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[63] John Mendelssohn, 'Yes: The Band That Punks Say is a "No"', in *LA Times*, 28th September, 1980.

[64] Lynden Barber, interview with Robert Fripp, 'Robert Fripp: Do you want me to sell you an album…or a treatise on neg-entropy?', in *Melody Maker*, 21st March, 1981.

[65] Richard Grabel, 'King Crimson: Robert Fripp's Chocolate Cake Discipline', in *Creem*, February, 1982.

[66] Mark Dery, 'Robert Fripp: The 21st Century Man Sounds Off', in *Record*, November, 1985.

[67] Phil Bell, review of Marillion at Dial Inn, Glasgow, in *Sounds*, 22nd May, 1982.

[68] Phil Bell, review 'Sob Standard: Script for a Jester's Tear', in *Sounds*, 12th March, 1983.

[69] Lucy O'Brien, review of Marillion at Bournemouth Winter Gardens, in *New Musical Express*, 9th April, 1983.

[70] Mick Brown, review of Marillion at Hammersmith Odeon, in *The Guardian*, 13th March, 1984.

"nurtured new bands and rallied support for old ones, prog-rock is making a return. For those who like their rock songs to stretch beyond three minutes, flash some accomplished technique and move into unpredictable musical terrain, the new prog-rock is a godsend"[71]

The complimentary article referenced, amongst others, Spock's Beard and The Flower Kings, and their debt to Yes, and Mahavishnu Orchestra's influence on Azizga (the lack of reference to 'second period'/neo-prog bands is evident). Sigur Rós and Radiohead are suggested as 'progressive', with Steven Wilson being seen as 'something of a role model' in his wide-ranging musical tastes and influences (ibid). Within the relatively contemporary press, some revisiting of the bands of the past is increasingly evident. Marillion could be seen as a typical example, having evolved considerably over the decades. As far back as 2003, Steve Ward was remarking upon their outstanding ability to create "beautiful, powerful, intelligent, catchy, adventurous and heartfelt rock music"[72].

The main themes emerging from the critics' views of Progressive rock, as evidenced above, bear close correspondence to those arising from participants. However, the emphases are somewhat different, and notions of what constitutes the 'correct' amount of virtuosity, spectacle, and progression are all key aspects for further discussion in the subsequent Chapters. This overview does provide a sound basis for this, and whilst critics' published views are heavily geared towards the early years of Progressive rock's evolution and development, this is not detrimental to exploration of participants' views.

1.5 Aims and Outline

"our knowledge of how progressive rock fans act is very limited" (Allan Moore, Introduction to Gonin 2016 p.7)

To reiterate, in this thesis I will use Grounded Theory to explore what it is that fans of Progressive rock value in their reception of the music, and why, and how this relates to existing theoretical frameworks. Drawing on over 100 hours of one-on-one interviews and Focus Groups, unique insights from the perspectives of fans will be discussed, analyzed, and existing theory revisited.

In this Introduction, the general situating of Progressive rock has been summarized, noting its early popularity, subsequent wane, and comparative rebirth. A wide range of definitions of the subject under inspection has been covered, recognizing that the absence of a definitive definition gives rise to problematical theorization, but this nature is an inherent part of its

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[71] Marc Weingarten, 'Porcupine Tree, Radiohead: Old and New Wave', in *LA Times*, 7th November, 2002.
[72] Steve Ward, 'Marillion: An Interview with Pete Trewavas', in *PopMatters*, 10th June, 2003.

attraction to participants. The absence of fandom's voice in the debates over the valorization of any particular musical genre or style has been noted. This has underscored the validity of participant contributions, as *amateurs* and aficionados, answering the call for their voices to be heard, and providing an opportunity for unique insights to be gleaned. Before discussing these views, insights into how Progressive rock was viewed by journalists have been provided. Academic and scholarly views are covered in subsequent Chapters, as they relate to theories arising through the Grounded Theory process.

Participants' views, in their own words, and as will be seen, reinforce some currently held theoretical views, and in other cases either run contrary, or raise questions regarding further potential theoretical constructs. The participants' views reflect life-long attachments, and give insights into the ongoing meaning(s) of music. Partly due to the current critical perception of Progressive rock, and the nature of its fans, this form of music does not attract researchers who are drawn to the study of spectacular music genres and subcultures. As evidenced throughout this thesis, the unspectacular reception of music warrants at least equal attention, and arguably more so at this stage, given its relative inattention. The arguments as set out above, and more fully by Nowak and Bennett (Nowak and Bennett 2022) in their review of the history of the sociology of music, provide an impetus and a justification to investigate, analyze, and theorize, the motivations for fans' enduring fascination with any particular genre of music. This a prime consideration as to why this research is the more needed, and the more valuable.

The thesis is structured with six further Chapters. The subsequent Chapter, 'Methods and Methodologies', provides an overview of quantitative and qualitative research conducted to date. Having situated music research approaches, the details associated with this research are explained, and justified, including the rationale behind adopting GT, and the research's ontological and epistemological bases. The process for selecting participants, and how the interviews and focus groups were established and conducted is discussed, including ethical considerations, as are structural considerations common to research endeavours of this type. The Chapter concludes with a review of post-participation analysis, and reflections on research 'in the field', along with delimitations and future opportunities. Chapter 3, 'A Contextualization', explores the histories of Progressive rock, noting that, consistent with Grounded Theory, no definitive history is privileged, and participants' perspectives assist in grounding further discussion. The Chapter will also discuss participants' views on genre, given its discursive prominence by both participants and commentators alike. This Chapter will contextualize participants' perspectives and bring to life similarities, and differences, between their views and extant theories. Chapter 4, 'The Complexity Attraction', will explore aspects related to two main

elements: dimensions associated with the listening experience; and an in-depth review of some Progressive rock tropes that participants proposed. The listening experience will specifically discuss repeated listening, immersive listening, the perceived depth and complexity in Progressive rock, and the role of lyrics. The tropes arising out of the GT approach include concept albums, paratexts, and virtuosity/pretension.

In Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura', the listening experience will be re-visited, although through a socio-cultural lens. This will be extended to the live setting, which will draw in elements associated with authenticity. Collecting practices will then be explored, including aspects associated with display. The role played by the music press will then be examined before the Chapter concludes with an analysis of these elements in relation to cultural theory, including sub-culture, scenes, and tribes. In Chapter 6, 'The Progressive Paradox', the variety of lenses through which participants define progression will be explored and analyzed. This will incorporate participants' views on the roles of technology and improvisation, and that which can be considered canonical, and why. The Chapter will conclude with a discussion on nostalgia, and participants' reflections on their relationship with Progressive rock over the decades. Chapter 7, 'The Enduring Legacy of Progressive Rock', concludes the thesis and will summarise the arguments made, and provide some theoretical bases to summarize the results of the research findings.

Martin noted that with his book "and the books by Macan and Stump there is finally the start of a basis for a much better discussion of what progressive rock is all about" (Martin 1998 p.xii). In his own book, Macan comments upon the omission of "live at the scene participants", who he lists as "musicians, managers, technicians, record company executives, roadies, and groupies" (Macan 1997 p.10): I find the non-inclusion of fans in his enumeration to be telling. This thesis features the voice(s) of the participants, to a degree considerably beyond that which has been researched to date. Their views bring to life the dynamics associated with the heterogeneous nature of Progressive rock that commentators have remarked upon.

Macan has identified a lack: "[n]ot only has progressive rock been largely despised by the rock critics, it has also been largely ignored by popular music students" (Macan 1997 p.3). I hope to have taken up the challenges laid down by him, and other authors. The issues associated with this research are complex. Views, issues, and theories throughout this thesis are interwoven, and form part of an overarching weave. Music in itself is difficult to define, and its differentiation from other cultural attractions is a subject of debate over the millennia. The reasons why anyone appreciates and regularly listens to any music, and is attracted to a particular genre, or style, is a subject of conjecture, with wildly differing views. That Progressive rock is so definitionally elusive adds to these issues. Furthermore, fans are multi-faceted, with temporally shifting

motivations, and subject to performative considerations. There is therefore an intrinsic challenge in articulating, and interpreting, reasons for their musical preferences.

All of the above leads to an ever-shifting, multi-dimensional, many-on-many phenomena, resulting in a very rich picture of music fandom and reception as it relates to Progressive rock. In this thesis, I provide a unique contribution to our understanding of what Progressive rock fandom valorizes, and why. Through the exploration and analysis of the views of 51 participants, expressed through over 100 hours of one-on-one interviews and Focus Groups, insights are gained into: new contextualizations of Progressive rock; how it is received and consumed; the social nature of participant engagement; and the paradoxes evident within their appreciations of Progressive rock's, and their own, evolutions. These insights, demonstrating the value of the *amateur* aficionado, demonstrate that for participants:

- No gender or age biases are evident.
- The text generally assumes primacy over context (for example, as seen through the lenses of virtuosity, spectacle, fashion, and collecting).
- Repeated and immersive listening habits are *contra* various extant theories.
- The roles played by the lyrics, and the artwork, extend beyond our current understandings.
- The socio-cultural settings within which Progressive rock is listened to, engaged with, and enjoyed, signifies individual, rather than wider societal, approaches to understanding music appreciation and the valorization of music artefacts and history, giving rise to a notion termed '*mea cultura*'.
- The relative lack of exogenous influences enables multiple meanings to be formed, and views to be held, that are relatively unconstrained by dogma or convention, facilitated by a consciously open interpretation of what Progressive rock is, and is not.
- Paradoxes are evident within the reception of this music (for example, as seen through the (non-)engagement with new Progressive rock, the live setting and the role of improvisation, and the role of 'aura' in conjunction with canonical bands and albums).
- Nostalgia need not to seen as retrogressive and negative, and temporally-located, but may be seen as forward-oriented, with an ideological, aesthetic, and personal locus.

Evidence to support the above will follow, consistent with the Grounded Theory basis of the research.

2   Chapter 2: Methods and Methodologies

Introduction

In this Chapter, the Methods and Methodologies employed in the conduct of the research, consistent with addressing the need to engage with, and utilize, participants' perspectives will be laid out. In Section 1, 'Project Design and Development', contextual background will be provided, and the rationale behind the epistemological and ontological bases chosen will be justified. This Section will also detail the choice of research approach, how participants were enrolled, and how an interviewing process was established. The structural issues associated with research in this field will be discussed. A statement on Ethical considerations will also be provided. In Section 2, ''Project Delivery', detail on participant selection and engagement, and the actions taken subsequent to this, will be discussed. Finally, in Section 3, 'Reflections and Next Steps', some lessons learned will be reviewed, including the dynamics associated with research 'in the field', and some of the delimitations associated with the research method employed.

2.1   Project Design and Development

2.1.1   Background and Rationale for Grounded Theory

I have been a fan of Progressive rock since the mid-1970s, when in my early teens. At the time of deciding to embark upon this research, I had read many related biographies, autobiographies and band histories, including the works referred to in the previous Chapter as the pre-eminent ones: those by Edward Macan, Paul Stump, and Bill Martin. I had found each of these books insightful, however, I also felt that whilst the authors exhibited clear and detailed knowledge of their subject matter, the voice of the average fan, the *amateur*, was seemingly absent. Building upon the points made in the previous Chapter, 'Introduction', Joli Jensen has noted how the literature on fandom "is haunted by images of deviance" (Jensen 1992 p.9), such that, incorrectly, it is seen as a "psychological symptom of a presumed social disfunction" (ibid. p.9). Keith Negus has reflected that Lewis's anthology, *The Adoring Audience*, has shown us that:

> "fans are neither regressive, obsessive, alienated individuals nor a manipulated collective mass. Instead, fans are imaginative, discriminating people who are capable of making a number of fine distinctions and who actively participate in creating the meanings that become associated with popular music" (Negus 1996 p.26)

Negus suggests that fans, therefore, are able to produce "'reservoirs of knowledge' that contribute directly to the meanings attributed to performers" (ibid, p.26). The fans that I had interacted with, or observed, did not appear 'pathological' to my eyes, although the journalistic reception that I had witnessed afforded to Progressive rock fans, certainly fell into a negative category, with very little apparent appreciation of fans' positive views, and their agentic role, as proposed by Negus. This thesis draws from Negus' reservoirs.

Quantitative Research Approaches, and Limitations

The rationale(s) for fans' preferences for certain musical styles, and modes of consumption and reception, have been quantitatively researched extensively over the decades; however, it should be noted that no quantitative study has been conducted specifically with regards to Progressive rock appreciation. Various models and their applicability have been proposed, with STOMP[1] and MUSIC[2] being widely cited. David Hargreaves', Alexandra Lamont's, and John Sloboda's work regarding listening preferences (all typically in conjunction with other researchers), have also received significant attention (see (Rentfrow, Goldberg and Levitin 2011; Rentfrow and Gosling 2003; Tarrant, North and Hargreaves 2002; North, Hargreaves and Hargreaves 2004; North and Hargreaves 2007; Sloboda 2004; Sloboda, Lamont and Greasley 2016; Greasley and Lamont 2016; Greasley and Lamont 2006)). A number of psychological studies have also been conducted using the 'Big Five Personality Traits'[3] (see (Dunn, de Ruyter and Bouwhuis 2012; Tully 2012)). Dunn, De Ruyter and Bouwhuis found that inconsistencies with previous studies existed, some of which was attributed to inconsistencies in research assumptions. Whilst popular music, and rock specifically as a selected genre amongst many others, has been researched, Progressive rock is conspicuously absent, apart from a very few instances that are so scant as to bear no statistical relevance. That there were few correlations between personality and music preferences was determined to be "perhaps because of genre ambiguity" (for further discussion of this with particular relevance to Progressive rock, see Chapter 3, 'Contextualization').

Structural and methodological issues in specific regard to quantitative analysis have been raised by researchers. Fundamentally, at the philosophical and structural level, the ability to demonstrate causality is heavily contested. The range of variables associated with such studies renders them "almost impossible to attribute direct or indirect causal relationships among all the variables" (Chang Jin 1999 p.9). At the methodological level, Sarah Campbell (Campbell 2019) provides a comprehensive summary of structural shortfalls in study design. These include

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[1] Short Test Of Musical Preference.
[2] Mellow, Unpretentious, Sophisticated, Intense, and Contemporary.
[3] Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

the emphasis on researcher-selected short, single pieces of music, between-subjects design impacts, 'musical snobbery', and an assumed universality of responses. These all mitigate against an interactionist basis of understanding. The laboratory-based methods also, by definition, suffer from a context-imposed environment, which is at odds with the claimed importance of the situational context in the music appreciation process. The majority of laboratory-based studies also, typically, self-determine genre(s) and that which constitute typical tracks. In addition, the 'emotional checklist' against which responses are to be made are likely to be selected by researchers. From a combinatorial standpoint, many-on-many responses are either not encouraged or are not possible in the research construction. This reductivism strips away the vast richness inherent in the music-meaning experience. Whilst some of these limitations have been addressed through a few studies that allow listeners to consume music in their own time, at their own pace, in their own choice of environments, research methodologies continue to constrain the available responses. As Will Atkinson states, quantitative research, whilst having its merits, "must be alive to possibilities for a more nuanced analysis" (Atkinson 2011 p.185).

A Qualitative Approach

The limitations described above invite a different approach to understanding fans' valorizations, especially of an under-researched musical style. The study of music fandom, and the meaning-making involved in music reception lends itself to qualitative rather than quantitative research because, as repeatedly noted and demonstrated throughout this thesis, the consumption of music generates a multiplicity of meanings. An understanding of an individual's appreciation of music requires a personal and interactive approach that can elicit the explicit and latent meanings behind fans' appreciations.

Frederick Wertz (Wertz 2011) discusses five typical approaches for qualitative research: Phenomenological Psychology; Discourse Analysis; Narrative Research; Intuitive Inquiry; and Grounded Theory (see also (Flick 2009; Burgess 1982)). Whilst differences in definitional interpretation can be argued for each of the approaches enumerated above (for example in the fundamentally different views taken by the originators of Grounded Theory (GT) after their initial collaboration), the distinctions between the approaches are broadly accepted, noting that overlap exists. These overlaps can arise from initial construct or from an evolution in thinking as theory is put into practice.

From a review of the literature, a GT approach is considered the most appropriate for the following reasons. Each of the approaches' appropriateness vis-à-vis the others is well

summarized in the 'five lenses' section of Wertz's book, where five proponents of their individually preferred methods (at least for the sake of the case study) present their reflections. In an enlightening coda, the participant to the case study shared her views on the respective approaches, noting that the insights arising from the GT approach were 'dramatic, but not exaggerated, distorted or unwarranted'. Furthermore, GT, as opposed to Discourse Analysis, Applied Thematic Analysis, or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, places greater emphasis on the development of emergent theory, grounded in fans' expressed views, which provides a unique contribution in this cultural sphere. Uwe Flick refers to this research process as an exposure of the "pluralization of life worlds" (Flick 2009 p.12), and Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln refer to the researcher as a '*bricoleur*-theorist' (Denzin and Lincoln 2008 p.8), as (s)he moves between "competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms" (ibid., p.8).

For an overview of GT, *The Sage Handbook to Grounded Theory* is recommended. It states at the outset that "[t]he iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis makes the collected data progressively more focused and the analysis more theoretical" (Bryant and Charmaz 2007a p.1). In summary terms the process steps are: conducting a literature review; coding for theory and superficial themes; using theoretical memos; building emerging theory and engaging with other theories; and ensuring clarity of procedure and chains of evidence. As well as an interpretivist stance, my approach to the GT-based research was consistent with Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin's philosophy (*contra* Barney Glaser) who contended that literature shouldn't be ignored prior to research commencement (Hallberg 2006 p.147). The reasons for this are essentially two-fold: firstly, because:

> "constructivist grounded theorists view data as mutually constructed by the researcher and the researched. Neither data nor the subsequent analyses are neutral. Rather, they reflect the positions, conditions, and contingencies of their construction" (Wertz 2011 p.169);

and secondly, because of the degree of familiarity that I had already accrued with some of the seminal literature, and, as it transpired, some of the literature arising through the GT process. Flick positively situates the "insights and information coming from the existing literature as context knowledge" (Flick 2009 p.49).

GT therefore provides a suitable framework and conceptual methical approach for in-depth investigation and research, and subsequent analysis, across the range of elements that comprise fans' valorization of music. In general terms, Albert Halsey has noted the 'distinct shift' away from the quantitative to the qualitative in British sociology, with the smaller scale, semi-structured interview approach to generating knowledge becoming 'increasingly dominant'

(Halsey cited in Wright 2016 p.12). It is this approach that is taken. The resulting theory, or suite of theories, contribute to the debate around what are the socio-cultural (or other) processes that account for most of the observed behaviour, thereby contributing significantly to our body of knowledge.

The research approach was founded on a constructivist ontological stance, noting Wertz's characterization of this research base, and the opportunities it affords. With regards to an appropriate epistemological approach, it is contended that there exist a variety of possible meanings that can be ascribed to music, and Progressive rock appreciation in particular. The vagaries of its definition, and the absence of fan-derived meanings in the existing literature, not only provide an opportunity to develop GT, but strongly detract from assuming any *a priori* point of departure. Therefore, the approach to GT will be reflected in an 'Interpretivist' epistemological approach. Interpretivism is in opposition to positivism, with an emphasis on social meanings and relations, rather than the natural world. Interpretivism assumes that:

> "there is no, direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (subjects) and the world (object). The world is interpreted through the classification schemas of the mind (Williams and May, 1996)" (Gray 2014 p.23)

Flick (2009) proposes three possible bases for methodological focus: symbolic interactionism; ethnomethodology; and a structuralist or psychoanalytical framework. Symbolic interactionism is chosen due to the latter two being beyond the range of the researcher, and also due to the consistency of symbolic interactionism with the epistemological and ontological bases of this research (Bryant and Charmaz 2007).

Herbert Blumer proposed symbolic interactionism in the 1980s, resting on three simple premises:

> "The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer cited in Frith 1988 p.viii).

 It is this 'social world', as opposed to positivism's 'natural world', that will be explored to make meaning from the various theoretical bases and participants' responses. This social aspect will be explored in depth later (see Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'). For the purpose of situating participants' responses and the associated analyses at this stage, it is important to note that an 'objectivist basis' is rejected as flawed in this context. As David Chaney expresses it, "[a]n objectivist cannot presume that the world they inhabit is the same for all inhabitants" (Chaney 1996 p.58), although he warns against 'extreme subjectivism'. After Bourdieu the answer is between the

two: "a *dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of the internality*" (Chaney 1996 p.59 original emphasis). This is consistent with the GT approach: such an approach steers between what Janet Wolff refers to as 'discredited universalisms' and 'total relativism' (Wolff cited in Prior 2011 p.123).

To understand musical meaning, given the need to be wary of over-generalization, homogenization, and the undifferentiated mass, and yet also 'total relativism', individual perspectives need to be examined closely. This examination needs to be conducted at both the atomic and at the networked level. Progressive rock, as already noted, is remarkable in its heterogeneity, and consequently the range of responses it elicits from a wide variety of listeners. Repeatedly, and increasingly, new, transverse or integrated perspectives are advocated, driven by the unpredictability of the research endeavour.

There was a concerted effort to adopt 'theoretical agnosticism' throughout the research. This was achieved via 'abductive reasoning': this combines an inductive and deductive approach, Robert Thornberg's 'dialectic shuffling' noted in the previous Chapter, 'Introduction'. As also noted by Thornberg:

> "[t]he trick in theoretical agnosticism is to treat all extant theories and concepts that one already knows or might encounter during the pre-study or on-going literature review as provisional, disputable and modifiable conceptual proposals" (Thornberg 2012 p.250).

Accordingly, this approach allowed for themes to emerge and develop over the period of study, and consistent with the ontological stance these were mutually developed through the GT process. These themes were subsequently analysed and assessed, with corresponding amendments, such that an overall GT emerged.

One epistemological advantage in this area of study was that, given the lack of research conducted by others to date, in general and in regards to Progressive rock in particular, no consensus as to fans' valorization existed, beyond those claimed by academics, scholars, and journalists. These views will be made clear throughout the thesis, noting that to a significant degree they lack qualitative (or quantitative) grounding. This absence of 'conventional received wisdom' contributes to 'theoretical agnosticism'. As the time horizon did not permit a longitudinal approach, a cross-sectional approach was taken, although participants were able to offer some lifecourse perspectives.

Autoethnographic statement

An alternative approach considered for this research was autoethnography. The merits of this approach include an understanding of the risks of assuming a value-free approach to research

and analysis when we are likely to be value-laden, and the benefits of a story-based approach over conventional theories. This helps to address some of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological concerns that exist within social sciences in a postmodern world (see (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011)). However, I have not employed an autoethnographic approach. Given the intent behind the research (to study the understandings, appreciation and valorization of Progressive rock by fans) it would not have been appropriate. Hence, while I was able to readily convince participants of my genuine interest and knowledge in Progressive rock (as more than one participant remarked, "who would pretend?"), I avoided adding any commentary or value statement of my own. On occasion, and almost exclusively within the Focus Groups, I would sometimes contribute a comment so as to facilitate or provoke discussion, however this was from the perspective of another participant's input into the research or on the basis of existing theoretical opinion, and would be couched as such.

Some participants were known to me prior to the commencement of the research. With these people our relationship is such that they understood this perspective and complied with 'protocols'. Some participants have remained in contact post initial engagement. I was diligent in ensuring that no personal views of mine were expressed until the conclusion of the interview and Focus Group processes.

The views expressed within the thesis are wholly those of participants, and are reproduced verbatim.

2.1.2 Participant Selection and Identification

Over the years of my personal fandom, I have inevitably come to know various people who share this interest, although, consistent with the 'Mea Cultura' Chapter, this is a relatively small group. However, it was felt that a snowball approach to recruiting participants would prove fruitful. The rationale for this is covered by Christopher Driver and Andy Bennett (Driver and Bennett 2015 p.107), who believe that the 'collective perception of the research sample' outweighs any pre-existing prejudices of the researcher. It is noted that this privileges those who claim a position of 'initial cultural proximity' (Hodkinson 2004). The overall process design was closely aligned to that suggested by Mark Duffett, which, in summary terms, details: how the researcher critically justifies various research choices; how the research philosophy is decided upon; the importance of the research design; the usefulness of chosen methods; and the importance of awareness of ethical issue (Duffett 2013 pp. 255-6). The essential criterion was that participants were selected according to their relevance to the research topic (and Duffett warns against 'self-labelled non-

fans'). Participants were not selected for constructing a (statistically) representative sample of a general population. As noted by Flick:

> "[t]he aim was not to reduce complexity by breaking it down into variables but rather to increase complexity by including context" (Flick 2009 p.91).

Participants regularly provided contact details and facilitated introductions with other fans that they knew. Whilst some of these contacts claimed to recognize me, e.g., from presence at festivals, none were known to me in any professional or social sense. The issue of 'legitimization', with respect to both the participants and the researcher, will be covered later in this Chapter, as will ethical considerations.

With regards to 'purposeful sampling', participants were drawn from (self-declared) fandom. This group, especially given the lack of voice previously afforded them, provide unique insights into the reasons for their valorization of Progressive rock. Verbatim quotes are used extensively, and analyzed, throughout this thesis, enabling a broad range of motivating factors and issues to be foregrounded and privileged.

Of the 57 people that were approached regarding involvement, 53 responded positively. Of these 53, 51 actively participated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews. These numbers, both in absolute terms of participation, and minimal 'frictional loss', compare very favourably with qualitative studies that could be considered comparable. Five participants were initially drawn from my personal friendship group, and this then extended, via the snowball approach, to a broad range of participants. The vast majority of the participants were unknown to me prior to the commencement of the Research. A 'spider diagram' illustrating the 'degrees of separation' is provided at Appendix B. Of this group, 50% volunteered to participate in subsequent Focus Groups (FGs). All of them were clearly passionate and knowledgeable about progressive rock (avoiding Duffett's 'self-labelled non-fan' concern), and ready to openly discuss a variety of aspects. No interview or FG finished early. A short survey (copy at Appendix C) was distributed to all participants prior to their involvement, and subsequent to Consent Forms being signed. This provided some insights into their background, and served a dual purpose of providing some contextual information, and facilitating subsequent discussion.

Initial questions were drawn from material found within research independently conducted by Richard Muggleton, Keith Kahn-Harris, and James Belcher (see (Muggleton 2000; Kahn-Harris 2007; Belcher 2010)). These sources were most closely related to the subject matter being

researched, and were supplemented by insights arising from other literature. These questions were aligned to the research proposal Aims and Objectives[4].

The 51 Participants in this study came from a broad background. The following provides an overview:

- Gender: 45 Males, 5 Females, 1 non-binary
- Education: 6 at PhD level, 20 at Masters/Post-grad, 12 Batchelors, 13 'other'
- Profession: Training (7), IT (6), and Consultancy (6) were the most common professions, with 6 at Director or owner level
- Newspaper choice: 'None' (15) was the most common response, followed by *The Times* (10) and *The Guardian* (6)
- Geographical Spread: United Kingdom, France, Austria, the United States of America, Canada, Argentina, and Australia
- Age: 23 – 68 years (mode: 57)
- Years spent listening to Progressive rock[5]: 15 – 57 years (mode: 45)

It can be concluded from the last two points above that, from a modal point of view, participants were born in the mid-1960s, and started listening to Progressive rock in the late-1970s. Reflecting on participants' views on Progressive rock's timeline (see Chapter 3, 'A Contextualization'), this involvement occurred at the time when, in critical and commercial terms, Progressive rock had peaked and was entering a period of decline, and certainly not a time when it was considered 'cool', i.e., attracting social capital. Via another question, it was deduced that participants typically listen to one Progressive rock album per week.

One unifying theme throughout all discussions, both in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and in the FGs, was the clear willingness of participants to share their knowledge, experiences, and passion. The increasing prevalence of online discussion is accentuating the opportunity for performative stances to be taken, whereby positions are taken that are not necessarily authentic and deeply held, more that they are expressed for the reaction that they might provoke. Robert Kozinets refers to this as 'consociality', the difference between what we share and who we are (Kozinets 2015). This was demonstrably not the case for this research. Participation was completely voluntary, and the majority of the advertised one-hour timeframes for the interviews was frequently over-run, with the participant's consent. The high participation

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[4] The broad themes were: Definition and Characterization of Progressive rock; the Role that is has and does play and the Significance thereof; Influencing Factors in Consumption; The Affordance; and Lifecourse Perspectives.

[5] There was one significant outlier who stated, "2 to 3 years".

level for the FGs further underscores this point. These extended interactions provided ample opportunity for the researcher to authenticate the genuine nature of participants' fandom, and the congruence between expressed views and beliefs. The comment 'why would one pretend?' can also be seen in this light. The majority of the participants explicitly stated that a large part of their enjoyment in the research was born out of a very rare opportunity to discuss something for which they exhibit great zeal.

2.1.3 Construction of Interviews

Given the richness that would arise from one-on-one interviews, online questionnaires directly related to potential theories and (asynchronous) email exchanges have been excluded from the research approach. It is noted that Laura Vroomen (Vroomen 2002), whose research most closely resembles mine in terms of subject area and related findings, determined to use questionnaires, leading to 12 email interviews and four face-to-face interviews. She notes that some difficulties arose with the elapsed time prior to the conduct of the face-to-face interviews, and also how every research method entails some mediation. Face-to-face interviews were the preferred means of engagement, however COVID-19 largely, but not wholly, prevented this. As the world became more comfortable with on-line interviews, this approach was taken as necessary and or preferred by the participant. Inevitably, the lack of physical proximity diminishes opportunities for rapport generation and sustainment. The upsides include the possibilities for wider geographical coverage, and allowing the participant a greater range of logistical control.

Tonya Anderson's research (Anderson 2012) did entail some interviews; however, these were conducted opportunistically whilst at gatherings. I determined that such an approach could raise the likelihood of reduced attention, and increased 'performance' aspects. Accordingly, all interviews were expressly conducted as a pre-arranged session. Most participants were situated in their home environments so as to maximise their comfort levels. A few participants, who were personally known to me, elected to conduct the interview in a social setting. The choice of interview as research method was also made on the basis of my status as an accredited Coach[6], noting that advice on field research closely mirrors the techniques employed by Coaches (Burgess 1982). Each interview was recorded, and transcription software was used, supplemented by my personal review of each record. Early in the design phase, chatrooms and their ilk were excluded as a means of acquiring data. Not only would such postings represent

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[6] I have received accreditation as a 'lifestyle coach' from two organizations, and have received training in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, and still practise coaching in a professional capacity.

secondary data, I also determined that there was a higher risk of performative aspects associated with such postings, and one that I was less able to gauge and interpret. Participants' views (see Chapter 6, 'Progressive Paradox') validated this approach.

A Pilot Phase was conducted from September to October 2020. This Pilot Phase of six participants allowed me to 'non-destructively test' the administrative processes, logistical and technological arrangements, and the suitability of the questions forming the bedrock of the semi-structured interview. The Pilot Phase participants were partially selected, with their consent, to provide feedback on my own performance, so that continuous improvement could be achieved. One Pilot participant was expressly chosen due to his in-depth knowledge and passion for opera: this was to understand whether comparable research had been conducted in that field, and to gauge scalability and transferability. See below for the conclusions drawn. Consistent with GT, the Research Design included phases for reflection, both in terms of personal conduct (a research daily diary was kept) and in terms of overall design and delivery. As well as the benefits of the snowball approach, time was set aside for further reflection, ongoing review of relevant literature arising out of the abductive approach, and the opportunity for Focus Groups, should participants wish to engage with them.

Due to the anticipated volume, and complexity, of data, an NVivo licence was secured so as to help with the coding process. Whilst this tool is useful, it remains a tool. Thought processes aligned to synthesizing of data, developing, interrogating, and modifying codes etc., including the generation of sub- and supra-codes, remain a human endeavour. My professional career in (complex) project management undoubtedly helped in the design and delivery of the Research and its analysis and conclusion.

2.1.4 Structural Considerations

> "If a literary man puts together two words about music, one of them will be wrong"
> (Copland cited in Pattison 1987 p.vii)

The research design needed to be cognizant of structural issues. The ability to describe the listening experience has been recognized as problematic, due to its 'shape-shifting', 'multidimensional', 'multiply paradigmatic', and 'channel surfing' qualities. In this regard, all commentators are amateurs to one degree or another. From an analytical point of view, Alan Goldman has noted how Peter Kivy, an author on the inherent nature of music:

"cannot answer the question why listeners, including himself, value the music they describe as profound so highly" (Goldman 2011 p.155)[7].

Words are indispensable, however the ability to express meaning is problematic. The intrinsicality of music has been commented upon by Allan Moore:

"[t]he chances are that who you believe yourself to be is partly founded on the music you use, what your listen to, what values it has for you, what meanings you find in it. You may not at present be conscious of this (few are)" (Moore 2012 p.1)

Music's intrinsic nature also acts as a 'closed system' - from a linguistic standpoint "it employs no signs or symbols referring to the non-musical world of objects, concepts, and human desires" (Meyer 1956 p.vii). The difficulties of 'translating the simultaneously multidimensional character' of music into 'the essentially linear medium of language' have been noted by John Shepherd and Peter Wicke (Shepherd and Wicke 1997), and Suzanne Langer refers to *Affektenlehre*: how "music can *reveal* the nature of feelings with a detail and truth that language cannot approach" (Langer cited in Gabrielsson 2016 p.216 original emphasis), hence leaving us tongue-tied and inarticulate about its revelatory nature. Therefore, we continue to struggle to do justice to this 'thing', or 'activity' (or 'musicking', see (Small 1998)) through our inarticulation.

An additional 'structural barrier' to articulation is the 'evolutionary' nature of the music and the music listening experience. John Docker has drawn attention to the Derridean view that we "are always inside the concepts and philosophies we wish to critique" (Docker 1994 p.xiv), and this mitigates against objective analysis, or even perspective, of our evolving senses. An additional temporal aspect providing further complication is Edmund Husserl's model of time consciousness, past and future continually altering in cognitive time (Born 2010). According to Husserl, our appreciation of any event is influenced by our and its position on our and its timeline. Our experience of Beethoven's (or King Crimson's) later works impact upon our experience(s) when hearing, whether for the first time or not, Beethoven's (or King Crimson's) early works. As noted by Luis Oliveira et al. "the listener is not the same anymore, his conceptual space has been altered" (Oliveira *et al.* 2010 p.63): that which has been heard cannot be un-heard, new musical conventions and techniques have been exposed to the newly enlightened listener. Because of the range of texts, and the age of the participants, works were typically not consumed by them in strict chronological order. If, for example, *Wind and Wuthering* had first been heard by participants, then any subsequent exposure to earlier works, such as *Trespass*, would be conditioned by the knowledge of Genesis's evolution. Critical reception is therefore enhanced, degraded, or simply altered by this 'future knowledge'. Music's ever-evolutionary

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[7] See also Leonard Mayer's identical critique of Eduard Hanslick (Meyer 1956 p.4).

nature also leads to that which Muggleton refers to as 'the depth model', the position where music's "infinity ensures that we must always ignore certain of its features as not pertinent to the values in question" (Barry Hindess cited in Muggleton 2000 p.6).

Tia DeNora has suggested that 'analytical despair' can be avoided: rather than considering and inspecting a musical text as a 'bounded object', progress can be made via explorations of what the text means for others. Such a strategy "ensures that interpretation of music is not used as a resource for, but rather a topic of, investigation" (DeNora 2000 p.30)[8]. This thesis's ontological basis is the views of fans, as distinct from scholars and academics, and thereby provides a rich, additional layer of interpretation and meaning to extant views. The GT approach, and the research hours involved, enabled these structural considerations to be navigated, and participants' views are positioned commensurate with DeNora's proposed contextualization.

This research deals not with fan research in isolation, but also in the sociological context. This should not be read as pre-determining the level of socialization that underpins the consumption and enjoyment of Progressive rock music. As shall be seen, there are several axes to the sociological dimension, and these shift for individuals, over time, and with respect to differing contexts. At a general level, the importance of this social context is contested (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'). Elspeth Probyn warned against the trap of assuming that which can be articulated represents that which was experienced (Probyn cited in Stevenson 2009 p.96). In terms of research basis and analysis, the GT approach maximised the opportunities for these elements be surfaced, although inevitably a variety of views emerge due to participants' degrees of articulation (Anderson 2012). GT also promotes the exploration of new ways of thinking, giving rise to the opportunity for new analytical approaches and theoretical developments. Nick Prior, after Born, refers to these as "new combinatorial perspectives" (Prior 2011 p.133), and this opportunity will be taken up.

2.1.5 Ethics

All ethical requirements were complied with during the conduct of this research. The relevant University committees, and governance aspects, were fully engaged with, and every stage was held in abeyance until formal approval had been granted. Once participants were identified, regardless of origin, an Information Paper and a Consent Form, which had been formally approved, were sent to them. These are included at Appendix D. The latter required formal sign-

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[8] See also Nowak and Bennett for further discussions of music as a 'boundary object' rather than a 'thing' (Nowak and Bennett 2022).

off by both researcher and participant prior to continuation. The short online survey was delivered by the mandated JISC platform, and was also formally approved.

Prior to commencement of the Focus Group stage, ethical approval was again sought and obtained. The ethical considerations associated with Focus Groups is an ongoing area of consideration, and still relatively immature (for a summary, see (Smithson 2008)). Research was conducted into these aspects, and fed into both the approval and the conduct stages. The Consent Form was updated, re-issued to Focus Group participants, and again its bilateral signature was a formal precondition for continuation. This form is also included at Appendix D.

Anonymity was assured to all participants, and this has been studiously maintained. As well as those participants previously known to me socially, I have now met some others subsequent to the conclusion of interviews and or Focus Groups. They have expressly self-identified, which is consistent with their unanimous choice to use their own names during the Focus Groups, even though anonymity could have been preserved. This reflects upon both their openness, and, I strongly suspect, their joy at meeting fellow enthusiasts and their willingness to share.

All personal data has been password protected and maintained in a separate hard-drive.

2.2 Delivery

2.2.1 Interviews and Focus Groups (FGs) - Main Phase

The Pilot proved successful, and feedback was incorporated into the interview process. The material gathered from this phase was deemed suitable for overall consideration in the Research analysis. Subsequently, the Main Interview Phase was entered into, and ran from November 2020 through to June 2021. The initial list of 15 potential participants grew to a final tally of 51. By definition of the subject under research, its heterogeneity and range of interconnected motivational factors for fans' valorizations, then no sample size can claim to be truly representative, even without taking into account temporal changes in views. This brings to mind Jean Baudrillard's simulacra issue with regards to the size of any map. The opportunity exists for others to extend this research. No attempt was made to 'force' the sample; I feel that the resultant 'theoretical sample' more than adequately represents a range of demographics appropriate to this thesis. As well as the snowball approach, participants also enrolled in the research due to an article in *Prog* magazine[9], and a participant asked me to co-host a podcast with him, which allowed for promotion, increasing the opportunity for diversity of input. The

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[9] April, 2021.

number of participants compares very favourably with other research studies. Each interviewee agreed to a one-hour discussion, and approximately half, with their consent, ran to 75 or 90 minutes. Whilst the background questions were frequently fine-tuned to take account of profitable lines of inquiry, the 'ground rules' associated with GT were followed. This ensured that Burgess's 'controlled conversation' which is bent to the research interest needs was achieved, whilst not giving such an appearance (Burgess 1982). The interview process underlined the utility of 'technical knowledge', i.e., the researcher's ability:

> "to ascertain cultural meanings, if they are to obtain detail, verify statements, elucidate contradictory data and obtain information will allow them to evaluate their informants' statements" (Burgess 1982 p.166).

One inherent risk is participants wishing to draw the researcher into a dialectical discussion, and the researcher acquiescing: this was resisted, and GT principles were gently re-confirmed, as necessary.

The rationale for privileging the *amateur* was established in the previous Chapter. Whilst the language of these 'amateurs' may lack academic rigour or precision it, nevertheless, provided valuable, unique insights, both in what was and what was not articulated. Antoine Hennion refers to this as a 'fertile approach' and specifically how people:

> "become remarkably inventive when describing what they do when someone asks them not what they like but how they form attachments, with whom, what they do, how they go about it" (Hennion 2001 p.6)

A contrast is drawn between this and my experience, and Kahn-Harris's research into 'extreme metal', where he refers to scene members' inarticulation, and that whilst:

> "music is constructed as energizing, cathartic and pleasurable, members are reluctant to delve into their reactions to the music to which they listen. Members resist being drawn into detailed, quasi-psychoanalytic discussions of music, emotion and feeling" (Kahn-Harris 2007 p.54)

Participants to this research were very keen to 'delve into' their reactions to Progressive rock, and share their views on meaning-making. No conscious attempt was made during my Research to engage in 'quasi-psychoanalytic discussions', however participants did, on occasion, promote discussion on this aspect. When this arose, some gentle probing did elicit some insights.

Consistent with the GT process, there was an ongoing attention to the abduction process. A circular, or spiral, approach was taken, with regular triangulation between the data and the theory so that in practice, constant calibration was being effected, with the "Scylla of 'mere description' on one side, and the Charybdis of 'immaculate conceptualizaton' on the other" being avoided (Bryant and Charmaz 2007b p.14).

Upon conclusion of the Main Phase, themes, memos, and the daily diary were scrutinized and analyzed. Several emergent themes were apparent, and there was an unsurprising degree of inter-connectivity and overlap between them. These were synthesized into 'supra-themes'[10] which were suitable for FGs, as each supra-theme contained various elements so that a group discussion would educe a discursive richness. Literature relevant to themes arising from participants was revisited at this stage too, including research material previously not reviewed.

Many participants had volunteered their willingness to contribute further to the research via an FG or other. An email was sent to all participants to establish levels of interest and availability (an online tool was used for the latter, with anonymity being preserved). Upon receipt of the expressions of interest I conducted a 'systems engineering' approach to determine optimal FG composition. Factors taken into account were: participants being unaware of each other, so as to minimise 'group think'; not wholly aligned views on likely themes for discussion, so as to generate 'creative friction'; and a rich as possible demographic mix, so as to take advantage of diversity. 24 Participants expressed their desire to take part in a two-hour FG, and six were held, over the period from October to November 2021. Each FG was advised of three suggested supra-themes for discussion, although this was caveated with the statement that the FG could organically develop its own agenda. This was consistent with the GT process. The identified themes for discussion were shared approximately five days prior to the FG, which I felt to be the optimal period to ensure that they remained reasonably front of mind leading into the FG. After concluding the FG phase, several participants belatedly volunteered their involvement, however at this stage I determined that the criteria for theoretical saturation had been reached. In total, over 100 hours of participant interaction time had been achieved. This compares very favourably with other research studies.

2.2.2 Post-Participant Interaction Analysis

Regardless of the structural constraints identified above, participants were able, and willing, to talk, readily, easily, and at length about their appreciation. Their views were often couched in metaphor, and the impossibility of talking about music without resorting, at some stage, to metaphor has been noted by Nicholas Cook (Cook 1998), who takes a 'constructivist' view, which is in keeping with this thesis's ontological base. Yvonna Lincoln (Lincoln 2010), in her work on qualitative research, underlines the need for metaphor in interpretivistic inquiry, and uses

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[10]In shorthand form: Virtuosity; Complexity; Community; Ongoing Progression or not; Concept albums and paratexts; Lifecourse perspectives; The live experience, including improvisation; and the role of Storytelling.

examples such as a double helix (which is akin to Grounded Theory, and abductive reasoning), to illustrate her point. In their study of heavy metal, which, as will be explored, has correspondence with Progressive rock, Susan McClary & Robert Walser suggest that:

> "new strategies for communicating how music *feels* (such as greater use of metaphor and using one's own musical experience) rather than what it *means* need to be adopted in the academic analysis of popular music" (McClary and Walser 2005 p.288 original emphasis)

Participants were given to praise, and to elaborate descriptions, rather than dispassionate dissections, and Lee Marshall has suggested that more 'praise' in music analysis would be welcomed, as this breathes life into the subject, and draws on the language(s) of emotion, the currency that the music itself deals in (Marshall 2011).

Both the one-on-one interviews and the FGs allowed participants to discursively, and passionately, explore that which was important to them, without aligning to a prescribed agenda. There was broad overlap between the results arising from the FGs and the interviews. However, there were differences of emphases and nuances that required analysis. The views taken by the FG participants were broadly aligned within the total FG population, however distinctions could be seen between them and those that did not volunteer, e.g., a differing of views regarding the extent to which Progressive rock was still progressing. This added an extra layer of analysis. The key emerging points also necessitated a further review of literature germane to issues arising from the FGs, and a revisiting of the draft codes and memos.

Subsequent to these actions, a taxonomy could be developed that represented the major themes arising. This taxonomy forms the basis of the subsequent Chapters. The nature of music appreciation in general, and Progressive rock specifically, when viewed through the lens of those that listen to it, inevitably leads to a number of interconnected dimensions. Therefore, throughout this thesis, signposts will be regularly deployed to assist the reader with understanding that further, relevant material exists within the overall body. The number of participants and interaction hours provided a very rich, broad and deep body of research upon which analysis could be conducted and theories conjectured. It also provided a volume challenge, and not all aspects arising can be afforded the prominence that some participants placed upon them, due to space limitations. However, the benefits of this unique contribution will be clear in the thesis.

2.3   Reflections and Next Steps

2.3.1   'In The Field'

Comment has already been made in this Chapter on how techniques such as allowing participants to ultimately choose communication platform, interview venue, and a coaching approach were deployed to democratize the interaction process. The Ethics consents were also a step in enabling participants to feel that they were equals in the research. The importance of them, the uniqueness of their role, was stressed. A coaching approach typically commences with the participants being offered an opportunity to provide an autobiographical overview. This is another method used to both demystify the event, and to provide an element of perceived control to the participant. This is consistent with recommended research in the field (Burgess 1982).

Pierre Bourdieu sees the 'field' as a space that exists independent of the researcher, with its own objective existence. The social scientist views the field as coming into being due to participants' interaction. The intersection of these forms the backdrop to this thesis. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson refer to 'impression management' (Hammersley and Atkinson cited in Vroomen 2002 p.171), and this is a two-way phenomenon. Experienced researchers, and coaches, will feel little, if any, need to create an impression above and beyond that already formulated by the participant through the 'ritual' of the Interview occasion. Ample opportunities exist within the interview construct for researchers to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject area; the greater concern is to not let this become an area of dominance. With regards to fields, Bourdieu refers to various, including the academic. In the conduct of my research, I was able to move between the roles of 'fan-scholar' and 'aca-fan' as the situation demanded, without overly drawing attention to this. The notions of 'aca-fan' and 'fan scholar' have been developed to demonstrate how academic- and (knowledgeable) fan-based analyses can be differentiated. Matt Hills distinguishes them as the fan scholar, or fan-academic, being "the fan who uses academic theorizing within their fan writing and within the construction of a scholarly fan identity", and contrasts this with the aca-fan, who is "the professional academic who draws on their fandom as a badge of distinction within the academy" (Hills 2002 p.2)[11].

Henry Jenkins is credited with the term 'aca-fan', although he states that he has no recollection of how it came into being (Jenkins 2013 p.viii). For a review of the development of thinking behind 'aca-fan' and 'scholar-fan' see Stephen Bruel (Bruel 2019). Within his review, Bruel notes

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[11] See also "fans as uncredentialed scholars/scholars as uncredentialed fans" (Jensen 2014 p.208)

Jenkins's concerns, that the researcher should remain a healthy sceptic, and that the scholarly role can be compromised by what is termed 'unhealthy indulgence'. Proponents of the role (see (Brennan 2006)) have drawn attention to the richness that can derive from the enhanced appreciation that a knowledgeable researcher brings to the study. Derek Scott asserts that as long as the scholar-fan can "manage their duality, then the consequent data will have depth of historical understanding" (Scott cited in Bruel 2019 p. 48). Therefore, with constant ongoing self-reflexivity the concerns can be managed, and in so doing, achieve access to Duffett's 'the knowing field', that is, the level of 'emotional knowing' of what it is like to be a fan (Driessen 2017).

The dynamics associated with research in the field, and the skills necessary to navigate potential pitfalls, are well expressed by the authors above. I am of no doubt that coaching skills, and a career in project management, were indispensable aids in the conduct of this research., and adherence to the GT process. The discussion in this Chapter demonstrates how I was able to address these field-based concerns.

The vast majority of participants were apparently happy to engage in a 'fireside chat' with an interested party. This opportunity for them was considered rare, and was clearly seen as a welcome one. The 'one hour plus' time set aside for interviews, with a focus on participant perspectives, enabled them to reasonably work through that which they wished to share. However, inevitably, given the expert opinions discussed here, at times participants resorted to "you know", and further prompting was required. Participants were happy to attempt further clarification, to the best of their means. This is borne out in the extensive use of their quotations.

A small minority of the participants appeared to initially feel the need to establish their 'domain knowledge' in what seemed to be an overly demonstrative manner, although this was not sustained, and the 'fireside chat' approach was seen to be effective. The relative lack of 'power dynamics' could also be seen in the near-universal response to a question that was always withheld until the final stages, unless it naturally emerged earlier. This question centred upon "what is your definition of Progressive rock?". Whilst this may appear counter-intuitive in terms of its placement in the interview timing, the deliberate rationale was to enable reflection by the participant upon their ability to succinctly articulate the nature of that which they had been passionately discussing for some time. The majority of participants remarked that they were anticipating this question, however were unable to provide a coherent, well-thought through answer. As well as insights into genre theory, socialization and other aspects, it also demonstrates that participants were untroubled by their inability to 'prove' a (greater) degree of knowledge in this regard.

2.3.2   Delimitations and Opportunities

This research was based on the views of 51 Participants, in two settings: Interviews and Focus Groups. Whilst this number compares favourably with other studies, given the heterogenous nature of the research subject, additional research would undoubtedly shed further light on fans' valorization of Progressive rock. Participant demographics broadly align to WEIRD[12], and other demographics could easily be explored using the same, or different, approaches. Although participants were not all English, they were anglophonic in their Progressive rock outlook, English was the language of choice, and the majority of the discussion was centred on English Progressive rock music, with limited examination of continental European and North American, or other, bands.

This research is sociologically-based, and insights could be gained from other perspectives, e.g., by psychologists or musicologists. The time constraints of a full-time PhD student also necessitated a cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal, approach. Although participants reflected on their lifecourse, this was inevitably based upon their current day perspectives, and prone to Husserlian views on historicism. Several participants, as will be seen, did themselves wonder about this aspect, questioning whether their 'now' self would react in the same way as their 'then' self. This longitudinal aspect is one that other researchers could study.

The Pilot Study was constructed so as to test the potential applicability of this research approach to other genres, or other cultural spheres. The one participant selected on this basis was of the firm view that this was possible. Whilst the bases of this research approach inevitably led to a voluminous and complex set of data points, this thesis demonstrates the utility of the approach.

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[12] WEIRD: 'Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic' (after Joseph Henrich (2020)).

3   Chapter 3 – 'A Contextualization of Progressive Rock'

3.1   Introduction

> "I'd summarize it as a fusion of a wonderfully written, and I would say fairly complex music, and that it is infused with wonderful and meaningful words to accompany it" (Ian)

> "I guess it's about having the confidence in yourself as a composer and a musician to be able to operate outside of any arbitrary boundaries, say this is rock or this is jazz or folk…. that ability to have that feel, to make it a cut above classical music" (Daniel)

> "I think it's taking music, themes, ideas, concepts and *fully* exploring what you can do with all that, exploring the musicianship, exploring the boundaries of musicianship, but also the boundaries of storytelling, ideas and concepts that you couldn't do in a tune" (Nigel, original emphasis)

In this Chapter, a contextualization of Progressive rock will be provided, and discussed. This contextualization, consistent with the Grounded Theory (GT) basis of this research foregrounds the views of the participants. Their perspectives, gleaned from over 100 hours of individual and group-based discussions, provide unique insights into how Progressive rock is seen by them, as fans of the music. They bring real-life experiences and understandings into dialogue with academic, scholarly, and journalistic reception already published. Given the heterogenous nature of Progressive rock, and the individual views of participants, some of which they acknowledge as contradictory, no one definitive view on any aspect is claimed. However, the amalgamation of their views provides a rich input into an ever-evolving debate, and a sense of that is witnessed in the introductory quotes above.

These perspectives, and subsequent ones in the ensuing Chapters, will shed light on the 'taste culture' enjoyed by participants, whether at a solitary or group level. As Herbert Gans noted:

> "Taste cultures are not cohesive value systems, and taste publics are not organized groups: the former are aggregates of similar values and usually but not always similar content; and the latter are aggregates of people with usually but not always similar choices from the available offerings of culture. Moreover, they are analytic aggregates which are constructed by the social researcher" (Gans 1999 p.94).

The recognition of the possibility of variation in both content and selection plays out in this research, and the extent to which these 'analytic aggregates' are empirically evidenced will become clear, as will Gans' belief that the high/low culture dichotomy is not as relevant as others believe. For him, the distinction is more between 'private' and 'public' culture. With regard to the issue of the 'level of aggregation', Bernard Lahire (Lahire 2008) has also warned against the assumption that once the taste culture of an assumed grouping is defined, then each and every individual within that grouping can likewise have his own taste culture assumed. He argues that:

> "statistical exceptions are nothing exceptional […] [t]*ypical and marginal at the same time*: this is the most common cultural condition of individuals considered in terms of their cultural behaviour" (ibid. pp.170-1 original emphasis).

This leads to a possible research risk, namely that "[b]y neglecting the margins and statistical exceptions, we do not simply miss out the edges of the picture, but the picture itself" (ibid. p171). This research is centred on music that has been marginalized, in journalistic, scholarly, and academic circles, as already described in the opening Chapters. Through verbatim quotes, voices of the participants will be foregrounded, and the variety of their views, including conflicting ones, will be explored: so as to realize the fuller picture, the margins will not be neglected.

This Chapter will start this process. It will cover, from participants' perspectives: the histories of Progressive rock, the plurality of this reflecting the grounding of this aspect in the breadth of their views; and genre, as this is a discursive unit of analysis used by both participants and other commentators. Commentators' views, as germane to the perspectives emerging from participants' discussions, will be integrated into the analysis. These elements will provide a contextual backdrop to the key themes to be explored in later Chapters, and help situate participants' understandings of Progressive rock's history and its meanings for them.

3.2 Histories of Progressive Rock

> "The development of Progressive Rock Music, a difficult task"[1]

The development of Progressive rock is indeed a "difficult task", due to a variety of factors: as the Introduction Chapter made clear, there is no one agreed upon definition of the subject matter; origins of movements are always difficult to pinpoint, both in terms of chronology and influences; observers and analysts will privilege and emphasize differing factors due to their own backgrounds, knowledge bases, and biases; and the inherent difficulty of analyzing a movement in generation or flux, necessitates a form of post-revisionism. This thesis argues that 'a' definitive history is illogical, and that the various histories, as viewed by research participants, need to be understood and amalgamated so that an overall appreciation can be put into context.

It was noticeable that perspectives on Progressive rock's history arose during Focus Groups rather than during individual interviews. This is rationalized as being due to: the focus of the one-on-one interview being on aspects of valorization, which largely obviated the need for historiographical overviews; and because Focus Groups either by design, or by organic evolution,

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[1] http://www.progarchives.com/Progressive-rock.asp#definition accessed 27th May 2022

debated the extent to which Progressive rock was still progressing, and hence participants felt the need to contextualize their understandings of its history, and or in their individual bounding of their field there was a drive to situate Progressive rock's origins and trajectory. (Whether Progressive rock is considered to be still progressing or not, and why, forms the basis of the penultimate Chapter, 'The Progressive Paradox'). Given the historical, aesthetic, and definitional breadth, depth, and ambiguity associated with Progressive rock, coupled with a time-restricted Focus Group, it is not surprising that these discussions focused on a few more prominent areas. One band in particular that was used as an exemplar of Progressive rock's historical evolution was King Crimson[2], and for many could be seen as a microcosm of the overall Progressive rock field.

General Overview

Three participants were more vocal and clear on general overviews on Progressive rock's history: Frank, Alan, and Trevor, although in keeping with all views, their perspectives were caveated by 'it depends upon your definition….'. For Frank, there were two "time periods":

> "you've got the '70s with your classic bands like Yes, King Crimson, Jethro Tull and all the rest of them, who by and large, with one or two exceptions did progress" (Frank)

There was then:

> "a massive leap, sort of, maybe 10, 20 years later, sort of in the mid to late 90s when you've got a whole raft of what I call 'new Prog', coming in on the scene, and a new generation that took the whole concept, I hate to use that word, but whole concept of progressive rock a stage further than their predecessors had. So I'm talking about Opeth, Porcupine Tree, Änglagård, Moon Safari, God is an Astronaut, I could go on forever…" (Frank)

In his historicization, Frank is clearly airbrushing aside the period of what came to be known as 'neo-prog'. He is ignoring a period of low sales and fan acclaim, before returning to a period of resurgence, with growing sales, media interest, and renewed fan acclaim.

For Alan, and Trevor, there were three "periods' or "waves" (the terms were used interchangeably):

> "The classic period, so '69 to '78 perhaps, and then neo-prog, early '80s, just early '80s[3] and kind of fizzles away. And then the third wave starting in the '90s, which I tend to call

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[2] Sid Smith's *In The Court of King Crimson* (Smith 2019) and Eric Tamm's *Robert Fripp: From King Crimson to Guitar Craft* (Tamm 1990), both benefit from privileged access to King Crimson, and offer compelling insights into the modus operandi of the band.

[3] At a different time, Alan referred to the "Golden period between say '69 and '77 say, neo-Prog '82 to maybe '87".

'Prog'. 'Progressive rock', it's just the first period and the whole thing is covered by the umbrella of 'Prog'" (Alan)

For Alan, virtuosity is primarily associated with the first and third periods, "the classic definitions you see in the textbooks". For him, Progressive rock took:

> "basic gut-orientated rock and roll guitar, Album-orientated rock and roll and intellectualized it, and that took them into other areas, so classical musicians, jazz musicians got interested and that was genuinely progressive and it kind of fizzled out when it mostly run its course" (Alan)

Neo-prog is associated with a "punk attitude", before this 'fizzling out". For him, the third period benefited from an "infusion of metal, which saved the genre", although that too has, for him, stopped progressing, and has once more reached a stage of 'fizzling out'.

Whilst other participants did not delineate these periods in such an overarching manner, the 'three period' characterization is one that accorded with the majority of their descriptions. Progressive rock's historiography has been likened by John Sheinbaum to Beethoven's three periods. Following Keith Negus's argument in *Popular Music In Theory* (Negus 1996), he argues that the:

> "conventional historical narrative of progressive rock tends to fit an "organic" model of periodization quite well; a story of rising (the late 1960s), a peak period of artistic maturity (the 1970s), and then an inevitable decline (the 1980s and after)" (Sheinbaum 2008 p.30).

Whilst he is perhaps guilty of over-reaching slightly for highbrow credibility, there is, however, a reasonable fit (as he demonstrates with five band examples). Allan Moore (with Rémy Martin) mirrors the 'three waves', and identifies the major influences and characteristics of each of them (Moore and Martin 2019). The 'first wave' progenitors are portrayed as ground-breaking in their various ways, noting their stylistic differences, whilst 'second wave' acts are seen more in the light of pastiche, via tribute, and seen as a retreat. 'Third wave' bands are viewed as being idealistically aligned to Progressive rock's originators, with bold explorations that seek to expand the meta-genre's horizons, with acknowledgement of the value of non-ironic parody. The book is clear on Progressive rock's heterogenous nature and the development of 'idiolects'.

Commenting upon these characterizations as they arose in discussion, William felt that it was "more complicated than that. I think maybe all of that is true, but then there's extra layers going on". His comment arose in a Focus Group, and no justification for that was asked for, or given. An analysis of his contributions *in toto* would suggest that William sees more of a through arc to bands', and the meta-genre's stylistic, growth, and less temporal delineation.

Progressive Rock's First Period

Trevor stated that he had done "a lot of research and thinking on my own, 'cause I sort of consider myself to be an expert having followed this stuff for nearly 50 years and following it intensely" and had a view that when Progressive rock started "remains a perplexing question for many"[4]. For him, whilst "a lot of folks" consider its origins to come from:

> "the progressive British folk movement, the Canterbury sound and the Fairport Conventions, the Renaissances and all of those […] they don't really hit my buttons as Prog… Maybe 'progressive British folk'" (Trevor)

The Beatles were regularly recognized and lauded for laying the foundations for Progressive rock: "they were obviously a big influence on this music that's, let's not be coy, all those bands started off loving The Beatles" (Derek). They were seen as moving beyond a focus on two- to three-minute singles (Trevor), or the "four-minute Pop song about your girlfriend" (Mark), with *Rubber Soul* receiving particular praise. The Moody Blues, with *Days of Future Past*, were also frequently seen as proto-progressive[5]. Mark saw the album as the band's demonstration of being a prog band, not least because it was "*exciting*". For Julie, "they're not necessarily prog, but they're very much precursors to the prog sound", and the album rightly attracts attention because "it was so symphonic and so different", and caught a lot of other musicians' ears. However, for Trevor:

> "you still have people who consider The Moody Blues to be a prog rock band. Maybe they were with one album in 1968 [laughs], I've not considered The Moody Blues to be Prog for a long time"[6] (Trevor)

Tommy and *Who's Next* also generated some positive comment with regard to their, and The Who's, progressive credentials, and their influence on the meta-genre:

> "that wonderful track in the middle of it, 'Underture', that's amazing. Instrumental, 11 minutes long. And if people try to tell me that's not progressive, then I say you're mad" (Mark)

In terms of other proto-progressive bands, Trevor suggested that:

> "some of the stuff that The Nice were doing, some would throw the Stones' *Satanic Majesty's Request* in there and I think those just kind of set the foundation for forward movement. But that doesn't necessarily make them Prog. They just laid a foundation for the experimentation that was to come" (Trevor)

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[4] Bill Martin has noted how "philosophers from Plato to Marx to Derrida have marked this problem of "genesis" as possibly the most difficult" (Martin 2015 p.37).

[5] Edward Macan (Macan 1997) refers to "proto-progressives" and names the Moody Blues, Pink Floyd, and the Nice as representative.

[6] Trevor is American, and *Days of Future Passed* was released in November, 1967 in the USA, and so it is likely that he, too, is referring to this album, rather their 1968 release, *In Search of the Lost Chord.*

Trevor privileged Progressive rock's 'crystallization' aesthetically and musicologically rather than temporally, i.e., the use of "exotic time signatures", and "longer songs that enabled a lot of great dynamic shifts and rhythmic shifts", allied to creative songwriting, and "virtuosic musicianship at all levels, because the average rock drummer, can't execute 5/8, or 7/8". However, he did reference In *The Court of the Crimson King* as the "ground zero" for Progressive rock (as did Derek, Frank, and Mark)[7].

Allied to ideas of experimentation and exotica, Charles referred to the "craziness" of what was transpiring in the "late '60s/early 70s" via the fusion and appropriation of various styles such as classical music and jazz, to produce "stuff that was so new" that such a process and result could never be replicated.

Various books, and articles, have been published, promoting a view of Progressive rock's history, with those by Edward Macan, Bill Martin, and Paul Stump being most frequently cited by later authors. Of the three leading authors, Macan, the first to publish, adopts more of a musicological stance, albeit one that he couches in the sense of 'new musicology', i.e., an understanding and acceptance that sociological aspects should be incorporated into analysis. In his words, the ultimate goal of musicology should be to "document the relationship between music and society" (Macan 1997 p.x). Macan's sub-title is *English Progressive rock and the Counterculture*, and this situates his grounding of perspectives. The role of the counterculture, as partially evidenced by the above quotes, was not as prevalent for participants as that assumed by him. (For further reading on this, see (Covach 2017; Willis 1996; Bowman 2003; Sora 2020; Middleton 1990; Albiez 2003; Ahlkvist 2001))[8].

Martin's title, *Listening to the Future*, indicates that his orientation is forward ("progressive music is music with a *project* – an orientation to the future" (Martin 1998 p.61))[9], rather than a nostalgic yearning for a past (whether real or imagined), and this is borne out in his positioning of the power of the music as offering 'significant possibilities'. Martin's philosophical, in contrast

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[7] This is agreed upon by other commentators: John Covach (Covach 2000 p.17) considers this album as the "breakthrough LP"; and for Paul Stump, "If Progressive rock as a discrete genre can be said to have a starting point, *In The Court of the Crimson King* is probably it. All the elements that characterize Progressive's maturity are in place: jazz and blues influences are subservient to intense compositional rigour characterized by Mellotron-induced Western classical symphonic arrangements [….] Individual and collective passages of arresting virtuosity and a rhythmic discontinuity bordering on the perverse are also components of an essentially tonal, approachable whole inoffensive to any classical or pop listener" (Stump 1997 p.52).

[8] Middleton concludes that the relationship between Progressive rock and the counter-culture is "uneasy and internally contradictory" (Middleton 1990 p.31). Its apparent non-relevance to participants would support a view that other aspects merit further attention.

[9] Martin acknowledges Jean-Paul Sartre with this quotation.

to Macan's musicological, stance is recognised by him, and is evident in his references to liturgical comparisons, the connection to the soul, and 'spiritual quests'. The Romantic turn is emphasized, and each of the major authors cited in this thesis have spent considerable time discussing the extent of the Romantic influence. For further discussion on this, both its validity as a theoretic given, and counter-arguments for (post)modernism, see (Shepherd 1991; Robinson 2015; Keightley 2001; Atton 2001).

Each of these authors suggest that the seeds of Progressive rock were sown in the late 1960s with the various flower-power, hippie, and counter-cultural movements, and their Romantic, anti-establishment, utopian visions. Consistent with participants' views, the books present The Beatles, particularly with the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album of 1967, as a driving force for progression and that which ultimately led to Progressive rock, although participants gave greater recognition to *Rubber Soul*. The three leading authors cite artists such as Love, The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Led Zeppelin for fusing rock and roll tropes with R&B stylings, 'stretching out', and indulging in improvisations, such that a greater sense of musical exploration and progression was felt. This too is reflected in participants' reflections, although to a lesser degree. This could be due to the nature of the research questions, participants' own age profiles, and or their focus on Progressive rock and its temporally closer progenitors. Whilst authors such as those mentioned here have a tendency to claim antecedents in the psychedelic and counter-cultural movements, this did not feature in participants' discussions. The leading authors' recognition of the UK, and more specifically England, and even more precisely, the Home Counties area, as being the hotbed of early Progressive rock, was remarked upon by the French and American participants. This is not to trivialize, or ignore, the contributions arising from other countries, which participants of all nationalities remarked upon, providing a more comprehensive geographic spread than that captured in these book-length studies. The USA (with bands such as early Styx and Kansas) and Italy (with bands such as PFM), as well as other European countries, produced musical works that bear comparison to the more-frequently referenced members of the canon[10].

Hugh was unique in referencing the hippie movement. He stated that he first started thinking about this origin question "decades and decades ago"[11], and for him:

> "the flower power and hippie and the peace and love, it had run its course. And what
> came out of it, it wasn't necessarily cynical, […] it wasn't a case of flower power turning

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[10] This canon has been reviewed by Timothy Dowd et al. (Dowd, Ryan and Tai 2016), and Ahlkvist (Ahlkvist 2011) (see Chapter, 'The Progressive Paradox').

[11] Bill Martin has referred to the *"real* alternative musical and cultural scene" of that era (Martin 1998 p.59 original emphasis). The appropriateness of 'scene' will be explored in the Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'

sour, but it was just slightly adjusting the view, the perspective. And combined with the creativity which might have started in that sort of hippie era, that to me, that was the Golden Age, until the mid-70s" (Hugh)

Nigel likewise positioned the "Golden Era" up until "the mid-70s"[12], and Julie believed the timeframe was "'69 to '77". Rhetorically she asked 'her' Focus Group what was it that occasioned all these 'thousands of great albums' to appear in less than ten years, mostly from England, and why has it never been replicated in scale, scope, and legacy. Derek likewise believed 1977, *and Going for The One*, as marking the end of the first period for Progressive rock, a period when Genesis went from *Wind and Wuthering* as a "genuinely impressive album" to *And Then There Were Three*, which was "a massive let down", not just because compositionally they had largely decided to abridge their songs and nothing more, but also because of "the soppy chart single". Similarly, in his research, Mattia Merlini found that 11% of the fans of Progressive rock he surveyed[13] thought that "true prog died around '76/'77" (Merlini 10th January 2020 p.2).

Various authors refer to 'waves' and 'eras' and do so in slightly different ways. For the purpose of this thesis, 'period' shall be privileged, and its alignment to chronology and development will be made clear. The 'first period' (or 'classical era') is viewed slightly differently by the leading authors. For Martin (Martin 1998) its time was 1967 – 1978, and its "shining moment" was 1971 – 1975. Macan refers to the years of "roughly 1970 – 1976" as the "golden age" (Macan 1997 p.27) (and he separates this into 'first' and 'second waves'), with 1972 representing the apogee, with increasing repetition (and therefore less progression) thereafter. For Mike Barnes its heyday was 1969 – 1974 (during which time it was "both revered and reviled" (Barnes 2020 p.3), as also noted in the Chapter, 'Introduction', when magazine coverage was reviewed). Stephen Lambé refers to 1971 as the "definitive year" (Lambé 2011 p.26). John Covach hedges his chronological bets, stating it as "[b]eginning in the late 1960s and continuing through most of the 1970s" (Covach 2000 p.13). Nors Josephson is even vaguer, believing that it "arose in England around 1966 – 1970, reached its apex during the mid- and late 1970s" (Josephson 1992 p.67) (going on to note its enduring viability in France and Japan in the 1980s). Balázs Alpár credits it with the longest timeline, with "the golden era of progressive rock (1964 – 1980)" (Alpár 2016 p.94).

Derek also noted that in his social discussions, prog and 'metal' were typically seen as simply just 'big rock bands', and he has no recollection of the term 'progressive rock' being used in the

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[12] Although similar terms and timeframes were used, these participants were not in the same Focus Group.

[13] Merlini's sample size in his online survey is unclear.

mid-1970s. Kevin Holm-Hudson (Holm-Hudson 2002 p.2) promotes Lester Bangs as the first user of the 'progressive rock' phrase, used to describe a number of emerging styles under some form of collective rubric. That the bands referenced included Blood, Sweat and the Tears, and the Allman Brothers, demonstrates that definitional precision, as would always be the case, is problematical. The relative absence of commentary in the mainstream and music-specific media, as referenced in the Introduction Chapter, was noted by Chris Anderton and Chris Atton in their review of the leading popular music papers[14] of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The papers' use of 'Progressive rock' or 'Progressive' was only noted in "a handful of the hundreds of features, interviews, concert reviews, and albums reviews surveyed" (Anderton and Atton 2020 p.16), and mostly only in 1970. The context for these references was in regard to the 'underground scene' of the time, rather than to the 'Big Six' (or other).

Progressive Rock's Second Period

With participants temporally delineating 1977 as an end of the first period, the middle period was characterized as being 'early '80s'. For Nigel, this marked a period when it became "prog rather than progressive", with Genesis and Rush being exemplars of not evolving or giving him anything "new". King Crimson were highlighted as an exception with "a new sound, something that was a progression". Alan recalled how he:

> "went to see Discipline, as they were, before they became King Crimson. And that kind of blend of really art rock with some of the prog sensibilities. So the incredibly odd time signatures I actually thought worked really well and I really enjoyed that gig" (Alan)

As well as Genesis, Trevor also disparagingly referred to Yes "going Top 40", and:

> "Gentle Giant falling off the map, and you see ELP disbanding and Robert Berry joining them, and then they become another Asia" (Trevor)

With regards to Yes, Alan stated how he is a "big anti-90125 person". He couched his argument more in economic than in aesthetic terms:

> "It's kind of the height of Reaganomics and neoliberalism and record companies were becoming great places to put pension pots and so they had a great deal of financial leverage. And the previous, kind of, 'let's buy an act, let's put another artist on the roster and see how well they do and it doesn't matter if they don't sell too many albums, 'cause we've got a couple of really great artists who do it to cover it', the experimental approach for the record companies had disappeared. And it was all about the dollar" (Alan)

Alan recognized that that commercially successful period saved Yes, although he felt that the band should have taken a new name[15].

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[14] *Melody Maker*, *Sounds* and *New Musical Express*, up to 1974.
[15] Cinema was mooted for a period of time, before record company intervention.

The emergent bands of the 1980s, with Marillion, and Pendragon explicitly cited, "never did anything" for Trevor: that which he loved, and felt should be "cherished", only "lived for about six or seven years before it, you know, took a wrong turn". Trevor's description of the period was couched in existentialist terms: "giants that emerged and kind of set the stage and put the definitional stake in the ground", found "big money" with shorter songs and radio-friendly material, and this "sell-out" constituted "a threat to the existence of Prog as we knew it". Trevor specifically referred to Genesis in this regard. Genesis' transition from 'progressive to pop' was researched by Michael Koss (Koss 2011), and his musicological analysis concluded that many Progressive rock elements were evident in Genesis's later work, often in the same one song. The degree to which participants' views aligned with this will become clear.

As well as Marillion and Pendragon, Trevor referenced It Bites, "an amazing marriage of prog pop", who managed to 'keep the spirit alive', such that a "gurgling undercurrent of Prog, not sold-out Prog", still lived on. Regarding this middle period, as Stephen Lambé (Lambé 2011) points out, other factors helped keep the flame alive: for example, the Marquee as a music venue, and the Friday Rock Show[16] late night on BBC radio. Both of these 'intermediaries' featured heavily in UK-based participants' life courses. Anderton (Anderton 2019) draws attention, also, to the re-issues, re-releases, new labels, worldwide interest, new websites, the Classic Rock Society and other factors that contributed to this 'long tail'. Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell discussed how artists such as Peter Gabriel and Peter Hammill re-invented themselves, both garnering critical and commercial accolades, including some joint work. However, essentially, the 1980s were a low water mark for Progressive rock. As Stump puts it, it was the decade when:

> "Progressive became an umbrella generic for a musically reviled body of works, a marketing tool, a nostalgic rubric. Progressive ideology was discredited" (Stump 1997 p.291)

As part of 'the new wave of British prog', Mark mentioned IQ, Twelfth Night, and Haze. For him, he found them new and interesting, and therefore concluded that "it can't be anything but a good thing". He noted Marillion as "of course, they were just pure Genesis copyists". Brian Devoil of Twelfth Night, a contemporary of them, took the view that:

> "the meaning of the word 'progressive' is 'to move forward', right? So, therefore it must be ridiculous to describe someone like Marillion as Progressive. Good though they are, all they're doing is re-creating the Genesis of the early seventies – working within already defined musical parameters, not actually moving forward at all"[17].

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[16] This was launched in November, 1978, and its role is discussed in 'Mea Cultura'.
[17] Cited in Dome, Malcolm (1983) 'Market Square Heroes', Kerrang 37, pp. 26, 28, 30.

Mark discussed how 'Grendel' was 'basically' 'Supper's Ready', yet argued:

> "what's wrong with that? It sounded great. It was great to watch. So, whether that's an original, or copy, whatever. It doesn't matter. If you enjoy it, go for it" (Mark)

Alan, and Hugh, remarked upon the positive aspects of this period, both in terms of keeping the flame alive, and the aesthetic affordance of great music, performed by accomplished musicians. These perspectives underscore both an openness of mind, and also a focus on the music *per se*. Andy Bennett states how Progressive rock, and 'prog-influenced music' managed, in this period, to create an 'alternative voice' that, as well as being an alternative to punk and or new wave, was also "instrumental in providing new pathways for British popular music" (Bennett 2022 p.137), long after the demise of the music that allegedly brought about its own death (see also (Josephson 1992; Hegarty and Halliwell 2011)). Anderton, too, has stated how during this period a number of Progressive bands continued to progress in terms of "increased compositional and instrumental complexity and sophistication" (Anderton 2019 p.3). Alan spent most time discussing this middle period. As well as the previously mentioned bands, Jadis and Solstice were name checked. For him 'neo-prog' was "a kind of prog sensibility mixed with a do-it-yourself ethos or a punk sensibility". He was attracted to *Script For a Jester's Tear* because of its artwork, thinking "bloody hell, this is, it looks like proper prog", although finances were too stretched to purchase it at the time. Sometime later, following a radio show, he started buying their music, and specifically remembers:

> "Robert John Godfrey hating Marillion for some reason and I remember being at Dominion Theatre and he had this huge *rant* about how they're upstarts and it wasn't proper music or something. It was very, very strange" (Alan, original emphasis)[18]

Otherwise, for that period, Asia, GTR, and *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, were cited as being examples of the tangential relationship of the music of the time with 'proggy-ness': "it's very well done, it's not prog, it's very catchy AOR" (Alan). Both Alan and William remarked upon lifecourse as being a possible factor in their relative lack of appreciation for that period of time: family and career priorities, an inability to see as many bands, or devote time to an appreciation of the music, all contributed to what William referred to as "a dip". Martin believes Progressive rock's decline was due to 'attention spans drying up' (1998 p.259), and Stump draws attention to the lengthy gaps that arose between album releases and tours: out of sight being out of mind (1997 p.255), although he also noted that come the end of the 1980s, and "Progressive rock, would be on the drawing board again for a radical rethink" (1997 p.291)

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[18] Robert John Godfrey critiqued neo-prog as ""no surprises - no adventures in harmony or rhythm - it is just cut and paste from a box of well-worn progression, pre-sets and riffs" (Anderton 2016 p.158)

For reasons that will be discussed, the role of the neo-prog bands was delimited from this research, fundamentally due to participants' non-awareness or their largely (although not wholly or exclusively) ambivalent or dismissive views.

The Later Period, and Current Day

Whether Progressive rock is considered to be still progressing or not, and why, forms the basis of a later Chapter (see, 'Progressive Paradox'). The reasons why or why not certain bands, and their music, were considered progressive or evolutionary dominated a lot of discussion time, and heavily influenced the discussion around what could be considered elemental to Progressive rock's third, and current, period.

An example of this was 'prog-metal', which Nigel believes no Progressive rock fan would really "be into", although its merits might be recognized. However, for Lily, she is very much a fan, and this keeps the music "still very exciting", and in 'her' Focus Group she drew attention to her wearing of a Haken t-shirt. Whilst she grew up with the progenitors, her favourite bands now tend to be drawn from this sub-genre. Frank shared how he wasn't attracted to this, until his son encouraged him to listen to *Watershed*, which:

> "was one of those, what do they call it, an epiphany moment, it just blew me away and ever since that day I have been a massive, massive Opeth fan" (Frank)

Lambé has noted how, into the new millennium, Prog is relative thriving, and how in the early to mid-1990s interest grew in the USA, and also "more reverentially" in Scandinavia, with subgenres being spawned, and how both of these markets were responsible for the growth in the interest in 'prog metal' (Lambé 2011).

As well as the works by Macan, Martin, and Stump, more recent meta-genre-wide overviews have been published by Robert Burns (Burns 2018), and Mike Barnes (Barnes 2020). Burns was a musician of some renown[19] and his musical and musicological background are apparent in his writing. Building upon previous authors, to whom he gives due credit, he aligns himself more with Hegarty and Halliwell in terms of Progressive's rock's early influences and ongoing progression. This latter point is one he particularly stresses, and cites various bands[20] who demonstrate the same spirit of experimentation and curiosity that distinguished the bands of the first period. Burns, in contrast to other authors, devotes more time to paratextual elements such as album artwork, concepts, and costumes and lights associated with the live experience. This accords with participants' emphases. His stylistic range is also broader, noting jazz

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[19] He has played with David Gilmour, Colin Townshend, and Jon Lord, amongst others.
[20] E.g., Animals as Leaders, and Tesseract.

influences in bands such as Colosseum[21], the heavier style of Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, and the poppier elements of 10cc. This attention to adjacent styles would also be recognized by participants. Burns traces a more complete arc for Progressive rock, extending through the second and third periods, and takes issue with some of the leading authors' views on the lack of quality or originality evidenced by later bands. He grounds his analysis more upon attitudinal and idealist grounds, stressing continuity and experimentation, over stylistic definitions. Again, this aligns with participant views.

Similar in style to Lambé, Barnes's journalistic background, and connections, allow him to present a comprehensive *tour d'horizon* of his subject matter, with a sacrifice of depth for breadth. He is able to spend time discussing rarely mentioned bands such as Gracious!, Egg, and Quintessence, and includes 'divertimentos', such as those on festivals, or fashion. As with Burns, Barnes notes the range of influences that combined to form Progressive rock's style, avoiding the cliché of classical music, however is then guilty of over-emphasising the 'Canterbury scene', which will be discussed in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'. As Barnes makes clear in his sub-title, his scope is the UK, to which he holds true, and the 1970s, to which he is partially adherent. Barnes's review largely culminates around 1976/1977, and falls prey to the reductive view of punk's *raison d'etre* and effect on Progressive rock. His chronological scope is the most delimited of all the book-length studies.

As noted above, Burns refers to 'heavy rock' bands and their association with Progressive rock fandom, and 'heavy rock' or 'metal' was an entry point for a significant number of participants. Despite the correspondences seen by participants, it is notable that authors such as Kevin Kahn-Harris (Kahn-Harris 2007), and Robert Walser (Walser 2014), pay little or no attention to Progressive rock, despite the many connections and analogues between the styles that are evident in analysis of fans' valorizations[22], although it should be noted that the primary bases for their analyses was not intended to be pan-genre comparative.

Focus Group 4 debated whether Progressive rock could reach a point of saturation[23], with Lily wondering what more could be added, given the historic focus on "virtuosity and complexity

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[21] Gary O'Toole is quoted as underscoring the influence of jazz in contemporary Progressive rock.

[22] Between them they explore the roles of scenes and communities, and fans' views. Kahn-Harris is more insightful on the former (moving the discourse on from a genre-based analysis), and Walser with the latter (although interviewees' comments tend to be relegated to footnotes, rather than analysed). They explore the role of subcultural capital within what others may see as a transgressive social context, although a greater sense of passion might be of benefit so as to being the subject more to life.

[23] Macan believes that Progressive rock of the middle period went into inevitable decline for reasons aligned to these Participants' discussion: "by the mid-1970s bands such as King Crimson and Gentle Giant had pushed the metric, harmonic, and thematic complexity of progressive rock to the limits of its commercial viability" (1997 p.181).

and time signatures, and, you know, the influence of classical and jazz and all of that". Tim commented that new instruments, and technology, add to the compositional, and aesthetic, possibilities, and, in a separate Focus Group, Nigel reflected on different cultural aspects being brought in, such as African, or different genres such as rap, and funk. For him, these represented additional areas of evolution, which he was aesthetically, and intellectually, drawn towards. Frank commented upon the "stagnation" evident to him in classic rock, and Daniel suggested that, as "people who perform Progressive rock tend to be musically more literate than people who perform other types of music for a living", then, unlike The Foo Fighters, who are repeating a formula "that isn't 1,000,000 miles removed from what bands in the 70s were doing", Progressive rock musicians had the ability, and the desire to keep exploring and evolving.

> "music is infinite and you can keep on expanding it. There is no limit to chord progressions or time signatures, or whatever, you just, you know, keep on going till you find what you like" (Daniel)

The other Focus Group participants agreed with this summation. In 'his' Focus Group, Trevor led the discussion regarding how Roine Stolt, with the Flower Kings, Kaipa, and Spock's Beard "reinvigorated" his interest. He noted a 20-year gap from when the progenitors started out, and how "its resurgence wasn't brought about by those progenitors. It was brought about by folks who discovered it, however they discovered it, and reinvented it, and re-introduced the genre".

All other group members readily agreed with this, with Philippe stressing the roles also played by Steven Wilson and Mikael Åkerfeldt, as curators of the original vision and ethos, and their depth of knowledge keeping the music sounding "fresh". Hegarty and Halliwell have stated that:

> "since the late 1990s progressive rock has renewed itself as a major cultural force without recourse to the musical vocabulary assumed to be the staple of all progressive styles" (2011 p.2)

Moore, from a musicological basis (Moore 2018), has demonstrated the similarities between, and borrowings from, music from 'the first generation' into recent bands' works.

Various other bands were praised within the Focus Groups[24], participants quite often suggesting that they were more progressive than the current incarnations of legacy bands, e.g., Yes. Other established acts that were still releasing new music, such as Steve Hackett, Peter Hammill, Focus, and PFM, attracted positive comment. These artists were praised for their continual exploration of new musical boundaries, both for themselves and for the meta-genre. *The Sunday Times*

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[24] These included The Far Meadow, Arch Echo, Moon Safari, Moron Police, Subsignal, Airbag, Motorpsycho, Thank You Scientist, IO Earth, Muse, Radiohead, Melting Clock, Haken, Avenged Sevenfold, God is an Astronaut, Moonsorrow, Cloud Over Jupiter, Riverside, and Bjork.

Culture magazine of 11th January, 2009 included the following comment in its "Your Definitive Guide to Todays' Music Scene":

> "Watching and listening to bands such as Radiohead, Muse, and The Secret Machines, is to witness all the mad splendour of prog rock, alive and well three decades after its heyday (and apparent death at the hands of punk)" (pp. 26-7, cited in Hegarty and Halliwell, pp. 3-4).

As Derek explained, no-one had released anything like *Larks' Tongues in Aspic* before King Crimson did, and this repetition, or otherwise, of formulae, whether their own or others, distinguished a band's progressive credentials. Even if participants did reference newer bands in relation to a 'first period' act, such as Arch Echo being compared by Nigel to the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Airbag by Philippe to Pink Floyd, and Muse to symphonic elements of Genesis or Yes by Julie, they were nevertheless praised for "freshness", "vibrancy", or a general level of quality. It is noticeable that the reference points were first period bands. Trevor noted how bands - such as Subsignal - do a "great job" of blending:

> "melodic AOR with tricky prog baked into it, you know. You have to listen to one of their songs a dozen times before you realize they snuck in a whole 5/8 and then a 7/8 theme to it, because they execute it so well" (Trevor)

which was one of the reasons that he concluded that prog is "bigger and better than ever".

The cited bands indicate that there is a geographical diversity that extends beyond the initial largely British shores, and this was allied to various comments regarding its attraction to a youth audience too. Mark referred to a previous night's Steve Hackett concert, and a "kid of 16, or 17" was there was his father, or grandfather, and how:

> "someone went up to him and said 'you're a bit young to be here aren't you?!' And I thought, 'how bloody rude'. And the kid said, 'well, I just love it, it's great to see all these great musicians'. And I thought, 'well, this is me back in the 70s'. So the age group is, so it's out there, the kids are out there listening to it" (Mark)

Milton agreed with him, noting that "a lot of younger people are definitely listening to some of the older music now and preferring it. So my daughter, she loves *Wish you Were Here*". William reflected that it's a "shame" that it is still "viewed as a bit as a niche", as it's "not cool", and "it's not something where you're advertising it in order to look better amongst your fellow mankind". Despite everything it achieved, as a 'movement', and what it gave its consumers, and its legacy that endures to this day, as Dowd, Ryan and Tai point out, 'prog' is still sidelined. In Bourdieusian terms, it is "culturally dominated" (Dowd, Ryan and Tai 2016 p.120). However, "as Dubois and Méon have convincingly demonstrated, those in dominated positions may not experience and enjoy their music in such terms" (ibid., p.120). This latter point is explored in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'. Both Trevor and Derek remarked upon Progressive rock's pervasiveness, even if the

mass audience are unaware of this[25]. Trevor discussed how, as part of his pedagogic approach, he will educate his radio listeners on "30 or so" bands that unbeknownst to the wider world have progressive elements in their music.

In the round, participant quotes provide a comparison with the leading authors who, in Anderton's view, unduly promote what he terms the 'symphonic orthodoxy': by contrast Anderton advocates a wider, non-UK-centric approach to Progressive rock appreciation (Anderton 2010). His analysis is extended geographically pan-Europe, and stylistically to riff-based space-rock, Coltrane-influenced jazz-rock, the avant-garde, and the aleatoric minimalistic music of bands such as Can. Anderton has also published articles on the Italian scene (Anderton 2009), and the neo-prog revival (Anderton 2019; Anderton 2016). Each of these extend our understanding of both the breadth and depth of Progressive rock as a meta-genre, and give insights into the various affordances enjoyed by its broad consumer base, and have resonance with participants' broadly open-minded ideologies.

Regarding Progressive rock's niche status, Julie and Lily both commented upon how alternative marketing strategies were being deployed so as to enhance the commercial viability of being a Progressive rock star, with 'Cruise To The Edge' being highlighted. The benefits of this were widely appreciated, with other participants remarking how it was necessary for artists (such as Lee Abraham, and Robin Armstrong), to be involved with several bands, as well as holding down other careers, so as to keep releasing their "amazing" music. Mark commented that fans have a crucial role to play in supporting them in their endeavours.

As far as the current period is concerned, participants were largely unconcerned whether the music they are currently enjoying is seen by others as "shoegaze, Goth Prog or whatever" (Derek), and indifferent to whether it fulfils others' definitions of whether it is genuinely progressive or not, as it is the participants' own criteria that they are being measured against. As Trevor said, "who gives a shit what others think".

3.3 Genre

"I'd rather it had no name" (Klaus)

"I'm genre fluid" (Rebecca)

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[25] In terms of an enduring legacy, "traces of progressive rock are evident in other experimental groups of the 1980s, such as XTC or the Talking Heads" (Josephson, op. cit., p.67), see also Hegarty and Halliwell (op. cit.), although it should also be noted that when Radiohead released their highly acclaimed album *OK Computer* in 1997 and were asked about the Progressive rock influences they very quickly and forcefully rejected the label and distanced themselves from it. This stance has to be taken on face value. The presumed reason is due to then-prevailing journalistic bias.

"You don't need a box. You need space outside the box" (Alan)

This Section first outlines the principles behind genre theory so as to position later discussion with regards to what constitutes 'progressive', then reviews the perspectives of participants, before exploring the correspondence of these views with arguments for the theoretical validity of genre. This will enable various theoretical strengths and weaknesses to be examined from an empirical base, with specific relevance to Progressive rock.

What is Genre Theory?

Genre[26] involves the classifying of a cultural object into a category that contains other similar objects with similar aspects. This can be seen as fitting within an overall ""*genre culture*" as a concept for the overall identity of the cultural functions in which a culture is constituted" (Holt 2007 p.19, original emphasis). However, as will shortly be seen, the precise definition of what constitutes a genre is a matter of some contention. Genre theory is regarded as important, because in their documentation and historicization, what happens "to genres over time is crucial to their meaning and because genre self-consciousness derives in the first place from an account (usually mythical) of its own past" (Frith 1988 p.89). Some of this can be seen to play in Progressive rock, with mythical representations and (stereotypical) characterizations feeding media tropes.

Participants' Perspectives on Genre as an Applicable Concept

Among participants, views were varied as to the utility value of genre theory, and its applicability to Progressive rock, either in direct association or relatively speaking. Positive aspects of it were noted: Julie and Philippe discussed the human need to categorize, reinforcing Holt's point above. Derek believed that whilst the terms 'Prog' and 'Progressive rock', amongst others, were academically essential so as to attempt to "describe an indescribable art form", at the consumption level they were irrelevant. At the theoretical top-level, only Bob stated that he found the concept to be unequivocally useful, "because it kind of shows how *different* music can be" (original emphasis). A few participants commented on its educational worth. For Lily, who runs U3A[27] 'fan sessions', the ability to broadly understand which bands or artists fall within the overall meta-genre, and within which sub-divisional elements, facilitates discussion around who to listen to, why, and the similarities with other bands. For Trevor, peoples' general ignorance

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[26] from the French (via Latin) for 'kind' or 'class'.
[27] University of the Third Age.

of the music requires him, and provides him with an opportunity, to be able to explain it at a lower level of granularity so that distinctions can be drawn:

> "[can prog be categorised at a subgenre level?] *Absolutely*, and there's no way not to, to the extent that you know what the hell you're talking about, because again, your average listener is just going to lump together your Fusion and your experimental and some of your electronic and some of your prog into one big bucket, and that bucket is entitled 'I don't understand this [laughs], so I'm not gonna listen to it, much less like it'. But for those of us who are more thoughtful about it, then we're going to categorize and subcategorize all of this stuff into genres and sub-genres because they tend to be different enough that, to those of us who are wide and deep into it, they warrant such sub classification, right. That's really hard to compare, well, not compare, it's really hard to throw Renaissance or Fairport Convention into the same bucket, stylistically, that you would throw Yes, right, or Van Der Graaf Generator, or you know, pick your poison? So to me they all kind of warrant being subcategorized" (Trevor, original emphasis)

Julie found the term useful as a 'learning instrument' not just in discussion with others, but for herself as she began to, and continues to, understand the boundaries of the music. Nicholas Cook believes that although strict definitional precision can be elusive, once some accepted stylistic norms have been (temporarily) settled upon genres can prove beneficial in enabling an objective discussion of a subjective content (Cook cited in Volgsten 1999 p.18). This can be seen in Trevor, Julie, and Lily's views above regarding educational aspects. For David Beer this process enables creativity, with a constantly evolving 'drawing, re-drawing, and imbrication of genre boundaries' so that creation, re-creation and reformulation are influenced by everyday culture, and hence in artistic flux (Beer 2013) . Keith Negus has described the tensions between genres that are seen as 'routine', and those seen as 'transformative' (Negus 1999a). This echoes Moore's reference to the 'friction' when norms aren't followed, and asks "at what point does repeated friction become a new norm?" (Moore 2012 p.167). Participants to this research regularly commented upon how they valued and enjoyed the friction between the expected and the unconventional: for them, the 'transformative' is anticipated as 'routine'.

For Hugh, the term 'Progressive rock' acts as a signpost of possible quality and interest. Jennifer Lena introduced a concept of 'target goals' and a 'genre ideal' for a group (Lena 2012), thereby acting as a stylistic 'north star'. This alignment function has particular appeal and commercial attraction for speculative purchase decisions, as for Hugh, and also compilation creators and specialist re-issue labels (Reynolds 2012), with an upsurge in genre-related product, and associated merchandizing. (See Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'). Lena takes the notion further, by arguing that marginal genres and small, discerning audiences can lead to ascribed 'unimpeachable aesthetic credentials', with implied kinship between artist and audience (Lena 2012). There are links here to theories behind what constitutes a recognised canon of work, and also potential elitism, and these will be explored in the relevant sub-sections. Klaus, as his

introductory quote suggests, sees the music as having no boundaries; however, as a professional musician, he recognizes that a genre, or sub-genre, appellation (*ProgArchives* notes 22 subgenres [28]) will have some marketing utility [29]. This marketing aspect (referred to as "merchandizing" in one Focus Group) was noted by a number of participants.

Participants' views on the theoretic validity of genre proved very interesting. At the ideological level, there was considerable emotion attached to what was perceived as 'pigeonholing' (Ewan, David, Scott), restrictive boundaries (Klaus, Geoff), and labelling (Alan, Ian). The strength of emotion, as well as the fundamental point, indicates fundamental resistance to dogma, and proscription. Participants clearly were attracted to the ability to define Progressive rock, and its meanings, at their own personal level. From a definitional standpoint, in Focus Group 4, Tim stated that:

> "as soon as you put a label on it, you actually make sure that everything falls outside it because you can never get the label exactly right" (Tim).

As well as the apparent resonance of this statement for participants *en masse*, participants' stances can also be seen in a more personal light: their own negative reaction to others' pigeonholing, restricting or labelling them. There is an apparent connection to Progressive rock, in its multi-faceted-ness being seen to apply as much to them as fans as it does to the music.

One of the issues associated with pigeon-holing/boundaries/labelling was the difficulty associated with 'where does Prog begin and end?', and for William, the difficulties in defining 'the Progressive rock genre' were due to how "it's taken on and absorbed other musical genres as it's gone through": a 'greedy' approach that others subscribed to. Alan's quote above regarding 'space outside the box' indicates a limitless elemental aspect to Progressive rock, enabling constant reformulation and evolution. The majority of participants referred to other bands that they, or others, considered on the edge of being 'Progressive rock', yet proved to be entry points for them, demonstrating an adjacent quality. As noted above, these bands were most typically drawn from the 'Heavy Rock/Heavy Metal'[30] genre, however, David Bowie, The Beach Boys, Fairport Convention, and (very frequently), Supertramp were also mentioned. Participants were typically interested in entering into a debate about other bands' relative progressive merits: regarding other styles, and c*ontra* Macan, the participants who expressed a view (Connor, Nigel, Trevor, Philippe, Derek, Anthony), considered jazz rock or fusion, in principle, to have legitimate claim to belonging within the Progressive rock sphere. Chapter 5,

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[28] http://www.progarchives.com/Progressive-rock.asp#definition accessed 27th May 2022.
[29] Klaus promotes his music as 'Cinematic Prog'.
[30] Most regularly cited bands were Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Black Sabbath, Thin Lizzy, Rush, and Uriah Heep.

'Mea Cultura', in particular, but not exclusively, demonstrates participants' thirst for knowledge, and their relative lack of opportunity to engage in conversations with others regarding their passions and learning. This research presented them, either via the one-on-one interviews, or as is seen more in this sub-section, via Focus Groups, with a relatively rare opportunity to share and discuss, to a level historically and typically not afforded to them.

In 'Histories of Progressive rock', above, the rise (or rebirth) of Progressive rock from the 1990s onwards was noted. Anderton and Atton have noted that there was a concomitant reaction, in that:

> "[t]he 1990s, then, stands as a time when classification and boundary policing emerged around the term "progressive rock", where it was not only the quality of the music that was at stake, but also what counted as "progressive" in musical terms" (2020, p.19)

Some evidence of this can be seen in participants' quotes above, and previously in this Chapter, e.g., Nigel's views on prog-metal, and this 'boundary policing' will be discussed in Chapter 6, 'The Progressive Paradox', where the intersections between engagement with social media, and participants' own strongly-held views, come into play. Beer (2013), and Mike Savage and Elizabeth Silva (Savage and Silva 2013) have drawn attention to the relationship between genre theory and Bourdieu's theories. From Beer's perspective, the ownership of classifications is important in regard to Bourdieusian notions of power struggles, the ability to mobilize and demobilize via genre policing. From Savage and Silva's perspective, genre distinctiveness is aligned to the "degree of symbolic credit they possess and confer" (ibid. p.113-4). This aspect will be discussed in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'.

For participants, another failing of genre theory was its reductionism. Participants drew clear and, for them, important distinctions between different albums. For Trevor:

> "when you say King Crimson, I have to say [laughs], well, which King Crimson are you talking about, 'cause they're radically different from one another!",

and for Murray:

> "Jethro Tull are they progressive? Well, it depends which album you're listening to, so I don't think … genres for me, it's a catch-all that says 'here is some interesting music which isn't afraid of dipping into various pots of paint, be it a bit of classical, a bit of folk, a bit of Hard Rock and it's going to mix it all up into something that's quite interesting. It could be a minute long or it could be 20 minutes long and it's going to push the boundaries of it', and that's good enough for me" (Murray)

Pink Floyd particularly, and Jethro Tull to a lesser extent, attracted a lot of attention in this latter regard, with debates over their 'Progressive credentials', despite their routine inclusion within 'the Big Six'. Phil, Connor, Sophie, Lily, Wayne, Trevor, Colin, Derek and Daniel all explicitly

questioned their 'progressiveness', with Daniel recognizing that his views were akin to "heresy". As a 'case study' for inclusion, regardless of their canonical status with regards to *Dark Side of the Moon,* Pink Floyd's lack of musical ability was most forcefully used as an argument against their worthiness (see also (Barnes 2020)). Counter-arguments were based upon their progressive use of studio technology, their evolution over the course of their albums, and their scale of ambition particularly with regards to concepts and live experience, although the participant-wide consensus was that these elements were insufficient to accord them the same status as the other members of 'The Big Six' (see, Chapter 6, 'Progressive Paradox').

Participants' active engagement in the debate around genre theory, the hitherto consideration of which was typically conducted in isolation, can be considered in light of Walser's view that listeners' backgrounds and perspectives influence genres, developing, sustaining and reforming them, such that they are never *sui generis* (Walser 2014). In this way, "genres both constitute social groups and are constituted by them" (Drott 2011 p.17), and are constantly evolving just as social situations are constantly evolving. This bidirectionality is an echo of Tia DeNora's views on music meaning (DeNora 2000). William Roy and Timothy Dowd have also commented on this bidirectionality, noting that as a distinctive feature of Western music, ""genre" simultaneously categorizes cultural objects and people", although warning that some definitions of genre "emphasize the content of cultural objects more than the people engaging such objects" (Roy and Dowd 2010 p.20). The balance between the sociological and the musicological is a contested area. Merlini (Merlini 2020 p.19) warns against an over-emphasis on the sociological aspects at the neglect of the music(ological), while Brackett cautions against a purely musicological basis of analysis, suggesting that consideration must also be given to associated elements such as performance rituals, and social and ideological connotations. He stresses the mutability of genres, and how "stylistic tendencies, codes, conventions, and expectations" (Brackett 2002 p.67) are meaningfully related, not temporally but relatively (see also (Krogh 2019; Haworth 2016) regarding this relativism).

Progressive rock has been seen as a style, a genre, a 'meta-genre' (Anderton 2010), a "frame of mind" (Cotner 2002 p.87), and a 'sub-code' (Middleton 1990, p.174), the range of which only serves to muddy the waters around its definition and boundaries. (For an exploration of how these terms can be indiscriminately interchanged, see (Fabbri 1999)). Johan Fornás argues that analysis needs to move from homologies to 'heterologies'. The notion of heterology deriving from how apparently similar organic structures have little analytically in common, and what we should observe, recognise, and even celebrate, are the 'contradictions and tensions' within these cultural phenomena (Fornas 1995). It is through an extension of this argument that Fornás

argues that "rock actually seems to be more a family of genres than a homogeneous category" (ibid. p.113). This has echoes of Drott's 'dynamic ensemble of correlations', which evokes a postmodern perspective with acts of assemblage (op. cit.). In Theodore Gracyk's view, although some common patterns exist, rock is not really a musical style (Gracyk 1996 p.xiii)[31]. Gracyk's thinking around a 'rock umbrella' is best summarized in Anderton's work on Progressive rock as a meta-genre, one that seeks to broaden our understanding beyond the narrow geographical and 'symphonic orthodoxy' views that are often, explicitly or implicitly, underscored by commentators. Under Anderton's definition, the consideration of Progressive rock as a meta-genre allows us to recognize its fluidity, variety of constituent styles and genres that can be seen as progressive, accept that new developments will continue to arise[32], and that there is an inevitability of retrospective classification (Anderton 2010).

At this level of analysis, this research finds that the music(ological) is favoured by participants over the sociological, and Progressive rock's vast scope for individual interpretation gives constant rise to bidirectional definition and evolution of the understanding of genre. This is, therefore *contra* Drott's view above regarding the social dynamic. Progressive rock's approach to 'dynamic assemblage' is a significant element of participants' valorization. Brackett's 'stylings' attract some support; however, participants' views are more nuanced. This characterization assumes a degree of homogeneity that is not evident in participants' appreciation of Progressive rock, and would need to be analyzed at a lower level, possibly at sub-genre or band level. This brings into play notions of authenticity which will be explored later. In addition, both temporal and relative associations are made by participants: these are linked, at some level, to the periodization that is described above, with distinctions between them, as well as their relativity to other contemporaneous genres. Participants' perspectives are also influenced by their relative attraction to 'old' or 'new' Progressive rock, an area that is expressly discussed later (see Chapter, 'Progressive Paradox'). Other aspects, such as fashion, display, and cross-border 'raiding' are complicating factors, and will also be discussed in subsequent Chapters.

Participants remarked upon respective bands' styles, in a manner reminiscent of that which Moore terms 'idiolect'. For instance, Liam drew a clear comparison between his ability to distinguish between Genesis and Yes, and a variety of other bands, yet made the point that he

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[31] Moore has suggested that rock has four constituent and differing elements: style, genre, practice, repertory. As an example, he regards Nice's 'America' as being delivered in a "progressive pop" genre and "art rock" style (Moore 2011 p.416).

[32] See also Negus's citation of Angel Quintero Rivera, and his views on salsa: not a 'series of codes, conventions or rules', but simply 'a manner of making music', and 'a fluid, flexible and changing creative practice', which leads to the active reproduction and ongoing life of genres (Negus 1999 p.27).

is unable to differentiate between "Rihanna and Beyoncé, Madonna and Lady Gaga". Julie painted the most graphic image, with her contrast between Genesis's more pastoral music and King Crimson's more 'dirty' style: "Genesis is a nice little hug. King Crimson is like 'get your whips out'". (As with other participants, Julie was sufficiently versed in both bands' works so as to discuss them at more nuanced level). This style of discussion was also informed by participants' knowledge of, interest in, and enjoyment of various band members' relationships with other bands. For Robert, "who they collaborated with, I think that's far more interesting in itself, probably than any one story about Genesis or King Crimson", because that allowed musicians to innovate, progress, and evolve without any band, or audience-led, constraints. This fed a sense of surprise, with the expectation of hearing the unexpected, which characterized participants' enjoyment of the music.

The points made above by Trevor and Murray demonstrate that 'Progressiveness' can take many forms, and should be considered on a case-by-case basis, even down to intra-track level analysis. This echoes a point made earlier, in 'Histories of Progressive rock' above, regarding Progressive rock's pervasiveness, beyond everyday understanding by the common man. Trevor cited Toto, and how he could easily construct mash-up CDs of 80 minutes:

> "2 CD's worth of material that you can't stop listening to, so you're going to listen for 160 minutes straight to somebody's material, they're worthy, […] It speaks to the lasting power. It speaks to the whole catalogue, it speaks to someone's ability to do more than just have, be a one hit wonder, right? […] some of the greatest prog you'll ever hear" (Trevor)

Franco Fabbri, in his early influential work, identified five 'rules' for genre membership[33]. Fabbri's thinking informed Lena's work on 12 'common dimensions'[34] (Lena 2012), with some additional or new emphases. One of these was the attitude towards neighbouring genres, and participants' views can be seen to be supportive of this through Progressive rock's non-antagonistic, or 'greedy', approach to other genres, and appropriation or borrowing of musical styles[35].

However, despite the consistent reservations expressed by interviewees, what was apparent, especially in Focus Groups, was how often 'genre' was used as a marker in discussion. This indicates its discursive utility in group settings (the frequency and nature of which shall be explored in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), despite its perceived limitations.

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[33] Formal and technical; semiotic; behavioural; social and ideological; commercial and juridicial" (in Frith 1996 p.91).

[34] These are structured along 'spatial', 'economic/mediatic', and 'ideology and style' parameters.

[35] Lena's other parameters, most notably the 'spatial' ones, organizational form, scale, and locus, receive less support in participants' valorizations.

Genre Theory Validity

Participants were able to discourse at length over specifics and subtleties associated with various bands and albums. Broadly speaking, through exploration, (occasional) discussion, research and contemplation, participants' understanding of that which could be considered contributory to any genre-based consideration of Progressive rock's essential nature evolved over their lifecourse. This brings into play individual understandings such that any temporally-based interim conclusions are fluid, varied, and subject to change. Accordingly, with regards to 'genre labelling', as a substitute a simple binary model of 'like/don't like' was repeatedly stressed (Ian, Chris, Phil, Charlie, Philippe, Frank, Walter, Murray, Liam, Barry, Derek, Geoff). The 'wordcloud' at Appendix A illustrates some of the more frequent descriptors used in participants' explorations of what constituted dominant aspects of Progressive rock for them. These aspects are consistently explored throughout this Thesis. For the purposes of the 'genre debate', elements that were particularly privileged were 'complexity, radicality and extemporization' (Charlie), 'meandering' (William, Jenna), 'boundary pushing' (Murray, Klaus, Barry, Geoff) and musicianship.

Participants' dislike of notions of genre, however expressed, are made clear above, and the theoretical validity of genre theory has been challenged. As well as Brackett's views on temporal flux, in Born's view, each text has, or has constructed for it, 'connections to prior and future or prospective works', (Born 2005) and this duality induces temporality. This Hussserlian perspective further underscores the fluidity (or even impossibility) of generic definition (Born 2010). Scott Burnham suggests that once we've analyzed a text, then it becomes "definitively situated, rendered a museum of its own meaning", and its intrinsic qualities effectively preserved in some temporal aspic (Burnham 2001 p.198). As well as this temporal problematization, Holt (after Born) has also drawn attention to how sociocultural dynamics lead to potentially more labile and unfixed connotations. For him this means that:

> "musical meaning is highly contingent, and that the ontologies of the semantic codes that form the basis of genre categories are fragile" (Holt 2007 p.5)

Negus refers to the 'dynamism' inherent within genres, and juxtaposes it with a 'rule-based and static' practice, noting that genre rules (such as they are) are known, "but there always seems to be something more" (Negus 1999b p.26). He refers to the need to be wary of a 'reverse engineering approach', force-fitting the text into an existing genre, with a rhetorical query as to "why does inspiration conveniently fit the codes and conventions of particular music genres?" (ibid., p.25). These observations have led several authors to say that upon closer and closer

inspection, at the atomic level, then less and less does genre theory fit (see (Drott 2013; Krogh 2019; Brackett 2002)).

Regardless of these critiques, Holt believes that the concept of genre is taking on a "new centrality" (2007 p.2)[36] as all forms of culture are underpinned by categorization[37]. Holt sees this as a collective endeavour, and one that involves "exclusionary mechanisms" (2007 p.3). Sam de Boise (de Boise 2016) agrees, noting how genres are usually referenced in relation to dislikes, rather than likes. Drott notes that a recurring trope in the discourse of modern music is about the decline of genre, and its irrelevance to composers and audiences alike (2011 p.3). However, popular music discourse continues to return to genre theory. Drott's argument for genre's ongoing centrality is partially built upon the notion that to distance yourself from any genre, then there is a need to reference it, and by so doing, draw attention to its assumed characteristics, and then by extension those of your own. This perpetuates the argument for its existence. This phenomenon may be due to Derrida's law of genre:

> "a text cannot belong to no genre; it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (Derrida cited in Haworth 2016 p.21).

Problems remain unresolved[38], due at least partially to a lack of grounding in empirical research, and are typical of armchair research (Merlini 2020). This leads authors such as Daniel Chandler to wonder whether genres are "merely the construct of analysts" (Chandler 1997 p.1), noting the inability of most people to articulate any kind of 'detailed and coherent framework', with their knowledge and understanding essentially at a tacit level only.

With specific regard to genre theory as applicable to Progressive rock, Merlini sets out the case for rethinking Progressive rock along the lines of 'ambition' and 'attitude', and posits a case for four styles – 'progressive', 'regressive', 'experimental', and 'limbo' (2020 n.p.). Merlini's work draws on fans' views, however these are as expressed via *ProgSnobs* and *ProgArchives*, and are subject to concerns over performative aspects[39], and Anderton's 'lay discourses' (2010) are likewise based on open-access sources. The unique contribution of this thesis is to bring into play the views of fandom, expressed via 51 participants directly contributing to this research. Their perspectives underscore some extant theories, and provide extra foundational support to

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[36] Holt has suggested nine genres for popular music, and 33 sub-genres. Progressive rock does not appear in his taxonomy. In an interesting comparison, not only does Heavy Metal appear at the 'first level', but several sub-genres of it are also listed (Black, death, doom, speed, and thrash).
[37] Spotify has in excess of 3,600 genres.
[38] Holt (2007) claims that music is the most difficult of the art forms in regard to genre theory.
[39] The website title *ProgSnobs* may be indicative of this, (see Chapter, 'Progressive Paradox').

them, and also provide new lenses through which the validity, and utility, of genre theory can be considered.

3.4 Conclusion

In considering how authors' views align to participants' perspectives on the histories of Progressive rock, some over- and under-laps, can be seen. The typical characterization of three periods is supported, with their delineation along the lines of 'drawing upon heritages' (first period), 'homage to the progenitors as heroes' (second period), and 'homage to the spirit and ideology as well as musicological antecedents' (third period). However, the historical, musicological, and socio-cultural influences foregrounded by leading authors are markedly less prevalent in participants' reflections. For them, emphasis was placed more upon aesthetics, ideology, and a wider appreciation of bands, some of which are considered more upon the boundary of Progressive rock, than is conventionally remarked upon. Anderton's broadening of the debate away from the 'symphonic orthodoxy' is supported. The 'neo-prog period' was afforded significantly less attention and credit than the preceding and subsequent, current, period. Development, progression, and evolution were still evident, although the debate around this is very nuanced. Ahlkvist's, and Dowd's, views on Progressive rock fans' motivations are only partially supported (see Chapters 4, 'Complexity Attraction', 5, 'Mea Cultura', and 6, 'Progressive Paradox'), quite probably due to their data sources.

Participants' views on genre likewise gave rise to subtleties. On the one hand, positive aspects were referenced: pedagogic aspects; differentiation with other genres; a kitemark of possible quality; the utility of sub-genres for intra-genre distinction [40]; and commercialization opportunities via brand extensions. On the other hand, participants reacted negatively to some aspects associated with genre theory. These reactions were generally at the philosophical level, with notions of boundaries and limitations claiming to be strongly resisted, along with dogmatic stances associated with journalistic views on bands' 'progressive credentials'. However, participants, in so doing, did exhibit some boundary policing at band and sub-genre level, contrary to an 'open philosophy'. This is one of the paradoxes explored further later (see Chapter, 'Progressive Paradox').

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[40] However, it should be noted that www.ProgArchives.com suggests sub-genres such as 'Crossover Prog' and 'Eclectic Prog', which demonstrates the limitations of this. Some bands also appear on sister sites such www.jazzmusicarchives.com, and www.metalmusicarchive.com, which underscores the definitional issues.

Notwithstanding this point, participants' *amateur* views were fundamentally aligned to Born's teleological emphasis: for participants, the music served a purpose, and this purpose was more important than others' views. As will be made clear in later Chapters, participants' views were largely self-derived, and developed over time in relative isolation. Participants' views on affordance were mostly unconditioned by exogenous factors, and the heterogenous nature of Progressive rock, and participants' ongoing immersion in it (at whatever level they chose), enabled them to explore and discern meaning according to whatever value criteria they determined. This might be seen as self-referential and 'closed loop', however, as the Chapter 'Progressive Paradox' will make clear, this serves as a wellspring of positivity for participants. On this basis, Walser's argument for genre's ever-evolving nature is supported, inasmuch as genre has utility value as identified herein, and due to participants' self-determination over time with regards to what bands (and works) are considered to be within the scope of a meta-genre. Accordingly, DeNora, and Roy and Dowd's, belief in consumers' agency, are supported by participants (albeit the authors' stresses on the importance of socialization are over-emphasized).

Whilst the role of social media is less accentuated for participants (see Chapter, 'Progressive Paradox'), Beer's general point regarding evolution is supported by participants. This constant evolution leads to ongoing connotations regarding music and identity, which may be embraced or rejected by artists and bands, and which may encode specific affective qualities. It is clear that participants are receptive to, and seek out, those 'specific affective qualities' that they valorize. Over time, this enables a certain connection to be established, and maintained, between all associated with the creation, production, distribution and reception of the music and musicians that embody those 'specific affective qualities'.

As noted above, genre was utilized as a discursive unit by participants, despite its perceived limitations, and its usage by other fans, scholars, academics, and music critics was recognized. This utility was seen in both negative and positive terms, and assumed different forms depending on the genre under discussion or in relative terms, *pace* Holt's views. From participants' perspectives, Fabbri's rules (later, 'conventions') are problematic, given Progressive rock's definitional inexactness, range of consumer interpretations, and participants' lived experience with regards to particular dimensions such as socialization. The Bourdieusian notions of capital, as described by Beer, and Savage and Silva, are likewise supported at only a minimal level.

With regards to the debate around Progressive rock, participants drew some correspondences between Martin's, and Macan's, 'style' and Cotner's 'frame of mind', in its ideological openness,

as noted in their comments above regarding lack of boundaries, labelling and pigeon-holing. Their discussions also revealed that articulating stylistic definitions would be prone to failure. Middleton's sub-code, as previously explained, attracts minimal support, and Macan's exclusion of jazz rock is both explicitly and implicitly (by strong inference) rejected by participants. Anderton's meta-genre proposition receives the greatest support, due to its focus on fluidity, variety, and evolutionary nature, hence its usage throughout this thesis. One additional aspect could be considered for inclusion: individuals' understandings of what constitutes fluidity, variety, progressiveness, and development evolves over the lifecourse, and this dimension should be incorporated into Anderton's definition.

Ultimately, participants, when specifically asked to characterize 'the Progressive rock genre' resorted as much, if not more, to 'exclusionary measures', and a *via negativa* - in the words of Jerry: "It was all part of the same 'It's not Pop Music' zone". This reinforces the latitude that participants felt they enjoyed with regards to what freedom the music, and their reception of it, afforded them. Participants also noted that Progressive rock is evident in many other styles, and attracting a younger audience whilst retaining many of the older fanbase. Dowd has argued that Jazz and Rap were once considered marginal and are now (becoming) universal, which leads to the question: whether Progressive rock is to follow?

4 Chapter 4: The Complexity Attraction

Introduction

This Chapter will explore the dimensions that participants associated with Progressive rock which rendered it 'complex' for them, and thence the attractiveness of that nature for them in affordance terms. Complexity can be characterized in varying ways, and participants' perspectives on this will draw on musicological aspects, albeit almost exclusively from an amateur stance, and also bring into play polysemic properties of Progressive rock appreciation.

In the first Section, the aspects and issues associated with 'The Consumption Practice' are explored, privileging the views of participants, and comparing them to existing theories. Participants frequently referred to their consumption of Progressive rock in terms of their repeated listening over the years, the immersive nature of this listening, and how notions of perceived depth and complexity in the music were bases of attraction. These areas are inter-related, and some interweaving of responses will be evident. There will be a particular focus on the role and importance of lyrics, as one example of a contested area. The second Section, 'Progressive Rock Tropes', reviews those aspects that participants considered to be recurrent in any discussion of Progressive rock: these elements include concept albums, paratexts, and virtuosity and pretension. The foregrounding of participants' views, gained from extensive personal interaction, represents a unique opportunity to gain insights into the valorization of an enduring musical meta-genre.

4.1 The Consumption Practice

4.1.1 Repeated Listening

> ""I knew you'd ask me that and I've been thinking about how to answer for that for the last couple of weeks and it's nothing you can really put your finger on" (Frank)

> ""There's always a surprise with great, great music even when you think you know it really well" (Phil)

> "long acquaintance with a musical work is no obstacle to responding to it with deep emotion" (Bicknell 2009 p.65)

Repeated listening to (very) well-known texts was a recurrent theme with participants, and one that occurred very early during interviews. Of all the participants, only three commented that nowadays they rarely, if ever, repeatedly listen to previously heard, and enjoyed, music. For the vast majority, examples like 'Supper's Ready' were cited: "I could listen to it, you know, I could

just let it run all day" (Ian); "the archetypal prog piece […], I can still listen to that. And still do today, hundreds of times, probably over the last 20 years, or 30 years" (Alexander); with similar comments from Nigel, Bruce, and Connor ("has anyone ever improved upon it?"). Other tracks or albums that were frequently mentioned in terms of repeated listening included T*ales from Topographic Oceans* ("I must have listened to the first two sides 10 times now in the last year or so, or less" (Steve), *Close to the Edge* ("if I've played it once, I've played it a thousand times" (Nigel), *Relayer*, and *Fragile* ("I listened to Fragile like a million times, I love that album" (Miguel). There were many other examples from participants; it was noticeable that either whole albums or extended tracks were most typically cited, although Gentle Giant also attracted a degree of comment not otherwise accorded them in other discussions.

'Freshness' and New Discoveries

The most recurrent element of the music that was cited as a reason for repeated listening was how it retained a sense of 'freshness', despite intervening years and repeated plays (Ian, Robert, Charlie, Charles, Miguel, Susie, Lily, Fred, Walter, Murray, Liam, Randy, Hugh, and Milton). This aspect was also described in terms of its apparent timelessness, with participants commenting upon how it hadn't aged. For Charlie he repeatedly listens to this music because:

> "It hasn't aged at all in the same way that other music genres have. I find it's still for me personally. It's still as valid a listening experience as it was back then" (Charlie)

Questioning of what enabled this enduring freshness for participants typically lead them to comment upon the perceived complexity of the music. Liam expressed it as:

> "there's always something new to hear in it, or you might miss a bit…. It's harder to commit to memory, you know. You know it's good, you enjoyed it, but you can't remember, 'cause, is it complicated, yeah it's complicated" (Liam)

Fred captured what a lot of participants felt:

> "There's something about picking up a new album and listening to something and thinking 'oh, goodness me, there's an awful lot going on there' and then after a few listens it starts to get into you. But then when it gets into you for some reason, that stuff stays a lot longer and I can't explain why that might be the case" (Fred)

Participants frequently referred to the challenge that exists with this music, and this being part of its attraction, and a cause of repeated listening. As Klaus stated:

> "If I don't understand it immediately, then I'm kind of intrigued and want to find out more about it. I wanna understand why I don't understand it" (Klaus)

This view was echoed by others such as Miguel, "with every new listen you grab like a different aspect that you haven't heard". Miguel and Klaus are both professional musicians, and Julie is a musicology student. For her, technology affords her the opportunity to hear new elements:

"One reason I think is that all this new fancy exciting 5.1 Surround, where you can get that nice little soundscape and it kind of opens up the sound and you can hear things you didn't hear before" (Julie)

However, Miguel's, Klaus's, and Julie's, motivations were echoed by other non-musicians/amateur musicologists. For Jeremy:

"there's something about Gavin Harrison's drumming, I just want to listen to it and listen to it and listen to it, and it gets better each time I listen to the same track" (Jeremy)

Milton made a very similar comment too:

"when you play, especially the lengthier pieces you hear, you play, you play it 20 times, but then you play it a 21st time, you'll hear something that you didn't quite hear before. I think you are always sort of learning something new when you're listening to it. So, you know, so I mentioned Yes, *Relayer*, I've played that loads of times over the years, but even now I still hear things, 'ooh, I've never quite caught that before'. So, there is a lot going on" (Milton)

It was not only music from the first period, or the 'symphonic orthodoxy' that was referenced by participants. Nigel commented upon *You Won't Believe What Happens Next!* (by Arch Echo) by saying:

"I think is a really bloody good album. It's one of those albums that even now I will play again and again and again. I'll listen to it again and every time I listen to it, there's more to listen to" (Nigel)

The phrase 'a lot going on' was used quite extensively by participants. The scope of various elements was considered by participants to render it beyond their ability to comprehend and appreciate it upon first, or even tenth, consumption, and therefore necessitated repeated, focused listening. Because of the range of aspects that were worthy of attention, encompassing instrumentation, the compositional dynamics, the conjunction of lyrics, music and paratexts, and the opportunity to discern other references (musical or other), then, as in Rebecca's words, "it is not idle listening music, so you have to engage".

Added appreciation over time was also a relevant factor. For Charles, "[as a more mature listener] there's a lot more dimensions to it than I noticed when I was younger". Hugh, too, commented upon the 'dimensions' within the music. Cornell Sandvoss has noted how a fan can move from immersion, rapture and lack of consciousness, whilst initially appreciating a text, to a differing state of enjoyment at a (much) later date when distance 'inevitably occurs' (Sandvoss 2005 p.148). Musical directions, new band members, new opinions can all lead to a more analytical, more self-reflexive consideration of the text, which can lead to it seeming more 'banal', and less attractive. There was no evidence from participants that this was the case for their preferred texts, although other texts (produced by new band members and or due to new

musical directions) attracted some comment. Rather than self-reflexivity leading to 'seeming banality', the contrary was apparent. New depths, dimensions, and readings were read into the text, leading to their enduring appeal. Henry Jenkins has referred to how "[r]e-reading is central to the fan's aesthetic pleasure" (Jenkins 2013 p.69). Participants would support this view.

Participant comments illustrate how the *amateur* has, at least, an equal role to play in advancing our insights into music valorization and repeated listening motivations. This was borne out also in participants' discussions, both individually and in Focus Groups. Their reflections brought out how the multi-dimensional aspect of the music afforded them varying levels of experience. In Focus Group 5, Daniel commented upon there being "so many levels in prog", which elicited this response from Rebecca:

> "there's so many different levels in prog, so you'll be, you know, perhaps listening intently to one of the solos, it might be, I'm just like really tuning into Neil Peart's drumming, or it might be I'm over here in a little bit of Wakeman's keyboards, and there's always, always something slightly that you tune into more or is different, in my personal experience. And I love that. So, I like hunting for newness" (Rebecca)

Other participants made similar comments. For Phil:

> "I always think the way the human brain works, you tend to concentrate on particular aspects of music when you're listening to it. And because of that, there are parts of music that you've never heard and you may have been listening to the same album years and years, and I find myself sitting down with something I thought I knew inside out and then I am like, 'Oh well, I've never heard that before', and suddenly it's, you know, like a little guitar motif somewhere, or something that's happening, so that draws me in. There's always a surprise with great, great music even when you think you know it really well" (Phil)

Likewise, for Charlie:

> "I started listening to different parts like the bass part, the drum part and appreciating, not the whole song, but looking more at what individual musicians were doing within the song and what how they were contributing to it" (Charlie)

Consistent with these observations, various participants compared listening to Progressive rock to appreciation of other art forms, most usually literature. Ash referred to how "you're respecting it more, by understanding it more", just as he would with a fine novel. Daniel made a similar comment, as did Barry who stated that you had to listen repeatedly to each track not at the unitary level, but as part of the overall work, "so as to get the whole picture", just as you wouldn't read a chapter in isolation within a novel. There is an elevated status evidently in play here, and also in comparisons made with 'chart music' that was instantly comprehensible and digestible. Liam compared superficial pop music with Progressive rock, stating, with regards to *Tales from Topographic Oceans*, that "I cannot do *Topographic Oceans* in my head. So I have to

hear it to get everything out". For him, and others, Progressive rock cannot (easily) be committed to memory, in all its detail, so repeated listening is the only way to fully appreciate it.

Participants' comments, both in regards to Progressive rock *per se*, and in comparison to other cultural forms, could be seen in the light of them being pretentious. However, it should be noted that whilst associations were frequently drawn by participants between Progressive rock fandom and high art, these were seen through a lens of artistic ambition, and both the musicians (and their works) and themselves as fans were viewed as being true to themselves, i.e., the antithesis of pretension. In addition, participants' private and non-spectacular consumption practices led to them infrequently encountering charges of pretension (either associated with the music or their enjoyment of it), and were largely indifferent to others' views. (See Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura' for a fuller exploration of this).

Just as Frank, in his above introductory quote, referred to the difficulty in analyzing this aspect of the motivations behind repeated listening, so Nathan commented:

> "Well, if you've maybe found this out after your research, bottle it and sell it because it's going to be worth a fucking fortune, if you could. I can't put my finger on it very easily" (Nathan)

One aspect that did repeatedly recur was that of perceived depth and complexity, and this will be discussed next.

4.1.2 Depth and complexity

> "'White Mist' by Pineapple Thief, and just listen and listen, and there's deeper and deeper and deeper, there's additional voice and additional music in there, additional instrumentation you'd never pick up, and you think 'blimey, it's like 100 tracks, playing at once'" (Jeremy)

> "some albums I listen to are so *profound*" (Oliver, original emphasis)

> "it's intellectual music, it's thinking man's music" (Bruce)

> "there is something about progressive rock that is not only to be enjoyed on the surface, but also to be understood and appreciated in depth" (Martin 1998 p.15)

In this sub-section, the role that perceived depth and complexity play for fans of Progressive rock will be explored. This will explicitly build on some points already made, underscoring the interconnectedness of the music-meaning experience. During Interviews and Focus Groups, 'depth', 'complexity', 'complicated', and 'intricate' were frequently mentioned as key aspects of attraction by approximately three-quarters of the participants. Several participants referred to the depth in compositional techniques:

> "you can find interesting things that you may not have been expecting when you bring things like that together, that don't seem at all like they should go anywhere near each other […] I just find that very interesting" (Jenna)

> "the construct of the song is, usually there's a twist in it, or it's not quite as straightforward as you might get with a, you know, a Rolling Stones rock song, you know. There'd be something different in there. It might be the solo more or it might be the rhythm more, which just makes it incredibly appealing to me musically" (Rebecca)

> "I like the way one track can move through different keys, different rhythms and it can constantly change, but still have a structure to it" (Lily)

> "very talented musicians who not only could think outside the box, but could play outside the box…. that's one of the *intrigues* of what I consider to be prog rock and I really don't consider any piece that's in straight four time to be able to consider itself as Prog. It may have some prog elements in terms of arrangement and instrumentation and virtuosity, and all of that shit but you know, at the end of the day, if it's a straight four time, it's a four minute song, you hear it on the airwaves, it *probably* doesn't have enough of those Prog elements to be accessible by most listeners [chuckle] who really render it Prog….,that created a challenge for listeners that some rejected outright, i.e. you can't dance to it, versus those that embraced it and said, 'wow, this is very interesting, I like the way it feels, I want to try and figure it out'" (Trevor, original emphasis)

Progressive rock was, as reiterated throughout this thesis, considered a musical style that did indeed *rock*, and complexity was no impediment to this, as noted by Klaus:

> "the complexity is not only in the structure, but also rhythmically so the most rhythms they play, I don't get it. I really would have to sit down, slow it down, analyze, and that's something I'm really fascinated by. If something is rhythmically complicated, but at the same time it grooves" [laughs] (Klaus)

Complexity was one of the 'collative variables' suggested by Daniel Berlyne with his 'inverted-U model'[1], which came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s[2], which proposed that music preference varies systematically in relation to such variables[3]. The inverted-U theory holds that peak enjoyment is reached at an optimal point. Sarah Campbell, in her thesis (Campbell 2019) noted Glenn Schellenberg et al.'s research into this theory in the classical music genre. An inverted-U shape was observed in a focussed listening condition. Liking initially increased after two exposures, returned to baseline after eight plays and then decreased after thirty-two repetitions[4]. In Anthony Chmiel and Emery Schubert's re-analysis of 57 previous related studies, they noted that peak enjoyment may occur "after much fewer than 25 exposures" (Chmiel and Schubert 2017 p.892)[5].

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[1] The others were familiarity, surprisingness, uncertainty, interestingness, and ambiguity.
[2] Berlyne's work drew on Wilhelm's Wundt's casual observations of the 1870s that resulted in the 'Wundt curve'.
[3] For a review of Berlyne's work, and related literature, see (Chmiel and Schubert 2017).
[4] This is likewise seen in Nick Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst's reference to a 'hump factor', whereby a consumer has to take some time to appreciate the text see (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998 p.155).
[5] For reviews of other musical styles see Orr and Ohlsson (2005) on bluegrass and jazz, and Chmiel and Schubert (2019) on "extreme music" (defined as "music that pushes the boundaries of familiar music

Participants' comments demonstrate that the inverted-U theory is contestable. A forensic analysis of every participants' relationships with every text with which they were familiar was not practicable. However, what is clear from their comments is that the inflexion points referenced within the literature are not recognized, nor is the overall inverted-U theory. Participants' repeated listening habits suggest a model more aligned along positive monotonic lines[6] (see Robert Zajonc on familiarity breeding liking more than contempt (Zajonc cited in Otchere 2014 p.69)). Focus Group 3 responded when asked about ever getting tired of their favourite tracks: Mark said, "No, it's never happened to me. It's never happened to me", which was echoed by Milton, and by Ian who said:

> "I can always go back, and nearly always, well, you find something new. It brings back to the fore, you know 'blimey'. The quality shines through I would say" (Ian)

Complexity was also referenced with regards to other less attractive musical styles: Lily cited Ed Sheeran's music as being representative of the "shallow" music that gets played on the radio that does nothing for her; Alan discussed how he "hates simplistic music"; and Liam reflected upon how, when he was initially attracted to Progressive rock, he realized that it was "other people" that liked "easy stuff", whereas he preferred this music that was "more interesting", and "made you think about it". Fred explicitly equated "less challenging" with "less rewarding". For Henry:

> "it's not throw-away 3 minutes, you know, pop. It takes some getting into it sometimes, some of the music. If I get into it too easily, I tend to drift away from it after a while because if it's too easily accessible or too commercial, then I'm not really that interested in it, whereas if you have to work hard to get what they're trying to get across, that to me is the beauty of it" (Henry)

Henry brings out what many others commented upon, the element of 'hard work' associated with understanding what the composers are attempting to convey, and this process leading to an aesthetic appreciative beauty. Alexander referred to the 'complex structure' of 'Supper's Ready', the general complexity of the compositional interplay within Genesis's music, and how *Tales From Topographic Oceans* "blew my mind" as he couldn't understand it at a musical level. The intellectual challenge was also commented upon by William:

> "You had to listen through, and every time you did listen through, you found new things. And it took a long time to be able to really get to the nub of the music. So it was, it was something more intellectual" (William)

Jeremy referred to *The Wall*, and how he'd:

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idioms or consists of radically unfamiliar items" (ibid. p.427)); and for the impact of temporal gaps see Martindale and Moore (1989).

[6] I.e., a steady, constantly increasing relationship.

> "sit in a dark room, put that on, put some headphones on or in the little office, and listen to that and just listen to the depth, listen, listen to everything, give it a chance, and it took me 20 years to get to the point where I, absolutely, that is an amazing album, absolutely extraordinary" (Jeremy)

Fred made a similar comment with regards to 'Gates of Delirium':

> "First time I listened to it I was thinking 'my God, you know, this is a struggle to get into the whole piece', apart from the last little section, which is, you know, a simple tune. But over the years and not over, it didn't take me that long, but as I got into it, I realized, you know, I thought it was a great piece of music. Still do to this day. And that's despite all it's, you know, it's kind of all the different stuff going on and I always find it enormously rewarding to listen to" (Fred)

Many others commented upon how certain texts did not appeal upon first (or second, or third…) listen, however they persevered, until they 'finally got it'. Hugh noted how:

> "for the first few years I really had difficulty in getting to grips with the 'Scheherazade' piece, but now I *absolutely love* it. And I mean, I suppose I started listening to it properly about 10 years ago. So, I was late in that sense to get into it, but, but that's a pretty complex piece, and when you get used to it and hear it repeatedly you understand it a lot more than maybe the first time. You think, 'my God, this is, uh, it's a bit, you know, I think I've bitten off more than I can chew here'" (Hugh, original emphasis)

He explained a similar process with Tangerine Dream. Hugh's comments, and the ones preceding them, reveal how participants recognize, and accept, that Progressive rock takes time to understand. Whilst this may initially be challenging, or even daunting, there is an inherent belief that, typically, this investment will be rewarded, many times over with repeated listening. Nigel likewise referred to *Free Hand,* which he now completely enjoys:

> "I bought the album and then didn't like it […] and I left it; it was in my record collection for a year. One day every so often, I'd bring it out and force myself to listen to it because it's this, it is intricate and it's beautiful and things like that, but just I couldn't get my head round it. I just couldn't comprehend it" (Nigel)

Similar comments were made by Walter (specifically with regards to *Brain Salad Surgery*), Steve and Alexander (*Tales from Topographic Oceans*), Philippe (*Starless and Bible Black*), and Ewan (Frank Zappa's music, generally).

Kevin Holm-Hudson has discussed 'conceptual density' or 'thickness' in Progressive rock (Holm-Hudson 2005 p.378), and referenced Einstein's notion of *'Verdichtung'*[7]. From a musicological perspective it is useful to think of this in relation to Gracyk's ontologically 'thick' and 'thin' music (Gracyk 1996 p.17-36) although depth, complexity and or density can take on other attributes (e.g., the subject matter of a (concept) album). Participants' repeated engagement with their most preferred text can be seen as an exercise in developing an enhanced ability to appreciate

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[7] *Verdichtung:* from the German for 'condensation' or 'compression', depending upon the context.

ontologically thick music. The use of 'there's a lot going on', has been referenced in the previous sub-section. (One Participant, Lily, commented upon how she lent a friend an album by Nightwish, as being an introduction to Progressive rock, and how the friend referred to 'a lot going on', when returning the album). Loren Steck and Pavel Machotka (Steck and Machotka 1975) have argued that as every individual has their own perception of complexity, and its attractiveness, then there is a need to recognise 'adaptation level theory'. Participants demonstrated an ability, as well as a desire, to invest significant time in this quest for comprehension. Walter said how:

> "I love that moment when something suddenly clicks and makes sense. Didn't make sense one day, but you know, somewhere down the line you 'Oh yeah, I get it, I get it'. What a wonderful thing" (Walter)

Miguel, and others, commented upon the "investment" that you make in a text. This could psychologically pre-dispose participants to ongoing repeated listening and felt appreciation. In 'his' Focus Group, Miguel commented upon how "I think once you reach a basic level of understanding of the complexity, it's like you like it, you enjoy it and kind of can't go back". Many participants commented that there were always new dimensions to be explored. In Milton's words, "you are always sort of learning something new when you're listening to it", which echoes Wendy Griswold's comment that "[great works] are continuously rich in meanings and implications that can never be depleted" (Griswold cited in Dowd 2007a p.38). It is therefore found that, as demonstrated by Miguel, participants develop, or adapt, their appreciation, and acceptance, of complexity such that the seemingly non-complex appears less and less attractive and the affordance gap widens. As Henry commented:

> "there's not that many who want to accept the challenge. I think it is a challenge. You know some of it is easily accessible, but the majority of prog rock is, it's basically what it says on the tin. It's progressive and you either get it or you don't. And if you get it, it's fabulous. if you don't get it, then I'm not going to waste any time trying to explain to people who don't get it, why they should get it, if that makes sense" (Henry)

King Crimson were referenced as a band that proved too difficult for some. Philippe noted how *Starless and Bible Black* "was hard for me, very hard. I couldn't listen for a while", for Alexander, with regards to the band's music generally, "it may be that I can't put enough work in to get it if you like, I don't know" (Alexander).

For Henry:

> "if it's too challenging then, you know, it can be sometimes too difficult to get into a particular style of music, and I would use King Crimson as an example of that. I'm not a *massive* fan of King Crimson because I find them a little bit too complex, and too challenging whereas you know Genesis, IQ, I, you know, I get into them, some of their music is challenging, but it's worth the effort once you get into it […] So I've never really,

I've never really got King Crimson, although I've got a couple of their albums" (Henry, original emphasis)

Henry's point about 'not getting' King Crimson, but having a couple of their albums, indicates King Crimson's assumed role in 'the canon' (see Chapter, 'Paradox'). His comment also needs to be seen in the light of his immediately preceding one: for him there is an upper limit of understanding and or appreciation. From participants' responses it can be seen that there is a scale of complexity: whilst they uniformly embrace it, and there is evidence of 'adaptation level theory' in evidence, there is also a clear view that even within the understood boundaries of Progressive rock, canonical bands, and texts, can be seen as too complex.

Joyce Conley built on research into the inverted-U model to propose a conceptual definition of musical complexity based on ten musical dimensions. These were:

1) regularity/irregularity of number of tones per chord;

2) number of independent parts;

3) number of different harmonies;

4) number of changes of harmony;

5) number of measures of tonic harmony;

6) number of measures of dominant harmony;

7) number of measures of nontonic/dominant harmony;

8) number of changes of rhythmic activity;

9) rate of rhythmic activity;

10) and duration thereof.

She determined that the 'rate of rhythmic activity' was the dominant factor, with the secondary ones being harmonic and rhythmic variables (for graduate level music students) or only rhythmic variables (for the "less musically sophisticated") (Conley 1981 p.451). Conley's findings are broadly supported. The opportunity exists for more empirical research to be undertaken so as to investigate the extent to which this complexity attraction is driven by her dimensions, or other. Such research could shed light on 'boundary conditions', such as seem to exist with King Crimson. Such research could determine the extent to which the canonization of King Crimson leads those less familiar with their range of work, which constituted the majority of participants, to endow them with a cachet not bestowed upon other bands, that might have similarly complex, or unusual, aesthetic characteristics. In addition, longitudinal research could lead to insights regarding fans' motivation behind repeated listening so as to generate greater understanding and appreciation inherent in this 'deep and complex' music. Another factor that could be explored is the relationship between desired level of complexity dependent upon

mood: Klaus noted how Progressive rock could cater for whatever mood he was in, and he could tailor the level of inherent complexity, and challenge, to that requirement. Motivational elements associated with intellectual challenge, apart from typically less than complementary connotations with elitism, has not been afforded attention within the literature in a manner that would reflect participants' drivers.

Whilst an empirical analysis of this is beyond the scope of this thesis, participants would note that whilst not all tracks exhibit all, or even some, of Conley's 'complexity dimensions', their frequency of appearance connotes 'Progressivity' as defined via complexity, and also the contrast between their usage, and indeed non-usage, is valued as a constituent element of the music's unpredictability. There is accordance, therefore, between Conley's characterization and Progressive rock, as valorized by participants, at both the meta-genre, and the atomic, level. However, as with the discussion on meta-genre (see Chapter 3, 'A Contextualization'), where the temporal aspect of understandings of what constitutes 'progressiveness' needs to be taken into account, so too does this need to play into our comprehension, and appreciation, of complexity. Steve referred to how the passing of time has allowed him to revisit *Tales From Topographic Oceans*:

> "I think I was too immature in my teens to really think about it properly and too busy with other things and now you know I'm taking a mature look at what it, what it's all about, 'cause I really like it" (Steve)

This investment in understanding, or decoding, a text leading to eventual comprehension can be seen as reducing its complexity, rendering it digestible and enjoyable at a solely aesthetic level. As well as this 'simplification', there also exists the opportunity to compose and produce 'simple music'. Bill Martin has commented that whilst the music of Yes is often 'structurally complex', simplicity has its own virtues, and can be the hardest thing to achieve (Martin 2015 p.xii). This drive for simplicity, in itself a 'progression', led to several bands, most notably Genesis, and to some extent Yes, alienating a significant part of their long-standing fan-base, being seen to divorce themselves from the Progressive rock style, whilst attracting vastly more fans, and achieving colossal commercial success as they moved into the 1980s and beyond. Participants, when discussing this era for those bands, were markedly more dismissive of their music, along the lines of its perceived loss of depth and complexity.

Depth and Complexity 'By Association'?

One driver for some participants' views may be found in their comparisons of Progressive rock with classical music (with 'symphonic' being the most widely-used specific term by them), in terms of compositional style, aspiration, and musicianship. This could be seen as 'depth and

complexity by association'. As stated earlier in this Chapter, the scope of this thesis is not to explore such views from a musicological basis. As seen above, participants referenced how musical depth could be allied to structure.

Steve referred to how Progressive rock took "symphonic stuff" and put "another layer on top of it" to give it extra visceral excitement. Mark explicitly discussed correspondences between various bands and Beethoven, Stravinsky and Bartók, Charlie used 'The Musical Box' as an example of theme development and resolution, and Alexander cited 'Supper's Ready' as an "extreme example" of a "complex" composition approaching 'symphonic form'[8]. Mark Spicer is one author who has drawn comparisons between Western classical music and the music of Progressive rock bands, most notably Genesis. He states such approaches, not only by Genesis, led to crafted texts "of much greater scope and complexity" (Spicer 2007 p.313). He also argues that Progressive rock's 'large-scale pieces' share their long-range coherence, "both thematic and harmonic", with their classical counterparts, however this alone does not explain the pieces' attraction, as formalist analysis fails to address the 'crucial role' of 'stylistic eclecticism' (ibid. p.314). Spicer draws on Nors Josephson's musicological analysis of 'Supper's Ready' to demonstrate how its various component parts draw on: post '60s rock ('Lovers Leap' and 'Sanctuary Man'); Lisztian Romanticism ('Willow Farm'); Stravinsky and high Baroque ('Apocalypse'); and a return to Liszt ('Aching Mens' Feet) (Josephson 1992 pp.85 ff).

Bands' ability to replicate the 'tension and release' aspects evident in classical music were referenced by Robert and Julie, and others commented upon how longer pieces incorporated recurring themes and evidenced recapitulation. Edward Macan refers to the use of leitmotifs, and the effect of layering them so as to build to a climax (Macan 1997 p.44), and Progressive rock's borrowing of this dynamic as a compositional trope has been noted by Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell as a 'key ingredient' that underpins its "complex musical systems" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.85). Spicer refers to this technique as a "shattering climax and abrupt tapering off", before starting anew (Spicer 2007 p.334). Frank stated that "the prog music of today is comparable to the classical music of yesteryear". Jan Blűml has similarly noted how, in Czechoslovakia, *Close to the Edge* attracted the observation that "a certain part of today's rock music is actually the serious music of tomorrow" (Blüml 2020 p.35)

Although some participants commented upon allusions to, and or comparisons with, classical music at a general level, it was noticeable that the majority of participants did not. Whilst

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[8] In addition to Alexander being clear on why 'Supper's Ready' approached but could not be equated to symphonic form, likewise Alan was able to express why the view that 'Close to the Edge' resembled 'sonata form' is contentious at best.

participants were routinely praising of 'Supper's Ready', there was no evidence of valorization in Spicer's (or Josephson's) terms. The absence of such reinforces the 'surface' or visceral level of attraction to which other commentators have made reference (see (Hung 2005)). Musical, or cross-genre, references were as likely to be made to jazz, blues, or hard rock, or an amalgam of them, as they were to be made to classical music, and Allan Moore has cautioned against Macan's 'locus classicus' (Moore and Martin 2019 p.107). The correspondences, real or perceived, between classical music and Progressive rock, and possible 'depth by association', should not be over-played[9].

Whether or not allusions were drawn to the high cultural reference point of classical music, it was clear that participants viewed the music, and the musicians, with respect. This is best summarized by Ash:

> "you're respecting it more by understanding it more, like…. Why would you ever read a book more than once? Why would you ever listen to a complicated piece of music more than once? and sometimes you don't. But, and, it's kind of, it's nice, it's sometimes reassuring. It's all sorts of things […] the fascination can come from 'what did they just do there?' or 'have they finally decided to use a mellotron on every damn track?', or 'why, did they seem to have done that bit of it with no guitars whatsoever'. That's interesting" (Ash)

Perceived depth and complexity were two of the drivers behind not only repeated listening, but also immersive listening experiences entered into by participants.

4.1.3 Immersive Listening

> "a piece of music is sacrosanct and you don't just listen to it, part of an album at a time" (Hugh)

> "it needs a really strong attention to listen to this kind of music, I think, because otherwise you won't capture it. You won't understand it" (Klaus)

> "a cup of coffee and a set of headphones and then sit back and listen and it's my, what I would call my 'aural joint'" (Geoff)

Having reviewed participants' repeated listening practices and their perspectives on Progressive rock's depth and complexity, 'immersive listening' as experienced and related by participants will be briefly explored. Significant emphasis was placed on this, and it was striking how often participants were at pains to ensure that their point(s) regarding the difference between 'hearing' and 'listening', and often the difference between 'listening' and *'listening'*, were understood and appreciated by the researcher.

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[9] For other arguments against this relationship, and arguments for stylistic eclecticism, see Barnes (2020), Kawamoto (2006), Holm-Hudson (2002), Shannon (2017), and Covach (1997).

"you have to think about it. I think it's not music, it's not background music. Prog rock is not something that's just played in the background [...] You *listen* to prog Rock, you don't listen to prog rock, you *listen* to prog rock. I think there's a differentiation between the two listens, you know?" (Ewan, original emphasis)

Foregrounding and Absorption

It was made clear that the desire, and the frequent need, for immersion in the listening experience was necessary to gain an optimal level of enjoyment from the listening activity. As Nathan remarked, "you're either somebody who has music on in the background, or when you listen to music everything else is in the background", and for Fred Progressive rock was "pointless" as background music. Randy[10] discussed the futility, for him, of playing favourite music in the background whilst he should be grading papers:

"If I put on *Mirage* just as background music, invariably I put down the papers and I just close my eyes and I just listen to the whole album and then I realize, well, I blew that, I should have put on something that was a little more boring [laughs]" (Randy)

This stress on Progressive rock being foreground rather than background music was explicitly or implicitly reinforced by almost every participant. Johan Lilliestam has commented that "[l]istening to music without doing something else simultaneously is rare" (Lilliestam 2013 p.19). Of his research participants[11], only one person made the distinction between 'hearing' and 'listening', which is in stark contrast to this thesis's findings. Participants clearly differentiated between their listening to Progressive rock, and 'other' music; this latter music being given the inattention suggested by other authors (see (Sloboda 2004; North, Hargreaves and Hargreaves 2004)). Lee Marshall has noted how research by John Sloboda (2001), replicated by Alinka Greasley and Alexandra Lamont (2011), claimed that 'focused listening' accounts for just 2% of all kinds of music listening (Marshall 2019 p.151). Richard Middleton has suggested that if "musical meaning is co-produced by *listeners* [...], listening, too, must be considered a productive force" (Middleton 1990 p.92 original emphasis), stressing the agentic nature of musical consumption. What this research finds, is that, regardless of whether the percentage of 'focused listening' is accurate or not for participants, the valency of the listening activity, and its productive opportunities, provides an emotional heft that far outstrips the relative brevity of the experience.

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[10] An American High School teacher.

[11] Lilliestam conducted via 42 "deep" interviews, between 20 and 90 minutes, with Swedish music appreciators aged between 20 and 95 years old. He also suggested that the "physical or bodily qualities of listening have hardly been studied, but it seems urgent to do so" (Lilliestam 2013 p.15), and this thesis would concur. Robert commented upon how "changes in the music may speed up your heartbeat, slow down your heartbeat, yeah, and really take you to a very quiet and you know, concentrating, contemplative, sort of state".

Participants also referenced solo listening, or listening via headphones (partially due to others' non-appreciation), and or listening in the dark for an enhanced experience[12]. This helped to take them on the 'journey' that the music afforded them. Phil's comment below neatly summarizes participants' views:

> "disappearance is actually a really important thing in music for me as well, … and that's why I think it was amazing about some prog bands give you the ability to disappear into the music. That's a really rare thing in music that you can, … to lose yourself in anything is really sort of shamanistic, isn't it? Kind of close listening, and then the next thing you know, 'Oh my God, there's the album done' and you have been in another place, and not consciously in another place, it's just, and you haven't been asleep. I think that's an amazing thing" (Phil)

Various participants spoke about how they would "lose" themselves (Phil, Connor, Fred), and or be "transported" (Jenna) to a 'different world' (Connor), so that you find yourself "almost meditating" (Charles).

> "You just lose yourself. And for a while you're in this different world, a different place, just enjoying it. Nothing else matters" (Fred)

> "I got *so absorbed* in it for hours and hours at, you know, in my early teens, and I can still happily, I can't think of many artists, whose *album* I would like, I would want to listen to at all the way through 'cause there's no fucking story! Whereas some of these, certainly these Genesis albums, did" (Nathan, original emphasis)

> "The one good thing I think about great progressive rock is it's like immersing yourself in a great book. You can really get lost in it. It's the thing I don't understand, why the people don't get that as to, you know, as a form of great escapism, because that [compared to] a four-minute song singing about a failed relationship, there's just no comparison" (Fred)

Several participants compared the immersive experience with either literature or classical music, with Daniel equating the level of "intellectual engagement" required across the cultural forms. Hugh favourably compared how he listens to classical music with his Progressive rock listening habits; he compared his enjoyment of Mahler's 'Second Symphony' with 'Echoes':

> "you listen to it from the very first ping of the piano until the wind at the end of the piece and it's calming, it's uplifting, it's everything you would want in a piece of music" (Hugh)

Simon Frith drew on Adam Smith's observation that:

> "a well-composed concerto can, without suggesting any other object, either by imagination or otherwise, occupy, as it were fill up completely, the whole capacity of the mind, so as to leave no part of its attention vacant for thinking of anything else" (Smith cited in Frith 1988 pp.280-1)

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[12] Although neuroscience is beyond the scope of this thesis, the use of headphones, or with the lights out, as part of the immersive experience, would appear to corroborate the neuroimaging research that underscores the anecdotal belief that the "perceived emotional intensity of the cultural experience" is enhanced with one's eyes closed (Lerner et al. cited in Schwarz 2013 p.416).

It can be seen that participants' immersive listening habits accord with this 'occupation of the mind' by the music. There are enough 'dimensions', to return to the descriptor previously used by participants, to absorb the listener. Hugh refers to the 'uplifting' aspect of a particular piece. Connor, likewise, referred to the relaxation benefits:

> "if I'm gonna sit there and listen to something and involve myself entirely in it, I do find that a relaxing process because you're involved totally in the music. But it's you've got to be in the right frame of mind for it and I don't think a lot of people do find prog relaxing" (Connor)

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi developed the concept of 'flow'[13] (Lilliestam 2013 p.5), and Peterson, Park and Seligman reviewed 'engagement' in this context. They noted how, when one is 'in flow' "time passes quickly", and with the focus elsewhere, "the sense of self is lost" (Peterson, Park and Seligman 2005 p.27). The authors contended that lack of awareness and self-consciousness means that descriptions or judgements of a 'flow' experience are flawed, as they can only be an "after the fact summary judgement" (ibid. p.27). Flawed or otherwise, it is clear from participant comments that this experience is significant and material for a number of participants (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura').

The Listening Unit

Perhaps inevitably, the practices, mindset, and resultant feelings indicated above meant that participants considered that a text needed to be listened to *in toto*. In the preceding quote, Hugh compares his enjoyment of Progressive rock to that of classical music. More fully he stated:

> "It's an album, if I'm gonna listen to *Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, it's like a symphony. I like classical music, if I'm going to play Mahler, I will play the whole symphony and nothing interrupts it. So I'm a purist in that sense, and you don't get the rewards unless you do listen to the whole thing […] for example, Mahler's 'Second Symphony' has got, you know, a magnificent ending, but it's not anywhere near as good unless you listen to the whole thing, which leads up to it. So it's about concentrating, not having it on in the background while you're brushing your teeth, but sitting down listening to it and giving it the attention it deserves" (Hugh)

Hugh refers to the rewards deriving from an immersive approach, and once more the nature of 'respect' is stressed. Frith has commented that:

> "If listening to a piece of music from beginning to end is these days unusual […] this presumably has some effect on our sense of musical progression" (Frith 1998 p.243)

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[13] For the purpose of this discussion, 'flow' can be seen as analogous to Abraham Maslow's 'peak experience', Marghanita Laski's 'ecstasy', Robert Panzanella's 'joyous experience', and Alf Gabrielsson and Siv Wik's 'strong experience' (see (Sloboda, Gabrielsson and Whaley 2016 p.747).

It is this sense of progression, and the opportunity to understand it and appreciate it, either at the track or album level, or at the philosophical meta-genre level, that attracted, and continues to attract, participants. Similar to Hugh's observation, Alexander made a similar comment regarding 'Supper's Ready'

> "I make a deliberate choice to listen to it, I wouldn't put it on, you know, while I was writing a document or something […]. And so it's not something I dip into … the end part is just amazing. I mean, I could listen, I could listen to just that without the rest, but then it's kind of cheating. Isn't it?" (Alexander)[14]

Notions such as 'cheating' and 'the attention it deserves' demonstrate the level of respect accorded the music and the musicians by participants. This aspect of the experience is so strong, and non-negotiable, that for Bruce, even if listening to *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, "not my favourite piece of work", then "once you start at the beginning you gotta see it through to the end". This level of respect for the original album as a listening unit attracted a lot of discussion during the Focus Groups (FGs). Within these FGs a few participants did comment upon the ability to 'dip in', although this was predicated upon a comprehensive familiarity with the whole work, and in FGs 2 and 6 was challenged by non-advocates of this approach. Alexander considered such an approach to be "cheating". A solution proposed by Frank was to make 'mash-up' CDs, removing what he considered to be the weaker parts of albums or re-sequencing them[15] so that, in effect, he was enabling himself to have an immersive experience commensurate with whatever time he had available. However, FGs 1 and 2 were clear in their discussion that the sanctity and entirety of the original compositions needed to be "respected". In FG2, with another reference to respect, Nigel commented that:

> "'*Tales*' is one of those albums that if, I don't do it very often, listen to the whole thing, however, when I do, I feel like I've gone through an experience. …. I do like to have it in its entirety because it was written as that. And sometimes it's like sort of honouring the artistry, in some ways, that you actually do take that 40 minutes or 80 minutes and just listen to what they wrote, you know, maybe it's a bit of respect" (Nigel)

Laura Vroomen, in her research on Kate Bush fandom, also drew attention to the need to devote time to the consumption experience (Vroomen 2002). This immersive approach to listening did necessitate a certain attitude for participants, being in an appropriate mood (the "intensity" of the activity was remarked upon), and having the necessary time, with participants commenting upon the exigencies of modern-day life militating against their preferred, or necessary, listening practice. In the absence of these opportunities, participants would most likely play other music,

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[14] Robert Burns has also argued that 'Supper's Ready' "demands that a listener hear it as a complete work" (Burns 2018 p.39).

[15] Frank provided examples of how he had spliced together both 'books' of 'Cygnus X-1', and also interspersed 'La Villa Strangiato' with 'Trees' and 'Circumstances'.

or engage in other activities: Rebecca described the opportunity, which she still on occasion takes, of playing the whole album - Geoff's 'aural joint' - as "an indulgence". By contrast, Steve commented upon how he wasn't able to engage with the music when he was younger, because of pent-up energy and desire to "change the world", hence not having the required attention span. Now, in his 60s, he has "the patience to sit down and listen to it and try and *get into it* much more" (original emphasis).

FG3 discussed how they would usually, but not always, postpone the listening experience until the necessary time was available, with Milton commenting how it was "all or nothing". In FG5, the implications of modern-day life and the attendant discussion led Paul to reflect that, in his opinion, with shorter listening and attention spans evident, he was witnessing Caravan and Pineapple Thief deliberately paring down their newer material so as to appeal to the modern consumers' listening preferences. Rebecca bemoaned this, and commented upon how the activity of engagement had been reduced to a "transaction", and "people are just consuming stuff".

It was noticeable that the three youngest participants[16] all commented upon this experience: Jenna continues to prefer the whole album experience (with particular attraction to symphonic metal, as it takes her on a 'journey'), and how 'shuffle' often leaves her feeling she's missing out on something; Scott, particularly referenced Steven Wilson's *Hand.Cannot.Erase*, but broadening his point out, said "I can't be doing with cutting off halfway through, you know what I mean, you have to be able to hear the full thing", and therefore would find time for whatever he wanted to listen to; and Bob "just has to put everything down". As Miguel commented, with regards to immersion in the whole album:

> "It's not necessarily that you have to, and that you won't listen if you have less time, but it's like a different experience" (Miguel)

Participants' need for an immersive experience so as to (more) fully appreciate the ranges of meaning afforded by Progressive rock might be seen by others as pretentious, given the 'norm' of listening practices as identified by other researchers. Pretension and virtuosity will be explored in the final sub-section of this Chapter. In brief, participants viewed the production and consumption of music through a Lens of being true to oneself, i.e., the antithesis of pretension. Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura' will explore the socio-cultural implications of this both in terms of participants' reflexivity and their interactions with the wider world. Whilst beyond the scope of this thesis, it can be conjectured that participants' immersive listening practices, and the

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[16] Mid-20s to early 30s.

reverence in which the music is held, may also be seen in classical music, and jazz, fandom. Further research could identify defining features associated with each of these styles and their fans, and analyze the nature and degree of correspondences.

As well as the music itself, the lyrics play a role in the immersive experience, and they could be a contributory element to perceived depth and complexity. To link this sub-section with the next, Jeremy stated that part of his intensity comes from:

> "things like *Brave*, or if I listen to some of the Pineapple Thief tracks, you get lost in it. And there's a real story, and you are listening *intentl*y to the lyrics, but the music just accompanies it, perfectly like they are additional lyrics" (Jeremy, original emphasis)

4.1.4 Lyrics

> "I'm probably more motivated by the musical hook than I am by lyrics" (Connor)

> "it was the novelty of the lyrics. It wasn't the same old sort of mushy love stuff, it was a bit more like reading a book than listening to a song on the radio" (Susie)

> "the lyrics were massively important and they still are, you know, the music I listen to today they are still important, so, of course you want good tunes, but I still care about lyrics" (Wayne)

Progressive rock is known, amongst other aspects, for relatively frequent and lengthy instrumental passages, and an eclectic range of lyrical conceits, including the use of concepts for side-, album-, or multi-album constructions. No participant was without a view on the merits of lyrics, either in absolute or relative terms.

Jarl Ahlkvist surveyed *ProgArchives* reviews, and noted how rarely the subject of lyrics and their meaning arose in fan discussions, and that when they are discussed, the focus is typically on their cryptic nature and or obscurity. He therefore argues against critics' accusations of fans being too cerebral, especially as online comment is directed more to the 'visceral reactions' that are provoked (Ahlkvist 2011): the 'rock' element of Progressive rock[17]. This thesis notes the unspectacular nature of participants' fandom, and contends that contributors to online sites are more likely to be motivated by performative concerns. The meaning that lyrics, as with the music, held for participants renders them even less likely to contribute to such forums. (Participants' views on technology are addressed in Chapter 6, 'Progressive Paradox). Stephen Lambé's view was that:

> "[i]f you ask a typical Progressive Rock fan whether they consider the lyrics to be particularly important to the enjoyment of the music as a whole, it is probable that they will answer 'no'" (Lambé 2011 p.173)

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[17] This is consistent with Chris Atton's findings on the subject matter within fanzines (Atton 2011).

As will be seen, lyrics did play an important role in Progressive rock valorization by participants., although their views were nuanced and varied: only four were definitively of the view that they played no, if any part, whilst a few more, six, accorded them unqualified importance. Most participants had a nuanced perspective on their role, and seen in the round, their perspectives are *contra* both Ahlkvist's research and Lambé's view. Some of the subtleties can be seen in Daniel's quote:

> "Depends who I listen to. Ian Anderson, I think, is a brilliant lyricist, I genuinely think some of his stuff is poetry. Others, other stuff, I hesitate to say it, it's verging on heresy, but some of Gabriel's lyrics are bloody awful, and some of the Yes albums, which I haven't listened to for ages I must say, and you think, 'Anderson, Christ, what were you smoking?!'. So the lyrics are part of it, for some songs a big part of it, for some songs just something which carries the melody and for some they almost intrude upon the enjoyment of the music" (Daniel)

Nigel was another who commented on this possible 'intrusion':

> "In fact, I've got a love of instrumental progressive rock 'cause the vocals don't get in the way sometimes. Wanna just listen to the music, get lost in it. So, it's very difficult to explain exactly what it is that matters to me" (Nigel)

Nigel's 'difficulty' was also evident in how he'd previously spent some time comparing Jon Anderson's lyrical style with Peter Gabriel's, and how Anderson's lyrics were a "perfect match" and Gabriel's took "storytelling to its nth degree". Jon Anderson was frequently mentioned as a comparator for participants. Fred was another who drew a comparison:

> "[Jon] Anderson just painting pictures with words that don't string together to make a coherent whole. Only snippets of it, in comparison with, I think Gabriel, who could tell a real story. But something about both those styles appeal to me…I found the different styles, actually, almost appealing in their offering counterpoint to each other" (Fred)

Participants' views can be seen to be supportive of the views of Alinka Greasley and Alexandra Lamont, who stated that "lyrics were important in shaping preferences for one artist, but inconsequential […] for another" (Greasley and Lamont 2016 p.266). C. Lee Harrington and Denise Bielby have noted that some lyricists, as in the case of Bruce Springsteen, should be seen as 'instructional guides' (Lee Harrington and Bielby 2010 p.445)[18]. A comparison of the effect of Springsteen's lyrics, and their contextual delivery, vis-à-vis those of Progressive rock lyricists is beyond the scope of this thesis: it may be conjectured that such 'instructional guidance' is in the form of life-course for the former, and worldview for the latter. This may represent a rich area for further research.

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[18] Sarah Campbell provides a comprehensive survey of much of the literature on theoretical, and empirical, bases for the perceived role of lyrics (Campbell 2019).

As well as Daniel's comments above, Murray was one of many who commented that the sound of Jon Anderson's words was more important than the meaning, and that they "somehow" complemented the music. For Henry, even though at times they resembled something that was "randomly generated from Scrabble", they still had the ability to convey profundity, and inspired him to further explore concepts and ideas, self-generated or otherwise. Several remarked that comprehending the lyrics' meaning was not essential to enjoyment. Frank's summary most accurately captures views:

> "you read any Yes lyric that's written down and I challenge you to say what it's about. But it had the knack of being enjoyable [...] it didn't matter because it suited the music and it suited that whole package that came with it" (Frank)

Roger Waters' lyrics also attracted a lot of comment. Derek deliberately drew a comparison between Waters as a person and as a lyricist, and said how he admired his ability to write about matters in a very "cutting and memorable" way, whilst expressing reservations about his personality. For Liam, he is unequivocally "a genius" in his ability to express the mundane in a way that made you think about it anew. Hugh referred to how *Animals* could be "articulate" in its relatively simplistic clarity, and how Yes's lyrics, whilst not always comprehensible, could nevertheless, too, be "profound".

Ian Anderson and Neil Peart generally received positive comment for their perceived ability to tell stories in an erudite manner, and the storytelling nature of Progressive rock was one of the main themes captured in the wordcloud (see Appendix A). Fred referred to the "epic, and mythic" element of some of Progressive rock, and how he:

> "never had a problem with this singing about things that aren't real, because when I read this stuff, in my head they were real" (Fred)

a comment that recalls the ability of Progressive rock to transport its listeners, and indicates how ambiguity could lead to a range of interpretative possibilities. This personally generated world echoes David Laing's view (cited by Richard Middleton) that:

> "the words of a song give us the key to the human universe that the song inhabits, and that the musical signifieds may best be verbalised in a metalanguage whose terms refer to the structure of that human universe" (Laing cited in Middleton 1990 p.228)

Whilst it is highly unlikely that Fred, or any other participant, would analyze their interest using such language, participants' immersion into, and adoption of, worlds of meaning for them, indicates that lyrics can provide a key, or keys, to meaning. However, the range of interpretations of any song need to be recognized in any such discussion, which is *contra* Laing's seemingly positivist stance.

Susie compared listening to Genesis's music to reading a good book; a cross-cultural reference that echoes points already made in this section. Whilst Peter Gabriel's storytelling ability, and style, was attractive to Nigel, and his ability and happiness to adopt different vocal inflections to portray characters was positively contrasted with James LaBrie's non-ability (or desire) to do so[19], others were less attracted to this on the grounds of intrusiveness or a general indifference to lyrics.

Peter Sinfield's work with King Crimson likewise divided opinion. For some, such as Robert, the "dystopian" nature of his lyrical style suited King Crimson's music, and lent it an "otherworldliness" element that was complementary. For Derek, there was a disconnect between musical and lyrical meaning, with Derek exclaiming "why do you need to find a way to put 'kiosk' into a track?". This can be seen as being 'intrusive', just as discussed above with Daniel and Nigel. Both Derek and Robert are keen fans of King Crimson, and their comments illustrate the difficulties associated with theorizing over the role of lyrics *per se*, and their 'fit' with the musical message(s). Robert's basis of appreciation can be seen to be more in regards to an overall 'feel', whereas Derek's is grounded more in specific details, any one of which can be dissonant.

Katherine Charlton has stated that "[l]yrics are very important in most rock music" (Charlton 2008 p.viii)[20], and this was the case for many of the participants. Hugh noted that he didn't have to learn the lyrics, they became "imprinted in my brain" through repeated listening and his subsequent absorption of them. Tim, similarly, commented upon this 'absorption by osmosis' effect of subconsciously learning lyrics, as did others. David commented:

> "When you used to get the vinyl, you got the lyrics printed out, you followed the lyrics. How sad is that, we must have been sad people [laughs]" (David)

Similarly, in Focus Group 5, Paul commented that "you know all the lyrics. It's a worry, isn't it?", to which Rebecca responded, "no, it's a joy!", which prompted a group-wide agreement on the enjoyment of certain lyrics and the retention of them. As indicated by these comments, participants accorded lyrics a high degree of attention in their early listening years, which would have been as a teenager. Rather than seeing this as "sad", which was ironically mentioned, participants reflected on the "joy" of this. This is in stark contrast to Theodore Gracyk's view

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[19] A contrast was made with the Ayreon albums, where different vocalists are used to assume different character roles.

[20] This stance may be influenced by the emphasis placed on lyrics by early American rock critics, e.g., for Robert Cristgau they were part of his grading system.

regarding teenagers' relative emphases; for him, after "decades of research", only one position is supported:

> "lyrics are not the primary reason that the young have for listening to popular music, but rather the musical beat or overall *sound* of a recording is of greater interest to teenagers" (Gracyk 1996 p.65)

Regarding their relative importance, Moore believes that there has not been any "convincing attempt" at measuring this (Moore 2012 pp.108-9). In commenting upon the limitations of scholarly studies to date, Reyyan Bal contends that most studies have been restricted to musicological or cultural studies fields, which *a priori* do not consider the lyric as a "focal point", whereas lyrics are more privileged by rock critics (or internet sites) which do not constitute academic study (Bal 2014 p.14). Will Straw has referred to "the long-standing prejudice against lyric analysis in music studies" (Straw 2012 p.231), and Lars Eckstein has posited that unlike:

> "few other art forms, lyrics fall between disciplinary chairs, which may explain why to this day hardly any veritable academic study has taken on song lyrics as its central subject" (Eckstein 2010 p.11)

Participants' comments would support Eckstein's view that more than one 'disciplinary chair' needs to be considered in analyzing the role of lyrics, although their role should not be studied in isolation. Participants' views will also bring out the interrelationship of the lyrics with the music.

Regarding lyrical subject matter, Macan has referred to the "strong protest element hidden beneath the arty, self-consciously literate lyrics" (Macan 1997 p.73), although he does note that some songs were written with no social comment in mind, simply for the joy of telling a story, and participants would support this latter observation. He also notes 'the deadly earnestness' of the lyrics of Yes, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Pink Floyd and King Crimson, and their peers (ibid. p.134). Regarding the 'protest element', Jay Keister and Jeremy Smith have written a paper dedicated to the 'nasty side' of Progressive rock lyrics, stressing that there was a greater political edge to Progressive rock lyrics than is generally acknowledged (Keister and Smith 2008). However, participants typically did not view either the lyrics, or the lyricists, through these lenses. Specific subject matter, such as 'the protest element', was not raised at any time, and charges of earnestness (or pretension) were not mentioned (see discussion later in this Chapter). Those participants who expressed a joy of lyrics did so on the basis of the broad sweep of subject matter, as well as the number of interpretive possibilities. Storytelling, or narrative-enabling, elements were of paramount importance to them. Their appreciation would be consistent with Mike Barnes's summation:

> "social satire, invented worlds, sci-fi, ideas from literature, stream of consciousness word paintings, a hippie-ish striving for enlightenment, a few love songs and even a smattering of politics" (Barnes 2020 p.2)

The storytelling, or narrative-enabling, aspect was not reliant on lyrics, however. Jeremy commented upon how he would often play *Oxygene* late at night, to help him sleep: the absence of vocals offset by his ability to create his own lyrical soundtrack, and story. Robert made an identical comment in this regard, and remembered that at primary school for an English lesson assignment, he wrote a fictional story based upon the music inspired by that album. Michael Anthony has argued that rock music, *sans* lyrics, can have depth and profundity, and can take us on unimagined journeys, in itself. For him, this is the distinction between rock music and mainstream pop (Anthony 2012 p.46). Nigel regards one of the joys of instrumental Progressive rock is due to how "musicians can pick a mood. They can pick a vibe and a situation to explain something in music which most people can't even do in lyrics". Jenna similarly noted:

> "the most obvious part of a song to deliver meaning *is* the words in it. Like we've spoken about the album, there's chord progressions and such that you can kind of steer the listener to. Like, how you want them to feel, what sort of energy you're going from as simple as, like, is it in E Minor, do you want them to be sad? Do you want them to think about things? Things can be missed because they're too quick or you're listening to the instrumentation and that kind of thing. I was always interested to catch those bits, 'cause sometimes I've realized that I've misheard it, or I've not realized like the flow of the song, 'cause I've been so caught up in just listening to it. And when you read it through, almost more like poetry, 'Ah, yeah, OK, I understand. I understand what this is'…. not having lyrics doesn't, surprisingly, remove the ability to get your point across… you could be distracted by listening to the lyrics of something and trying to make sure you work out what they're saying" (Jenna, original emphasis)

Nigel and Jenna's comments demonstrate their belief that Progressive rock musicians have the musical ability to tell a story: the non-reliance on lyrics provides not just an opportunity to non-lyrically capture and develop a mood, but also the ambiguity and hence the range of interpretative possibilities play to the imaginative attributes evident in both the production and the consumption of the music

Walser has suggested that "lyrics have been granted disproportionate focus" (Walser and Berger 2014 p.40), and for a small selection of the participants they were largely irrelevant. Geoff recognized that "a lot of people" studied the lyrics, and "read between the lines and all this, that and the other", however as long as it made "some sort of sense" then that was sufficient. He laughingly noted how over the years he's been surprised to learn just what the lyrics were for some of his favourite works. Liam commented on how, as far as Progressive rock is defined, then "it's not trying to find a great sort of 'World Universal Truth' through the words, I just get lost in the music". Randy was completely indifferent, saying that the musicians "could say literally any

lyrics to most every song I like, and it wouldn't change my enjoyment, or even the opposite",
and Klaus just commented that he's "not a lyrics guy". For these participants, the music, literally,
speaks for itself.

For most participants, the balance was key, with both 'the words' and 'the music' having an
equal part to play, and this is one of the defining features of Progressive rock. This is *contra*
Lawrence Kramer's view that "words and music do not get along; they never have" (Kramer 2012
p.395). In their interplay, Ash suggested that the lyrics can provide a signposting function,
enabling a listener to be guided:

> "I think some of 'The Cinema show' stuff is really important, the words are important, but
> the fact you wait awhile before you get back to them is also important. So yeah, I think
> it's all part of the ABBA, whatever song format you're listening to, so it's an important part
> of reminding, reminding you where you are" (Ash)

'The Cinema Show', and other tracks as cited throughout this thesis, was praised by others for
achieving this balance. Moore praises Dai Griffiths's 'rare' position among critics at affording
music and lyrics equality (Moore 2012 p.61). The majority of participants to this research
privileged neither the lyrics nor the music; for them both were essential elements of the overall
meaning-making experience. Storytelling was not dependent upon lyrics, although they clearly
had a role to play. Between them, the lyrics and the music constituted the 'text', and, as will be
seen later in this Chapter, and the next (Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), other 'contextual' elements
such as paratexts, and performance spectacle, whilst important were secondary. This thesis
therefore supports this 'rare position'.

Throughout this thesis, attention has been drawn to participants' desire to discern meaning
within the texts. As an example, with regards to lyrical interpretation, Steve spoke at length
about how he continues to find meaning in *Tales From Topographic Oceans,* noting that whilst
his level of comprehension is increasing, he is yet to fully grasp it, and still "loves" the album. He
drew attention to his initial experiences with the album, how this has evolved over the years,
and he gave an example of analyzing and comparing two tracks from different albums, to see if
an overall narrative arc could be found, or insights into Jon Anderson's overall philosophy
gained:

> "there's a big difference between 'Soon' and 'The Ancient', absolutely diametrically
> opposite. So 'Soon' tells you the story that, you know, you're coming out of the bad times,
> you are coming into the light and that's what we're all here for. Really emotional lyrics.
> And 'The Ancient', it's, and I need to understand the language, and what he's trying to do
> there, whether I ever will or not, I don't know…." (Steve)

Importantly, and to underscore the contextually-dependent views participants had, Steve
immediately then went on to state that:

"Lyrics aren't *that* important. I don't think they're that important 'cause when I think of some of the stuff that Emerson, Lake and Palmer did on 'Trilogy' for example…" (Steve, original emphasis).

One aspect of the practice of lyric writing is that they are typically (although not wholly) written after the music has been (largely) composed. Keir Keightley, as Frith notes, ironically "makes them a source of insight into common conventions of *musical* meaning" (Keightley cited in Frith 1998 p.110 original emphasis), and David Hesmondhalgh has commented that lyrics are perhaps the most "notable source of extra-musical meaning in popular music" (Hesmondhalgh 2013 p.278). This thesis suggests that Progressive rock provides another dimension to this point. Progressive rock music, places few, if any, bounds on its musical explorations. Progressive rock lyricists are therefore relatively unconstrained by the demands of time-bounded conventions of most other genres. This affords the lyricists opportunities to go deeper and wider in their lyric writing, and it enables the whole band to align, on various levels, both the music and the lyrics. There is a symbiotic dynamism in play here that elevates Progressive rock music for participants.

"The lyric [to 'Get 'Em Out by Friday'] is absolutely incredible, but the music that goes on with that, builds that story, builds that vision, builds that world and it just makes it mind blowing […] you actually understand what the story is and you've got the, it's like a little *film noir* thing, you know you can visualize what's actually happening" (Nigel)

It can therefore be argued that Progressive rock lyrics are more able to provide greater insight into the overall music meaning, than other genres and styles. They, therefore, could be an area deserving of further research and analysis.

Participants' comments indicate the nuanced view they have of the interplay and relative importance of the music and the lyrics. Their explanations tended not to isolate either element in a dichotomy but considered them as constituent parts of a whole.

4.2 Progressive Rock Tropes

4.2.1 Introduction

The first Section of this Chapter, 'The Consumption Experience', explored how participants repeatedly, and in an immersive fashion, listen to Progressive rock. Specific elements associated with perceived depth and complexity, and with lyrics and their interplay with the overall meaning-making, were also discussed. In the second, final, Section of this Chapter, attention will be turned to the elements of Progressive rock that arose out of interviews and Focus Groups (FGs), and were positioned by participants as key tropes of Progressive rock. Consistent with the Grounded Theory nature of this Research, it is these elements that are foregrounded for review,

eschewing some that otherwise arise in academic works or popular discourse. Those attracting most attention were concept albums, paratexts such as artwork, and virtuosity and pretension.

4.2.2 Concept Albums

Concept albums: ""one of the more elusive topics in music" (Sorenson, 2019)

As set out in the 'Introduction' Chapter, Progressive rock's use of concept albums has attracted significant critical attention. The discussion on the role of concept albums cannot be conducted without recognising interlinked aspects already discussed in the first Section of this Chapter, e.g., immersive listening, and story-telling, whether via lyrics or otherwise. The attention given by participants to concept albums will also be seen in Chapter 6, 'The Progressive Paradox', when canonicity is discussed. Martin Johnes refers to concept albums as being 'common' for progressive rock bands (Johnes 2018 p.122), John Covach states that they were 'embraced' to such a degree that the "progressive rock album that is not a concept album is probably more the exception than the rule" (Covach 2017 p.74), and for Mike Barnes they had become '*de rigueur*' for Progressive rock bands, if not with an album, then "at least some kind of side-long suite" (Barnes 2020 p.357). The accuracy of Covach's and Johnes's observations are not material to this thesis. However, their views were not echoed by participants, and they do not stand up to scrutiny. By contrast, Jarl Ahlkvist states that 'relatively few' symphonic progressive rock concept albums were created (Ahlkvist 2011 p.651)[21], a point coincident with Bill Martin's "fewer than you might think" (Martin 1998 p.41). For a history of concept albums see Paige Sorensen (Sorensen 2019).

> "the lyrics should all be connected and have a deeper meaning and a deeper message and a rollercoaster of emotions" (Miguel)

> "very much the reason it's criticized is the very reason I like listening to it" (Nathan, on *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*)

> "a concept albums is a natural evolution for a progressive band with an artistic vision" (Nigel)

Approximately half of the participants explicitly referenced concept albums during their interviews, and every FG, whether by design or otherwise, spent some time discussing them. This is possibly an indication that for fans of Progressive rock, concept albums are the 'ur-album', the opportunity for bands to bring together many of the aspects associated with the meta-genre, and hence act as a lightning rod for exploration of many facets of the whole experience. In principle, participants valued the notion of concept albums, although, inevitably, opinion was

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[21] Ahlkvist does single out neo-prog bands as being particularly avid proponents of concept albums, and identifies Marillion, Arena, Pendragon, and IQ as 'specializing' in them (Ahlkvist 2011).

divided over which were most enjoyable[22], and most crucially, why. Their intrinsic role in Progressive rock was captured by Geoff:

> "they're important. There are really good pieces of work, and I think people ought to listen to them. If they have a problem with them, they're really ought to revisit them and listen to them and try to understand where they've come from and why they were written in such a way" (Geoff)

However, as with the discussion over what constitutes and defines Progressive rock, inevitably there was some variance of opinion over the defining characteristics of concepts. Murray spent some time reviewing whether '*The Lamb*', and *Thick as a Brick,* were actually concepts, as it was hard to articulate what the respective conceptual bases were (re. '*Thick*': "'Well, it's all about English middle-class', really? Well, I'm not sure").

When characterizing concept albums, participants used synonyms in their descriptions: for Charles it was about "unity"; for Scott it was "a through line"; for Steve it was "thematic unity"; and for Nigel it was all "part of a woven fabric". Miguel said how he "*loved* the connectedness" (original emphasis). Participants didn't assume the album as the unit of conceptual duration. Several referred to tracks in isolation, with Connor's view summarizing these:

> "if you look at it in terms of a particular track rather than a concept album, I like the idea of a track starting, and kind of growing and developing and then maybe coming back to that same place that it started at. I like that" (Connor)

Connor's comment also alludes to symphonic elements, and this will be discussed shortly. Rebecca discussed how the various elements could be nested together as part of a conceptual whole:

> "you've got the whole flow of the album. The whole album told the story and, you know, you hung on every single lyric, every single note, every single track, almost like a movement, to be honest, in a wider piece" (Rebecca)

This perspective enabled participants like Robert to suggest that *Wish You Were Here* was as valid a concept album as *The Wall*.

Participants' use of terms such as 'unity', and 'thematic', and a notion of a 'through line' can be seen in the definitions that have been proposed: Bill Martin refers to them as "albums that have thematic unity and development throughout" (Martin 1998 p.41), and Edward Macan suggests that they should be seen as:

> "the practice of tying a series of songs together by using both a recurring melodic theme and a program – that is, a unifying idea or concept which is developed in the lyrics of the individual songs" (Macan 1997 p.20)

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[22] *The Myths and Legends of King Arthur* was the most divisive.

Participants' characterizations were not musicologically based, which is the typical research basis for the relatively few studies of concept albums conducted (Dozal 2012 p.13), and can be seen in Macan's analyses of selected works.

As Nigel's introductory quote indicates, concept albums were seen as an opportunity for bands to consider "what else can we do?", without feeling restricted. Participants felt that concept albums gave freer rein to creating "a soundscape" (Nigel), "an overarching narrative" (Robert), and "fantasy worlds" (Charles). For Daniel, the use of a concept approach to underpin the whole album provided aesthetic benefits that would otherwise have been lost:

> "*The Myths and Legends of King Arthur*, by Rick Wakeman, which I think is just an absolutely superb piece of music from start to finish. And I think had that been a series or separate tunes if you like, that wasn't linked together by a common thread, it would have lost a lot of its impact. And I think that's probably true of '*Six Wives'* as well" (Daniel)

These perspectives reinforce the views from participants as being taken on a journey, and one that was open to their own subjectivity. Klaus commented upon concept albums in general, but also with specific regard to Dream Theater's '*Scenes'*, that they had a particular "hypnotic" quality, as they took him on a "journey". For Jerry, this element allowed his imagination to create something "that was mine", promoting a sense of agency with the listening, and with music-meaning. Nathan felt that concept albums enabled him to feel "part of a drama". The role of lyrics was consistent with the views expressed in the previous sub-section. Jenna compared how both halves of Nightwish's *HVMAN :||: NATVRE* were individually interesting, however it was the juxtaposition of their differing styles that made it a much more interesting "whole", which then "made sense" and was "amazing". Jenna reinforces the points made earlier in this Chapter regarding repeated listening, and depth and complexity. These previous points are echoed by Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell's comment on how:

> "[t]he repetition of instrumental and lyrical conceits would offer an immediate coherence on first listen, only for other resonances to emerge on subsequent hearings" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.65)

The concept album also enabled possibilities for a greater 'intellectual challenge'. FG5 particularly discussed this. For Daniel

> "I think Prog, and I don't know quite why it does, but I think it lends itself to a concept album in a way that lots that you put, possibly because of this intellectualization, or this intellectual element of it, that we discussed earlier, in a way that you know, disco doesn't" (Daniel)

Paul and Rebecca agreed with this opportunity for learning, with Paul stating, "it was a great thing. I learned quite a lot of things from concept albums in the old days".

Connor's above comment referenced symphonic comparisons, and Miguel, Wayne, Rebecca and Nigel all drew similar parallels with the 'symphonic possibilities' in terms of thematic development and recapitulation. Building upon Rebecca's above comment, she reflected upon her formal classical musical training and commented that:

> "having been used to listening to a movement in a Symphony or a, whatever, a concerto, that actually listening to a whole LP of storytelling, or very compelling musical pieces, you know, I suppose I, that prepared me for that, to enjoy that where, you know, my attention span was for the whole 'peephole' [sic], you know. An album rather than just the individual track" (Rebecca)

Rebecca's comment, as well as referring to the "compelling" nature of the listening experiences also reinforces the attention span, echoing points on immersive listening. This aspect also arose in relation to listening to a concept album as discrete tracks. The importance of listening to a concept album from beginning to end was referred to as its "unique selling point" by Miguel. For Ash:

> "it's difficult to hear those, some of those tracks out of order, or even on CD if you end up with a gap between them, you find yourself thinking well, that's a bit of a nuisance" (Ash)

Jenna likewise compared concept albums to 'normal' albums, where for the former, "I'll listen to the whole thing and think 'oh wow, OK, amazing. It makes sense'". Wayne compared the practice of enjoying concept albums with other cultural art forms:

> "the order matters […] these are, I suppose, artistic statements and stuff, you know you don't read books out of order, and you know, you don't listen to, if you've got a Symphony you don't listen to the third bit before the second bit" (Wayne)

FG6 discussed this most at Length, with Miguel stating, "you have to really dig into the concept and you can't just listen to a song in the middle", with Barry agreeing with him. The Group concluded that familiarity with the work meant that it was acceptable to "dip in and out". Ash suggested that for some, their initial exposure to '*Thick*' might have occurred via Jethro Tull's 'Greatest Hits'[23], and therefore this legitimized, or even privileged, a piecemeal approach. The consensus reached was that whilst there was no "strict rule", the aesthetic experience differed markedly. Within FG2, Trevor argued that this 'dipping in or out' depended upon the particular album: he suggested that this wouldn't work for *'Tales',* and *'Passion Play',* but could do for *'Thick',* and *The Wall*, although the Focus Group dynamic prevented any discussion of his rationale.

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[23] A reference to *MU – The Best of Jethro Tull* (released 1976).

It was generally accepted by participants that the overall worth of a concept album, at the album level, allowed for some leniency in regards to the quality of some of the subservient tracks. The overall experience was key; for Nigel:

> "the way I look at *Tales From Topographic Oceans* is, I stick my headphones on and I fuck off this planet. I just go, and I live in the world of Yes, and even their filler bits, that what other people call their filler bits, is 100% or let's say 98% better than most other things…. I'm gonna give myself over to Yes for four sides of an album" (Nigel)

Focus Group 2 spent considerable time discussing what the evolutionary possibilities are for Progressive rock bands in this regard. Jenna commented upon Within Temptation's *The Unforgiving*, and its use of multi-media as part of its overall package[24], which lead to a group discussion based on the possibilities of exploiting technological developments to create a more immersive, 'VR-like' experience. David Montgomery's[25] definition of a concept album was that it is an LP that is "made a totality of linked songs through compositional (musical and literary) and marketing (graphic and promotional) strategies that were both thematically explicit and undefined" (Montgomery cited in Sivy 2019 p.34). FG2 participants were broadly aware of Coheed and Cambria's approach with the Armory wars, however they found the concept of tie-in marketing strategies to be antithetical to their situating of aesthetic appeal. This was largely rooted in a desire to retain a very personal interpretation of possible music-meaning(s), and if a video was inconsistent with a prior conception of the 'world' that had been created, then that acted in a dissonant manner (for a discussion on the role of technology, see Chapter 6, 'Paradox').

Comments on *The Wall* were of particular interest in this regard. Pink Floyd were praised for their artistic ambition, and its "cutting edge" live production (Julie), however both the film and the music attracted criticism. Those that commented upon the film felt that it failed to live up to their private expectations. The music was considered to be "regressive" and too reliant on "progressive rock tropes" by Alan, although, as a comment upon Pink Floyd's musicianship, he suggested that what was generally regressive for Progressive rock bands was musically progressive for them. Liam drew a comparison between the album and Richard Wagner: "some marvellous moments, and some jolly boring half-hours".

In contrast, comments were also made on the restrictive nature of concept albums. The use of the term in itself could "get in the way" (Murray, Geoff, Mark) of aesthetic appreciation. For them, and others, if the concept isn't of interest, then attention is diverted to the tracks at an individual level, and the whole concept (of the concept) falls apart. The role of 'structure' was

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[24] See also Coheed and Cambria's '*Armory Wars'* series of releases, and their use of paratexts.
[25] PhD Thesis: 'The Rock Concept Album: Context and Analysis' University of Toronto 2002.

important for participants: by definition, concept albums had to be structured, however there was a danger of them becoming over-structured, with a consequence of historically, and anticipated, aesthetically pleasing aspects being subordinated. These views are consistent with Sorenson's concern that the concept album allowed artists of all styles to "innovate to the point of rejection by their audiences" (Sorensen 2019 pp.17-8). For her, the greatest examples resided within Progressive rock and its 'plethora' of them. In terms of their apogee, and consistent with his reading of Progressive rock's timeline, Paul Stump suggests that by 1973, they had begun "to assume a character identical to that of their creators" (Stump 1997 p.158). It is assumed that Stump is referring to their negative characteristics in this regard.

Barry noted how strict adherence to a formula could militate against "improvisation and virtuosity". For Connor, Dream Theater's *'Scenes From a Memory'* initially attracted him with its premise, however he felt no emotional connection with the music and therefore could not relate to it on any level. For Ash it could, at times, become restrictive, with bands following a course of direction that seemed "forced". Miguel, a fan of concept albums ("I *love* them", original emphasis), had to take issue with *The Astonishing's* length, as did Hugh with some Transatlantic works. Participants' specific observations in this regard bring to mind criticisms made by non-fans of the overall meta-genre, which reflects the crystallization of Progressive rock in the form of concept albums.

Sorensen's contribution to the theoretical debate was to propose a 'continuum', based on various criteria, so that strict 'in/out' judgements could be avoided. In her analysis, Sorensen concluded that concept album definition remains elusive, and despite the number released, across genres, and across the years, they "continue to defy traditional categorization" (Sorensen 2019 p.3). In terms of theoretical precision, Sorenson identified criteria (each with sub-criteria)[26] to be assessed on a 'Yes'/'No' basis so to analyze the degree of 'conceptual strength' an album possessed. This presents an opportunity: definitional uncertainty and individual perception led Sophie to reflect:

> "you don't think [laugh] this is a concept album. You think, 'oh, this is an album', and then looking back it's like, 'The 30 Greatest Concept Albums'. It's like 'Oh, so that was a concept album, was it?!'" (Sophie)

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[26] Those criteria are: A *strong* narrative, and conceptual foundation; Connection to, and repetition of, a musical element; Focused and meaningful *intent*; Supportive visual elements; Transitional passages between songs; Consistent songwriters for most (or all) of the concept (Sorensen 2019 p.6 original emphasis).

Sophie's comment echoes that made by Mark Shannon, who noted that assumed conceptual bases of many Progressive rock albums, using Sorenson's schema, would be assessed as 'loose', despite their common characterization (Shannon 2017), which reinforces Murray's challenge (above) over what the concepts were behind certain claimed concept albums. Given the importance placed on concept albums by participants, forensic analysis of albums using Sorensen's continuum could provide insights into its utility and possible developments. From a top-level analysis of participants' comments, the 'transitional passages' criterion appeared to be valued more highly than she suggests, whilst the 'consistent songwriter' one was not mentioned. Part of the explanation for this may be in the greater extent of instrumental passages, and the acceptance that lyrics are not necessary; instrumental passages were frequently composed by more than one band member (or seen to be). Other aspects, such as Montgomery's 'explicit and undefined themes', and Martin's, and Macan's, 'unified themes', can be seen in Sorenson's schema, and are clearly borne out in participants' discussions. However, it was noticeable that an album such as '*Tales'* was appreciated not necessarily because of its apparent 'immediate coherence' (see Hegarty and Halliwell, above), but because of the impression it created of coherence. This point reinforces the ones already made on repeated listening and depth.

The concept album as the Progressive rock 'ur-album', embodying the range of offerings that the overall experience can offer participants, was writ large in their discussions: the concept album provides a vehicle for more intense involvement. It can be seen that for participants, concept albums are an intrinsic aspect of Progressive rock. Whilst weaknesses were commented upon, these were accepted as an integral element of Progressive rock ideology and ambition, and therefore seen through the lens of being a strength. The affordance provided by many of the concept albums (some of which are cited above) underscored their value to participants.

4.2.3 Paratexts

The progenitors of Progressive rock were seen by participants as forging strong visual connections between their music and their cover art and stage shows. The artwork associated with bands and albums was one of the most persistent aspects that arose from participants, and was one of the key Focus Group subjects.

> "You fold [*In The Court of the Crimson King*] out, it just stretches out. Kinda like the music does when you listen to it" (Robert)

> "I want a beautiful piece of artwork to look at, that really captures what the music is about" (Phil)

> "the old saying, never judge a book by its cover, well, that was bullshit when it came to [Prog] music" (Ewan)

With only one exception (Jeremy: "I'm middle ground on it"), participants were unequivocal in their praise for artwork, and the various roles it played in their overall enjoyment of the Progressive rock experience.

> "There isn't anything like opening up the gatefold of a record and looking at the liner notes and the lyrics, and the photos and the drawing and the artwork and the care and attention that has gone into producing something that, you know, that they want you to see, and they want you to sort of cherish and enjoy" (Walter)

Walter's comment echoes a sense of respect that has been evident throughout this thesis, whether in regard to the musicians, the music, or the lyrics. Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers believe that the artwork was often as "critically revered" as the music within (Bennett and Rogers 2016 pp.31-2). Words and phrases typically used by Participants when commencing discussions on the artwork included "important", "very important", "so so so so important", "love", "absolutely love", and "amazing" up to "obsessed", "fascinated" and "captivated". For Phil:

> "You know it's almost a cliche to say about listening to the music with your headphones on and poring over the artwork, and there's the sleeve notes to read" (Phil)

Bill Martin says that "cover art played a key role in the development of progressive rock" (Martin 1998 p.154), and devotes some time to reviewing some of the key artworks. Prominence was afforded by participants to artwork associated with Yes (particularly Roger Dean), Hipgnosis, and specific albums such as *In the Court of the Crimson King* ("the cover to end all covers", Frank)*, Brain Salad Surgery, Tarkus, Tales From Topographic Oceans, Dark Side of the Moon,* and, surprisingly given its lack of general recognition in the literature (and participant comments on its musical quality) *The Pentateuch of the Cosmogony.* The latter owes its recognition not just because of the external and internal gatefold artwork, but also because of the story booklet that was included. The importance of gatefold sleeves was stressed by many participants. Hugh purchases "exclusive deluxe box sets" that are "ludicrously expensive" partly because they come with gatefold versions of the album.

The significance of the artwork, as works of art in their own right, was underscored by participant comments regarding how they would, to this day, still admire the album sleeve in its own right. As Robert says, "I mean that Tangram album, I still love looking at that, and the Peter Gabriel ones as well". Tynon Adamczewski has commented upon how the artwork became a 'cornerstone' in the discussion of "prog albums as art pieces" (Adamczewski 2018 p.187), and participants would also buy album artwork books (such as Dean's '*Views*'). Connor remarked upon buying two copies, so that one could be used to decorate his bedroom walls. Lily remarked how she has attended specific Roger Dean exhibitions. Whilst Connor, and a couple of other participants, remarked upon album art being used on bedroom walls, most did not comment

upon this. This could be seen as running somewhat contrary to Paul Stump's observation that it was not unknown for posters to outsell the records, and *Sounds*, from 1971, included 'Best Album Sleeve' in its list of annual awards (Stump 1997 p.91). It can be conjectured that poster buyers were not necessarily fans of the associated music, consumers for whom contextual elements were privileged over the text. This aspect of display, and spectacular nature, will be returned to in the next Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'.

For William the album artwork represented a "gateway to the music", for Hugh, "you knew it was an invitation, because it was attracting you in. That there was an appeal to the cover", and for Bruce it was an invitation "to be transported to a parallel universe". Participants regularly commented upon how Progressive rock allowed them interpretative possibilities, and this Chapter has covered the dynamic between lyrics and music in this regard. Artwork, as with William's 'gateway', was an integral component of this for them. Phil explicitly stated how for him "I don't just respond to the sound, there's a, I *imagine* visuals with music and I hear music in colours" (original emphasis). Milton spoke about *Relayer* and how he was "just imagining myself being in that kind of landscape that Roger Dean had created". His impression was that "the music seemed to fit the cover as well, which I'm sure Roger Dean was aiming for when he was doing that".

Participants clearly identified an intrinsic association, and the expression "part and parcel of the same package" was very frequently used. Steve commented upon how, with age, he spends more time considering, and increasingly appreciating, the linkages between the artwork and the music. Ash would spend time considering "what were the band trying to say?" with their particular choices, as it was routinely considered that the selection (or selections, if other ephemera were included) were intentional. Hugh commented on how he would, when listening to an album, see how much of the music was "reflected" in the art, and vice versa. For him, in his early listening years, "there *was* a definite theme between the art, the cover and the music and the story and the music" (original emphasis). Julie recounted how she spent considerable time wondering what meaning was associated with the cover of *Meddle*: "there's ripples on the back, could ripples be the liquid equivalent of sonic echoes? I don't know". Wayne enjoyed Mark Wilkinson's artwork for Marillion and teasing out detail within the covers, for instance the cross-cultural references on *Script for a Jester's Tear.* Walter talked about Derek Riggs' covers for Iron Maiden[27], and the between album linkages, the connections to album songs, and the differences

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[27] The correspondence between neo-prog and heavy metal is discussed in the Chapter 'Contextualization', and can be seen in the *Kerrang!* articles in editions 36 and 37 (February and March 1983 respectively).

between album and single artwork. Jay Keister and Jeremy Smith have commented how "the music, lyrics and album cover art of *Tarkus* were intended to be experienced as a whole" (Keister and Smith 2008 p.437). Macan refers to Wagner's *gesamtkunstwerk* in discussing the holistic interaction between music and artwork, how "music, visual motifs, and verbal expressions are inextricably intertwined to convey a coherent artistic vision", using a *bricolage* approach (Macan 1997 p.11).

The assumption that bands consciously deliberated over appropriate artwork led to a belief that this element should be treated with due respect. The ultimate in this regard was as described by Derek:

> "I always liked the idea that if you saw the *Going for the One* tour, you have the album with the triple gatefold sleeve, you had the programme, and that artwork was designed to fit in with that artwork and even the stage looks like, the patterns at the back of the stage looked like it, and I do like that idea of design being important to the group and I've always liked that. And of course, in the progressive years, that was a very prominent feature of the presentation" (Derek)

A dozen participants commented upon how they always pored over the sleeve-notes, to garner information and make connections. The subsequent Chapter, 'Mea Cultura', discusses how participants' knowledge, in their formative years, of other bands and albums was limited, as was their disposable income. The album cover was often a primary reason for deciding on purchase acquisitions. Jerry's comment is typical in this regard:

> "bands I'd never heard of I got just through the artwork, bands like Nectar and Eloy, 'cause I hadn't heard from anywhere else, I'd just pick one up and go 'it's £2.00, OK I'll give it a punt and hope for the best'" (Jerry)

William commented upon how you "could just tell prog albums" at that time. This comment is interesting in itself, with regards to identifiable image at a band or meta-genre level. Whilst Roger Dean is irrevocably linked to Yes in participants' minds, the band have used other artists (probably returning to him to signify a reconnection with their canonical sound). Pink Floyd had a long-lasting connection with Hipgnosis (born out of band members' academic backgrounds and early friendships with Hipgnosis' founders). However, of the other 'Big Six', Genesis, Jethro Tull, ELP, and King Crimson (until their relatively recent association with Francesca Sundsten), were not associated with any particular artists or design house over an extended period of time, or albums. William's comment therefore needs to be viewed through a meta-genre lens.

The album covers also represented participants' main route to knowledge acquisition. Trevor remarked upon how engineers such as Ken Scott would represent a 'kitemark of quality' for him. Others scoured the cover to understand what instrumentation was being used, the length of the

tracks, and the track titles, the names of engineers and producers, as well as main or guest musicians, to help them discern the likely level of 'progressiveness'. For David:

> "the gatefold sleeve, lyrics and who produced it, who wrote it, made the album far more interesting… you get information on the sleeve, which was associated with the record, so you felt like you were being drawn into, you're getting information so you felt part of the record, more than just listening to a piece of music, if, you know what I mean, does that make sense?" (David)

Given the role that the artwork played for participants, it was not surprising that a significant number of them made disparaging remarks about CDs, and the absence of artwork (and also, if included, how the lyrics were illegible to elderly eyes). Phil spoke for other participants with how he gets:

> "really fed up when the band puts out a really terrible piece of artwork; you spent months recording an album and you put it out with a terrible, it doesn't matter if it's only available online, I want a beautiful piece of artwork to look at, that really captures what the music is about […] It's interesting how people don't see it in the same way anymore, cause it's become dislocated. But to me it's an important part of our understanding of music" (Phil)

Phil's comment reinforces points already made in this Chapter regarding the inter-relationship of aspects associated with the consumption practice, and the nature of the respect that they afford these, and expect to see reciprocated.

Lily commented upon how she observes students at gigs purchasing vinyl rather than CDs, indicating, for her, an appreciation that they realize that they are "missing out" otherwise. Two of the younger participants are professional musicians, and explained how they need to consider how to augment their music with either visuals, or possibly with producing vinyl copies, so as to attract a wider audience. Some technological advancements were also seen in a positive light: for Jenna, it enabled her to seek out, and incorporate into her listening device, the associated artwork to add to her streaming service experience; for Steve, he would simultaneously watch concert footage and or project artwork whilst listening to particular albums; and for Ewan, it allows him to generate appropriate artwork for his own personally curated 'mixtapes'. However, the attraction of videos was largely disparaged. Focus Groups 1 and 3 in particular discussed this, and their discussions were representative of participants' overall views. Ian drew a comparison between albums and books, and asked:

> "How many books have you read that have been turned into films where you think the film has added to what you had in your mind? Count them on one hand I suppose" (Ian)

To which the others readily agreed. Videos were compared to film versions of books, and likewise how rarely directors' interpretations accorded with personal expectations. It was felt that videos would fail to do justice to the 'imaginary worlds and journeys' that participants had

created for themselves. Mark suggested that they had some small benefit; he would watch video 'tasters' from contemporary bands to assess their attractiveness, however they would be in digital form and not retained.

Opinions of the relative importance of the artwork vis-à-vis the music was roughly equally divided. For some participants, the artwork and the music were jointly important, and for some the artwork was a close but distinct second. For no-one did the artwork's importance outweigh the music. As Geoff said, "It would be sort of a bonus or an icing on the cake". Its intrinsic, subliminal importance is reflected in Walter's comment.

> "I don't think the artwork is important and I don't think the package is important, but it definitely is important, isn't it [laughs], because otherwise I wouldn't be so passionate about, you know, sitting down and reading through sleeve-notes and that kind of thing. So yeah. I don't think I've considered, I don't, I've not considered that it's important to me because it's got to be there, but I certainly love it. Am I offering too many contradictions this afternoon? [laughs]" (Walter)

Regarding discussion of the artwork with other fans, participants' views were mixed, and broadly analogous to their discussion of the music in the round. That is, not to a significant degree (see Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'). Nicholas Cook suggested that record sleeves were "part of the discursive framework within which the music inside is consumed" (Cook cited in Volgsten 1999 p.148). If so, participants' views indicate that the discursive framework is internally vocalized, consistent with the latter Chapter's findings. As Tim said, "if you bought something, you would study the packaging in great detail. Discuss it? No, not with anybody".

In conclusion, the points raised above by other commentators are supported by this research. However, this research finds that the extent to which participants valued the artwork is emphasized to a degree beyond that conveyed by other authors. Furthermore, the reasons for this valorization are more wide-ranging than that conveyed by a relatively simple reference to *gesamtkunstwerk*. The utility of album artwork in informing purchase decisions, acting as a key information source, and enhancing and complementing the private journey that the music afforded are all salient factors. Participants' views on videos as 'alternative artwork' underscore the rationale to reconsider the importance of this aspect of the overall Progressive rock music-meaning experience. As a recurring theme throughout this thesis, contextual elements, in various forms, play a role in an overall appreciation of Progressive rock for participants; however, these contextual aspects never assume primacy over the text.

4.2.4 Virtuosity and Pretension

> "I didn't see it as pretentious; I saw it as clever and interesting and absorbing" (Nigel)

In this sub-section, both pretension[28] and virtuosity[29] will be reviewed. These are examined in tandem as they are often paired in critical discourse regarding Progressive rock[30]. Participants were not unaware of the charges of pretension and pomposity that have been levelled at Progressive rock, and its musicians. This sub-section builds upon observations made in this Chapter's previous sub-section on 'Depth and Complexity', and presages discussion on the live environment to come (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura').

It was clear that musicians' virtuosity, or musicianship, was highly appreciated. Words used to describe the musicians and their abilities included "excellence", "awe inspiring", "exceptional", "fascinating", "amazing", "superb", "mind-blowing", "fantastic", "*profound* admiration", "craftsmanship", "adoration", and "stunningly special". Participants were eager to provide examples via specific tracks, or passages of them. The ability of musicians with high levels of musicianship to take compositions to another level, and to continually captivate participants during complex pieces, especially of extended duration, was one of the value markers of this musical style. Participants drew a correspondence with Progressive rock in the round, and some Progressive rock bands particularly, with the need for virtuosic musicianship such that compelling artistic visions could be brought to life (although, as will be seen, simplicity was also valued). As Daniel commented:

> "you have to be a capable musician to be able to keep up with it all, and especially live, to make it fit together into a coherent song, because if you haven't got the musical chops then it's likely to not be any good when you listen to it. It'd be like a tractor driver in a Formula 1 car" (Daniel)

In Focus Group 1, Hugh discussed how, for him, the opening of 'Gates of Delirium' had:

> "at least two different melodies, probably three or four [chuckle], and yet somehow, they are all virtuoso musicians, that they blend together perfectly" (Hugh)

and how only a band like Yes could achieve that. The 'blending' such that it appears seamless was also witnessed in Nigel's comment regarding how the level of musicianship wasn't apparent until a greater understanding of their abilities was attained:

> "when I was younger, I didn't really think about it as musicianship, right, because I didn't really understand it and I wasn't playing at the time and or I was very, very young, but I didn't really understand musicianship and I think I've got an appreciation of musicianship through being a musician, because I understand how bloody hard it is... bands like Gentle Giant and Genesis, and Yes, Van der Graaf, ... you just suddenly go, 'Do you know what?

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[28] Pretentiousness: "trying to appear important, intelligent, etc. in order to impress other people", www.oxfordreference.com accessed 25th February, 2022.

[29] Virtuosity: "a performance of exceptional technical accomplishment", www.oxfordreference.com accessed 25th February, 2022.

[30] The charges of 'self-indulgence' and 'pretentiousness' by music critics, and other authors, are noted (see Martin (1998); Macan (1997); and Hegarty and Halliwell (2011).

> The musicianship is absolutely superb. The technical ability of these people is superb'"
> (Nigel)

In Focus Group 5 Daniel (as did Klaus, separately) talked about how Progressive rock's sense of no boundaries, allied to musicianship, enabled "outer fringes of music" to be explored, which were similar to Robert's "virgin territories". Keister and Smith have stated that "progressive rock is the only [popular music style] characterized by its musical ambition" (Keister and Smith 2008 p.434). Whether this monopoly is quite as the authors state it, the germane point is that participants did attribute this to progressive rock. This exploratory nature, and musical ability, led participants commenting upon how this facility enabled a level of unpredictability, and surprise, that was the hallmark of attraction for them.

Bands and artists that received particular praise were Yes, Van der Graaf Generator, Gentle Giant, Genesis, Pink Floyd (for their studio mastery and creativity, not their instrumental musicianship), King Crimson, Rush, ELP, Keith Emerson, Robert Fripp, Bill Bruford, Rick Wakeman, David Gilmour, and Gavin Harrison. Instrumental virtuosity at the individual level is stressed by Eric Hung, who de-emphasizes the importance of the lyrics, and by extension the stories that they tell, and instead draws attention to the "the surprising sounds, the sudden stylistic shifts, and the stunning virtuosity of the performers" (Hung 2005 p.257) [31]. This virtuosity, according to Hung, enabled musicians to stand out[32], such that their playing was, essentially, instantly recognisable. In this vein, Jerry referred to his enjoyment of Tangerine Dream and Camel, noting their relative lack of technical ability, however it was their distinctive sound, that which Moore refers to as idiolect, that made them attractive. Stump cites Carl Palmer as an example of one of many such 'signature players', who were able to demonstrate the individuality which characterized what "Progressive was all about" (Stump 1997 p.344).

It is noticeable that King Crimson are mentioned above, however they were largely excluded from participants' appreciation of Progressive Rock bands, typically on the grounds of them being 'a bit too complex', yet they, or their musicians, featured heavily in this focus area. Bruce captured what many felt, noting how he does "struggle a little bit with King Crimson, but the sort of genius that Robert Fripp has, that, you know you know it is *real* musicianship" (original emphasis). This aspect will be returned to during the discussion on canonicity in the Chapter, 'The Progressive Paradox'. At the band level, and *contra* Hung's emphasis, Charlie, Charles,

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[31] Readers are reminded of the variety of views regarding the importance of lyrics, with participants largely believing them to be more important than typically represented in the literature.
[32] Hung privileges ELP in his analysis, and Colin spent some time discussing an ELP concert when the power failed, and Keith Emerson was able to entertain the crowd with an 'hour-long' extemporized piano playing exhibition.

Alexander, Klaus, Steve, and Colin, most forcefully commented upon collective virtuosity, and the ability to introduce and meld a wide variety of styles. Several participants commented in generally awe-struck terms about the band dynamic that would allow this fecundity to continue, even if only for a few albums.

With regard to noting some of the excesses with this music, some, such as Jerry, could dissect canonical albums and their "significant missteps", such as within *Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* and *Fragile,* and identify areas of 'irrelevancy' and 'flab'. Derek spent some time describing, and lauding, in some detail the competences of King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, and ELP before commenting upon:

> "their ludicrousness, they're, all these bands have got ludicrous aspects. But I think ELP go way over the top with that you know. And whereas, you know, they've all got, you know, I, I know these groups, particularly those four I've just mentioned so well now, I do know what the flaws are" (Derek)

ELP, as a group, and as individuals, in particular attracted a very varied response. In terms of more negative observations: the 'three lorries across America' overhead shot[33] was cited as an example of "bloatedness" by Sophie, as was *Welcome Back My Friends…* by Daniel. Keith Emerson was critiqued for "excessive noodling", with comments along the lines of Tim's, "never mind the song, just listen to the musicianship". Daniel commented that "you almost had to know the language before you understood what was happening". Rick Wakeman and Steve Howe were also singled out for similar habits, although both also were praised by others. Some inconsistencies with regards to what constitutes the 'right amount, but not too much' virtuosity on display, or the factors germane to analysis, was evident in participants' reflections, that upon challenge they were unable to substantiate. For instance, Phil explained his strong dislike of *Night at the Opera* for being' too pompous' and taking itself too seriously, whilst recognizing the contradictions due to his love of Utopia and Davie Bowie. Ultimately for Phil, the distinction was down to not 'feeling the need to press your genius', and "knowing when to stop" (*Discipline*-era King Crimson was cited as a good case in point):

> "I don't see sophistication as actually being able to *show* your knowledge through some kind of intense display, sophistication is showing the knowledge through a small display, a tiny display" (Phil, original emphasis)

Focus Group 1 discussed 'Echoes', of which the "quality of it is the vision and the imagery and the imagination and the timing" (Hugh), with others agreeing that relative simplicity can also be effective. Several others commented upon the merits of playing one note perfectly, as opposed

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[33] From their 1976/'77 tour.

to 'shredding'. For Miguel[34], Dream Theater, and especially the drum interplay by Mike Mangini, could feel too much like "a math problem" at times. Ash suggested that it was important to avoid having musicians whose *raison d'être* appeared to be based upon convincing the audience that his solo was "almost impossible for anyone else to either conceive of, or certainly play". These comments indicate that virtuosity can be seen through various lenses: technical spectacular ability, but also, the genius that lies in simplicity, and also the skill to evoke an incredible emotion – Bruce referred to how David Gilmour's 'Comfortably Numb' solo took him to a 'higher plane'. (Aspects associated with transcendence will be discussed in the next Chapter, 'Mea Cultura').

Jazz music was typically cited in cautionary terms as an example of how 'noodling' and endless soloing could be taken to undesirable extremes. As with Miguel's 'math problem', Tim commented that listening to jazz sometimes felt as if he needed "three years of musical training", and his over-riding emotion at the end of the pieces could be, simply, "so what?". For Oliver, the key was that there was "feel" to the music, and in a similar vein Walter commented that:

> "one of the criticisms of jazz is it could be incredibly indulgent, to the point where it's unlistenable, but I don't find that with prog very often. There's always something in there. It's got *heart*" (Walter, original emphasis)

Connor observed how for jazz fusion, virtuosity was by design, whereas for Progressive rock, virtuosity was by necessity:

> "I'm pretty certain Robert Fripp didn't aim to be a virtuoso guitarist when he started out, and same as Bill Bruford 'cause he was a jazz player. But the complexity of the music kind of lead them that way and they had to get better in order to deliver it live" (Connor)

This necessity refers back to Daniel's 'tractor driver in an F1' comment, and how virtuosity was not an end in itself, but a means to an end, that of creating inspirational, exciting music. This perspective was also borne out by other participants, reinforcing the importance of the music. Not every band nor every musician was required to be a virtuoso, or display virtuosic abilities all the time. As Scott said, "[t]hey don't all need to be kinda virtuosos. But I enjoy it some more when they're impressive", Walter commented "I don't go and see somebody necessarily because, you know, they're an incredible musician. They've got to perform incredible music I think, to attract me", and Murray said

> "I don't think I ever thought about it. I just, it wasn't something like 'well, I can't like that band 'cause they're not good musicians'" (Murray)

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[34] Miguel is a South American professional musician, and keen fan of Dream Theater.

Hegarty and Halliwell have stated that for Progressive rock, virtuosity is not a pre-requisite, nor is it required (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.10). They suggest that the issue is a "vexed one", and suggest that the question is whether virtuosity hindered or helped musical creativity. They suggest that two main issues exist with regard to the emphasis on this: firstly, virtuosity was "praised for its own existence", and that there arose an increasing sense that personal technique could override band creativity and secondly, that it was not true that the texts had or required very skilled musicians (ibid. pp.9-10). On this latter point, the lack of musical virtuosity within Pink Floyd is largely agreed upon, however, Martin suggests that, for example, *Wish You Were Here* could not have been improved upon by the presence of more accomplished musicians (Martin 1998 pp.102-3). Participants' comments demonstrate that they were cognizant and appreciative of these elements.

Virtuosity and creativity are not identical. Of the early authors, Macan dedicates most time to a discussion on virtuosity. He categorizes it in terms of instrumental, metrical, compositional (e.g., concept albums), and electronic/technological virtuosity (Macan 1997 pp.46-51). He considers the first two elements to be 'preoccupations' (ibid. p.13) and compares Progressive rock's embrace of virtuosity with the flamboyance of Romantically-inspired musicians.

Martin differentiates between virtuosity and creativity:

> "a virtuoso has great ability on his or her instrument, the ability to play music at any level of difficulty, and therefore a very broad and deep *vocabulary* with his or her instrument (or voice)" (Martin 2015 p.43)

whereas creativity is expressed where musicians (or artists) can produce an innovative range of cultural artefacts, without necessarily having significant musical, or other, ability. Likewise, musical virtuosi are not axiomatically creative, although they will have the ability to reproduce works created by artists across a very broad range of styles. Participants were seen to be, at times, conflating virtuosity with creativity. What was clear, was that the end result was the determinant of quality, not the route by which it was achieved. As can be seen, virtuosity was welcomed, although not as an end in itself. Robert Walser, in his study of heavy metal, which has been shown to be analogous in some regards (see Chapter 3, 'A Contextualization), noted that:

> "[s]ome might find virtuosity inherently distracting or elitist, since it is a sensational display of exceptional individual power. But for many others, virtuosi are the most effective articulators of a variety of social fantasies and musical pleasures" (Walser and Berger 2014 p.76)

Participants to only a limited degree, as indicated here, found virtuosity 'distracting', and did not frame it as elitist (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'). Virtuosi were seen, by Walser, as effective

articulators of 'musical pleasures', although not exclusively, and social fantasies are considered to be more relevant to heavy metal[35] than Progressive rock. Also, heavy metal is a genre that privileges the lead guitarist as a virtuoso. Progressive rock's virtuosi were drawn from a wider musical spectrum, with guitarists, keyboard players, bass guitarists, and percussionists all being recognised for their ability. Also, crucially, there was an appreciation of virtuosity at the group, as well as at the individual level. (With regards to 'social fantasies', see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura').

Regardless of origin, motivation, or reception, both creativity and innovation, as Jason Toybee suggests, can be found "either in incremental differences made by musicians within distinct generic fields or by forging unlikely combinations of possibles between musical paradigms" (Toynbee cited in Albiez 2003 p.364). This reference to pan-paradigmatic combinations raises the question of whether, since Progressive rock's basis "is an increase in musical vocabulary, often propelled by a high level of instrumental skill" (Martin 1997 p.90), it is the definitionally innovative music style *par excellence*.

By contrast to jazz, where musicianship was seen to be an end in itself (albeit to Progressive-rock fandom ears), classical music was referenced in positive terms. Frank, Fred, and Rebecca, suggested that no-one would criticize, for example, the lead violinist in an orchestra for aspiring to higher levels of musicianship, and drew parallels with Progressive rock musicians. Fred referenced Beethoven's later works, and characterized them along similar lines to some Progressive rock works, and queried why no-one considered the former to be "overblown and pompous". Derek discussed how the ideology of Progressive rock was rooted in progression and evolution, therefore aspiration to higher levels of musicianship and virtuosity were an axiomatic constituent element (echoing Connor's above point). He provided an example of a David Bowie interview, wherein Bowie stated that pretension made life and music more interesting. Another analogy drawn by several participants was to sport: Trevor commented that people attend sports events to see the best possible athletes; and Fred suggested that it was better to aspire, and try - that a game with near misses, and a few goals for and against, was far better than a "boring nil-all draw". Given the comments above regarding Keith Emerson sometimes being guilty of over-indulgence, it is instructive to hear other comments welcoming his laudable aspiration. Steve positively recalls him in an interview, appearing down to earth and humble

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[35] The emphasis on virtuosity arising out of the late psychedelic movement of the 1960s, influenced the heavy metal bands more than Progressive rock ones, according to Macan (Macan 1997 p.46). Hegarty and Halliwell suggest that parallels between heavy metal's and Progressive rock's respective declines in their timelines can be seen in their tendency towards "inflated virtuosity" when playing in large stadia (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.259).

rather than arrogant, and stating "he just says, well, I just wanted to be a composer and do my best". Alan offered this perspective:

> "Keith Emerson was actually trying to bridge high culture and popular culture, and I think the others were too. It was expressing fairly complex music in a popular form, and it was therefore bringing, you know, classical music to the masses, and that, it's one of the reasons I kind of got more into classical music" (Alan)

More broadly, reflecting on the meta-genre, Derek queried:

> "Is the alternative having musicians who are scared to say anything, and scared to go beyond three minutes, you know? In a way, if you try and reach beyond what you've done before and try to go into a new area that scares you, you are being a bit pretentious, aren't you I suppose? But it's had such terrible results, but brilliant results as well, and I'd rather those things happened than didn't" (Derek)

Derek's, and others' views, can be seen to echo Lambé's quote that "without ambition, virtuosity has no purpose" (Lambé 2011 p.13). Consistent with these views, Robert viewed musicians' aspirations through a lens of authenticity: "authenticity. You know these people were not posing… I mean they were, but they weren't posing at being good musicians". Colin commented how bands, such as ELP, had the musical ability to compose and produce whatever type of music they wished, and therefore their rejection of blatantly commercial, lucrative music was a demonstration of their integrity and the antithesis of pretension.

Charges of pretension and pomposity were also met by counter-arguments of 'naïveté', 'jealousy', listeners' inability to comprehend, and prejudice. However, some participants did reflect on how some musicians could come across as pretentious, although a distinction was drawn between their personal style and their music. However, the majority reflected on how unpretentious the musicians appeared to be in the interviews that they recalled. In Focus Group 2 Philippe noted that other people and musical styles are pretentious too. Colin suggested that '17-year-olds in hoodies shuffling onto stages in carefully chosen t-shirts' are being pretentious, and Derek suggested that Lily Allen's pretence of writing her own songs made her as guilty as any Progressive rock band, if not more so. As Stump argues, the singling out of Progressive rock for its alleged faults of aspiration are inappropriate. The stage sets and artistic reach behind Progressive rock bands' stage sets were, at the very least, matched by U2's *Zoo TV* tour. Progressive rock's alleged self-indulgence and excess are routinely rivalled by modern-day rock corporatism, "and yet these analogies are never drawn" (Stump 1997 p.346).

Trevor's view was that a lack of musical education, compounded by the difficulty of it being "music you can't dance to", rendered it pretentious in the eyes of the uneducated and closed general listening public. For Klaus, the music is simply "too much for them to understand […] I think it's like classical music or it's like literature which is complex" and people won't invest the

time to see past their preconceptions. As Mike Barnes notes, whilst the pejorative charge of 'self-indulgence' was prevalent in the music press by the "back-to-basics brigade", for others it can be seen from a "different angle, it can just as easily be synonymous with risk-taking, experimentation, boundary-pushing and unfettered self-expression" (Barnes 2020 p.35). As Laura Vroomen notes, whilst for some Kate Bush could be seen as self-indulgent, this is the antithesis to pretension, her pursuit of perfection is a demonstration of an honest approach (Vroomen 2002 p.247). Participants' views support Barnes' and Vroomen's points.

One interesting slant on this overall debate was provided by Nigel. He observed how he didn't perceive Progressive rock music to be pretentious because there was so little social interaction regarding reception of the music, and therefore no comparators were being evidenced by peers, or others. He was able to consume and appreciate the music purely in affordance terms.

From a lifecourse perspective, most participants' views had not seemed to significantly change. Whilst Wayne, who is in the minority, looked back and found some of it somewhat naïve and could see "the weaknesses", he still noted that "when it's good, it's still really good". Others such as Steve and Nigel found that with age, a greater appreciation of the difficulties associated with composing and producing the music gave them renewed respect for it.

Discussions concerning *Tales from Topographic Oceans* probably best exemplified the role and importance of virtuosity for participants. As summarized by Alan:

> "you can see why people would call that kind of overblown and pretentious. But then, you know, it was there to be done, and someone got to do it. And I think Yes were possibly the only band that could have possibly done it" (Alan)

It was this ability to strive for, and more often than not, achieve something unique and aspirational that characterizes Progressive rock, and its musicians, that was evident in the interviews. For participants, Progressive rock music isn't valued because the musicians are "trying to appear important, intelligent, etc. in order to impress other people", i.e., susceptible to a charge of pretension, it is valued for the musicians being seen to be true to themselves and delivering 'stunningly special' music. Ultimately, for participants, this was another example of the foregrounding of the music in their evaluations: as Milton said, "I think they play for the love of the music and to get that love across to the audience", and as Nigel concluded:

> "if you don't like that sort of stuff, then it's pretentious. As soon as you get into it, it's not pretentious, you know, and it is just people's reaction to art" (Nigel)

4.3 Conclusion

In this Chapter, and as will be seen throughout this thesis, various recurring themes were interwoven throughout participants' discussions and reflections, and resultant analyses.

One recurring theme in this Chapter was in regard to the perceived intellectual nature of Progressive rock in its breadth and depth. This thesis finds that this depth presents a challenge for participants so as to understand and grasp the range of interpretative possibilities, both inherent within the music, and via their own ascribed explications. This challenge leads to participants repeatedly re-listening to texts to a degree beyond that suggested by the 'inverted-u' theory. This thesis finds that participants believe that the music retains its freshness due to this perceived depth, that new meanings and twists can be discerned, and that opportunities exist for explorations along many dimensions. Participants equate this challenge with Progressive rock music, and believe that the investment required so as to fully appreciate it is an investment that is repaid. It is understood and accepted that some music will be beyond immediate appreciation, however perseverance will reap benefits. This accords with 'adaptation level theory' in regards to musical complexity, and this thesis finds that this is a positive spiral for participants and leads to them (further) distancing themselves from music considered shallower, at least in affordance terms. However, there is an upper limit for participants, and King Crimson were seen as representing that for a significant number. The dynamics associated with this are an area for further research. The intellectual nature of Progressive rock was also borne out in discussions related to lyrics, and paratexts, where participants were eager to discern the meaning behind choices made by the musicians and or determine meanings for themselves. This thesis finds that these elements contribute to a sense of respect accorded by participants to Progressive rock, and this is one of the distinguishing features of it vis-à-vis other musical styles.

Another dimension to this intellectualization is the allusions drawn to literature and classical music. This thesis finds that these are seen in consistently positive terms, and are used as rationale for consumption practices such as immersive listening, the listening unit on a "all or nothing" basis, the interconnectedness of affordance elements, and the aspiration to follow your muse: better to strive for the (possibly) unattainable than settle for mediocrity. However, classical music was seen as just one amongst many styles of music, and did not represent a 'locus' in terms of a musical reference point.

Another recurring theme was one of personal meaning-making. Building upon the above point, this thesis finds that the music, the 'text', retains primacy for participants over 'contextual'

elements. The music, whether complemented by lyrics or not, allows participants to "disappear" into it, to "lose themselves" and be "transported" to other worlds. This thesis finds that this immersion aspect applies pan-generationally, and is *contra* Lilliestam's findings. Paratexts, such as videos, need to be consistent with participants' own imaginings, and this is frequently unachievable. The concept album is seen as the 'ur-album' in this regard, and its reception, both through participants' perspectives and more broadly, represents a crystallization of Progressive rock: its positive aspects and its negative ones are mirrored. Where a story (or underlying concept) could be discerned, then participants would routinely laud the result, however, this thesis also finds that structural and philosophical issues are in play, and that the concept album premise has fault-lines not generally appreciated.

With regards to the album art aspect of paratexts, this thesis finds that the reasons for valorization generally recognized in the extant literature are underplayed when viewed through participants' eyes: the intellectual challenge as noted above; the "gateway" and "invitation" aspects in agentic world creation; its role as a purchasing decision aid; and as an information source (particularly in the era when most participants were first engaging with the music); and the lyric sheet. With specific regards to the lyrics, participants' views on lyricists were nuanced, to a degree beyond summary views normally seen, and consistent with Greasley's and Lamont's observation. This thesis finds that Ahlkvist's, Lambé's, and Gracyk's views are not supported, as appreciation of and engagement with the lyrics was more important to the participants than that otherwise suggested. The symbiosis between the lyrics and the musical accompaniment was noted, and their joint role, albeit that the music is ultimately privileged, was stressed, in accordance with Griffiths's 'rare position'. This thesis finds that this deserves greater recognition and analysis, and proposes that the inherent nature of Progressive rock music, with greater compositional latitude being afforded to all band members (and external lyricists where used), represents an opportunity to gain insights into lyrical elements not otherwise possible in most other genres.

With regards to virtuosity, this thesis finds that virtuosity for its own sake, and its own ends, was not appreciated, and virtuosity could also be seen in achieving simplicity. Virtuosity was praised, respected, and revered, and more emphasis was placed on this at band as well as individual level than routinely noted in the extant literature. However, as with other 'contextual elements' he had to be in service to the music and its needs. Comparisons were made to jazz music, and this thesis finds that virtuosity was seen as arising in Progressive rock by necessity, whereas in jazz it was by design.

In summary of all the above, the various dimensions that are seen to be intrinsic to Progressive rock by participants, and the levels upon which it generates meaning for them over the decades, represent a degree of complexity that is of inherent interest to them. The pan-paradigmatic combinations suggest that it is the definitionally innovative popular music meta-genre *par excellence.*

5   Chapter 5: 'Mea Cultura'

5.1   Introduction

In this Chapter, participants' lived experiences of their engagement with, and enjoyment of, Progressive rock will be explored through socio-cultural lenses. The term 'mea cultura' as a Chapter heading, and leitmotif for the interwoven sections, has been proposed, so as to signify individual, rather than wider societal, approaches to understanding music appreciation and the valorisation of music artefacts and history. This formulation arises from participant accounts, which offer compelling new perspectives on consumption practices which do not always accord with extant theories. Historically, spectacular aspects of music fandom have been privileged, and "the actual mundane acts of listening to music has mostly been ignored" (Brown and Sellen 2006 p.38).

Key aspects that will be examined through participants' perspectives will include:

- the listening environment, demonstrating the private nature of listening and engagement
- the live environment, within which setting domestic listening practices are largely replicated
- the collecting practice, which is conducted for personal non-spectacular reasons
- elitism, and participants' reflections on their level of musical appreciation
- fashion and display, with text assuming primacy over context and environment
- the media, and its relatively minor influence in participants' determination of aesthetic value
- socialization practices, and the secondary role that they played.

Socio-cultural formations evolve over time, and participants' reflections on their association with Progressive rock reflected this. Attachments were formed to certain bands, although these were not hagiographic in nature, and participants were able to self-discern whether the affordance was still of value to them. This is partially evidenced in the following:

> "Jethro Tull, I actually walked out the last time I went to that because Ian Anderson, he just can't sing anymore" (Walter)

> "I know over time things will grow and I'll enjoy them in different ways so I don't ever think, oh, you know, you let me down, that kind of stuff, that's *absolutely* not the case" (Jeremy, original emphasis)

> "because I like to think I'm so open minded and every band has ups and downs in their creative lifecycle…it was a case of just accepting it for what it was and realizing they can't hit it every time" (Randy)

In essence, participants' attachments were rooted more at the meta-genre level, than necessarily, beyond question, to any one band, although preferences were clearly in evidence ("they were my band"). Whilst all participants volunteered on the basis of their self-declared fandom of Progressive rock, each was prepared to identify how this fandom was delimited in some way: "I'm quite critical of a lot of Prog, generally speaking" (Jerry). Discussions on these aspects were non-confrontational and non-hierarchical, although this did not preclude spirited debate over the merits of certain bands (and albums, and tracks, etc..). Neither did it deter participants from being open to the merits of 'other peoples' bands'. An attachment to a band frequently underwent changes over the band's lifecourse. In Focus Group 6, Frank explained how he was so disappointed with Yes's *The Quest*, that he was moved to write a letter to *Prog* magazine, only to hold off sending it:

> "I just thought I'm such a huge Yes fan, and they've given me so much pleasure over the last 50 years, I just don't want to go into print criticizing them" (Frank)

This positively inclined, non-critical, accepting stance was echoed by many. Several participants commented upon how their favourite artists were not many years older than them when they were composing and releasing the music. This appeared to generate a form of attachment in the sense of how their growth and development was seen as mirroring that which the participants felt. Mirroring their own developments with bands, and band members, is another dimension to a participant's own 'mea cultura'.

With the range of participants' ages, it was possible to gain a sense of enduring, or otherwise, attachments, and how these have altered through the lifecourse. Oliver spoke for many when he commented that, once invested in Progressive rock, "it never really leaves you". Tonya Anderson notes that there are "few academic accounts of research on lifelong fandom" and that for her, in keeping with the fans in her study, societal pressures led to a dulling of her fannish tendencies upon entering adulthood, although "I never fully let go" (Anderson 2012 p.16). David Leaver and Ruth Schmidt suggest that such enduring attachment is partially a result of investment that is made at an early age. They situate the investing of time, energy and resources via "symbolically and ritually manifested commitments" in engaging with the music star, related artefacts, and significant destinations. They propose that these practices "show a strong desire for interaction with like-minded people, generating a sense of 'communitas' through shared consumption" (Leaver and Schmidt 2010 p.111). Leaver and Schmidt's analysis receives very limited support from participants. Turners' communitas, and its ritualistic connotations will be

discussed shortly, and artefacts play an ambiguous role over the lifecourse. Whilst music venues hold some nostalgia value, there is little attachment to significant destinations as evidenced by other genre's associations with place, e.g., Graceland, Liverpool, Nashville, or, in Progressive rock's case, Canterbury[1].

Although clear parallels exist with 'bedroom culture' on some levels, the evidence of 'fan attachment' to a Progressive rock music star is limited to musicianship aspects. Again, noting the primacy of the music over contextual elements, when the music is deemed to hold less aesthetic value, then participants are not constrained by unquestioning loyalty. Whilst the majority of participants valorized the music and the musicians for their progression, clearly there were lines being drawn as to what represented a 'true and authentic' progression, and that which didn't, even if the rationale behind those drawn lines wasn't clear.[2] Attachments are formed and conducted at a private level, and are claimed to be personally driven, rather than by others' views or conventional dogma. The referential system developed and deployed by participants serves a teleological purpose, supporting participants' own, rather than others', 'mea cultura'.

5.2 The Listening Experience

> "if you were going out to a disco or something, you listen to the same music as everybody else, but this was sort of music that you probably would listen to on your own. You wouldn't go out and hear it anywhere else" (Susie)

> "I liked to listen to music rather than have music on" (Walter)

This Section commences with an understanding of participants' listening practices, so as to situate their preferred modes of consumption, and to gain insights into what listening to this music means for them, and how it achieved these effects. Rosemary Hill notes how fandom research, and theorization, largely privileges "outdoor and public" fandom, and this becomes the dominant representation. For Hill, "private activities are more integral to a passionate engagement with music than has hitherto been theorized" (Hill 2014 p.5). Hill's contribution is to draw attention to female fandom in public and private spheres, and does not address private male fandom. The majority of the participants to this research were male, and provide unique insights. Of the participants, two-thirds actively discussed their listening experience. Of these, three-quarters clearly stated that their listening environment was private, mostly at home

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[1] The importance of geographically scene-based theories will be discussed later in this Chapter.
[2] Yes post *Drama*, Genesis post *Wind and Wuthering*, and Rush post *Moving Pictures* received the most negative comment.

(although in later years, in the car), solo, or occasionally in a group setting. In this latter case, whilst there was a range of responses, they tended towards private listening with minimal intra-group interaction. The following quotes give some insight into this:

> "I'd say mostly on my own I would've thought…. you mostly just listen to this stuff on your own…. […] but there were a few occasions when you go around and mates' houses and stick a record on and have a listen, but I think that was a little bit later on" (Jerry)

> "we would mostly listen to it, and would we talk about what? well I'm trying to think if we had discussions about it. Usually it was just that we liked it" (Charles)

> "I think it was more personal and more contemplative, to be honest with you" (Walter)

Ash noted that whilst there would be a group of, at most, "two or three", it was a quiet experience, and for him the strength of his memory was evidence of his focussed attention. When asked about the level of interaction, Alexander reflected that:

> "It's an interesting thing though, because when you actually raise it, I'm not absolutely sure how and why, and what happened" (Alexander)

Of those that did comment, there was approximately a 50/50 split between those for whom there was some degree of interaction, and those that had none. Regarding discussion of the music, for Nigel, Susie, Steve, Matt, Randy, and Jenna it was simply "just not something we did". Jenna commented that, as music is so personal, you would have to feel very comfortable with discussing what it meant, "because it does feel like you're opening yourself up for ridicule". Within Focus Group 6, Barry commented upon the potential benefits of being able to discuss music attraction. However, for him, as well as having few people to talk to about it, other musical genres attracted personalities that he considered less "enjoyable", and their emphasis on "trendy" music led to him excluding himself from any music-centric discussion, essentially as he felt he couldn't be true to himself. These participants' experiences all underscore the personal listening habits discussed earlier in this Chapter. These perspectives also reinforce how participants, either through necessity or choice, would develop their own appreciation of Progressive rock at a personal cultural level.

Randy shared his difficult experiences of trying to engage others:

> "almost every friend I turned the music over to and have them listen, very few times then did anybody, ever, on any music I ever played, show any real interest in what kind of music I was playing, so it's like I was the MC of my own little domain and they were fine with what I was choosing, whatever it was" (Randy)

In a similar vein, Frank mentioned that he would make "mash-up CDs" for others, and then reflected that quite often they would be solely for his own use.

Participants are used to, and comfortable with, a lack of external approval. Miguel, a professional musician, was aware that whilst friends and family wanted to support him, and "it would be nice" if they enjoyed the music as much as him, they don't and he is at ease with that. During the same Focus Group discussion, Barry commented that it is important to share ideas, however Progressive rock appreciation was too "niche" for this to happen very often. Regarding the likelihood of introducing new people into the appreciation circle, Ian commented on how this has not worked for him:

> "Number of times I've tried to say 'just have a listen to this piece', and you just see the glare midway through the bit where you're really getting into it and no, to me it's personal, and if somebody else gets it brilliant but… no" (Ian)

A similarity was seen with one of Laura Vroomen's respondents, Liz, who commented that she is:

> "so used to being the island that I don't really think about it that much anymore. I have sort of been an oddball when it comes to taste & have always liked artists – musicians or actors or authors – that most of my friends have never heard of or were not interested in"

and therefore, her opportunities for sharing were very limited, and her perspective had not changed with the advent of on-line communities (for a discussion of this aspect, see Chapter, 'Progressive Paradox').

Miguel noted how he anticipated a low level of interest:

> "I always say 'it's progressive rock, I know it's not for most people, it's for a reduced amount of people that enjoy it, so I know you might not like it. It's heavy'. So I already come in with that idea that the most probable thing is that he doesn't like progressive rock. And it's OK, I already set my mind to know that it's for a small group of people. They will enjoy it and *they really enjoy* it" (Miguel, original emphasis).

When Frank mentioned, in Focus Group 5, that nowadays, occasionally a friend of his takes an interest, and they engage in discussion, both Paul and Daniel reacted. Paul wistfully commented that he wished he had someone similar with whom to engage, and Daniel reflected that:

> "it's funny when you find someone like that, it's great though, isn't it? You can discuss the difference between various different guitars, and various different drum versions. Yeah, someone else gets it" (Daniel)

The motivations and rationale for 'personal and contemplative' listening have already been discussed (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction'), however the comments in this Chapter also shed light on the isolated nature of Progressive rock appreciation for participants. This was born out of a largely non-appreciation and lack of interaction by peers and social groups, and participants' own comfort with lone listening.

> "I like what I liked. I wasn't going to pretend to like something I didn't like, so I was quite happy to, you know, sit in my room and my little dansette, whatever it was, record player" (Frank)

> "as the years have gone by, I found out that I have such a unique taste that just to share them with most others is, it's difficult at best" (Randy)

Ian also commented upon how, when his school friends were sharing albums to listen to, his choices were not appreciated, and how he was indifferent to that reaction.

Previous sub-sections (see sub-sections 4.1.3,'Immersive Listening', and 4.2.2, 'Concept Albums') have discussed participants' enjoyment of the music took them on a personal journey:

> "bands like Yes and Genesis, with almost some sort of semi-mystical stuff, nobody really talked about that much and that was an internal conversation I think I had in my own head with what was going on and why" (Fred)

The solo listening experience not only facilitated this journey, and internal conversation that Fred refers to, but was seen as a necessary condition.

> "For me it was much more a personal thing, it would be me in my room listening to music when I should have been doing my homework, or when I was doing something else, or just listening to the music and gazing at the LP cover" (Frank)

Participants would typically reference the 'isolated' nature of the experience, and the need for 'contemplation'. Participants' entry route into Progressive rock was often via heavy rock (see Chapter 2, 'Contextualization') which has analogues to Progressive rock appreciation: Keith Negus has summarized the caricature of an obsessive individual as being:

> "the young fan of heavy rock music, listening alone in a small-town bedroom, estranged from family and friends, neurotic and prone to irrational, suicidal or aggressive behaviour" (Negus 1996 p.11)

Negus sees this as "despairing and quite condescending" (ibid. p.11). In his reading of Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, Lincoln Geraghty disapproves of the lack of appreciation or respect for the 'lone consumer', someone who can be seen as 'cultist', with such behaviour associated with pre-adolescence and immaturity, and he suggests that these prejudices are akin to comparisons with religious sects (Geraghty 2014 p.19). Laura Vroomen has questioned how 'audience' should be defined, with the traditional notion of group precluding the "lone listener who does not convene with others" (Vroomen 2002 p.55), although her thesis does not explore this point in any depth[3]. She notes that music listening is a solitary pursuit, something someone does in 'my time' (Vroomen 2004 p.247), and she cites the 'furtiveness' evidenced within Janice Radway's work on female romance readers. There was no evidence of 'furtiveness' in play with

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[3] Vroomen does note Daniel Cavicchi's study of Bruce Springsteen fans and his representation of fans as 'individuals within a communal framework' (Cavicchi 1998:54).

participants, rather a recognition that few other social contacts share, or are interested in, their Progressive rock music choices.

Paul Gilroy has suggested that music's deepest meanings are only revealed in the 'heart of collective, affirmative consumption' (Gilroy cited in Vályi 2010 p.22)[4], however this thesis finds that these meanings can be revealed in private consumption settings, which may, in the listener's experience, enhance the depth of understanding. For William, in his 'group' of two people:

> "it was him and me... it would typically not be with more people […] there were less distractions. It was more about, more able to actually focus on the music" (William)

Reference has already been made to the inability of language to do justice to evoked emotions, (see Chapter, 'Introduction') and Allan Moore sees *jouissance*[5] as 'beyond verbalization' (Moore 2012 p.217). Nevertheless, it was clear that participants were keen to try to articulate this lived experience, and one-third of them actively discussed this in some manner. There were frequent uses of religious, or liturgical, metaphor, although participants stressed that they weren't particularly religious[6].

> "I'm not a religious sort but it kind of lifts the spirit […] great long pieces of music just really take you out yourself" (Fred)

Fred's comment echoes Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell's reference to "examples of epiphanic moments in progressive rock" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.86), (albeit that the authors viewed this through the lens of a correspondence with Romanticism).

More directly, for Oliver:

> "it touches my soul. That's probably the best way of describing it […] I imagine if I had a brain scan when I was listening to a piece of music that I particularly enjoyed, then you would see completely different brain activity to what's normal because it transforms me to somewhere else. It really touches my soul" (Oliver)

Participants would talk about literally having their 'mind blown', or being 'blown away', (Nigel, Henry), being 'transported' (Rebecca, Bruce), being moved to tears even if not normally tearful (Mark, Colin), and being 'hypnotized' (Klaus). Jenna spent some time searching for a word, whilst

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[4] See also Keith Kahn-Harris (Kahn-Harris 2007 p.122).
[5] Jacques Lacan defined 'jouissance as' the enjoyment or pleasure that goes beyond mere satisfaction of an instinct' (https://dictionary.apa.org/jouissance, accessed 7th July, 2022).
[6] Participants did not reference, directly or indirectly, 'Xian Prog' and bands that have tackled Xian subject matters, nor artists such as Neal Morse, Geoff Mann and numerous non-UK bands who have recorded albums based on the Bible (or other religious sources). This is an area that might be worthy of further research given the emphasis placed on transcendent experiences.

trying to describe associated feelings, and when 'transcendence' was suggested, the reaction was immediate:

> "Yes, yes, that's what I mean [claps]. That's it, exactly. It's like when you're out for a walk, I don't know, and you just, you get that sensation of, I mean that is it, kind of transcendent. I should, I won't try and re-explain it but you get it, you get it" (Jenna)

In his study, Paul Willis stated that the hippies were "massively concerned with the possibility of transcendence" (Willis 1978 pp.85-6), and Daniel Levitin has stated that "[m]any of us believe that great music connects us to something larger than our own existence" (Levitin 2006 p.243). It is clear that participants believe that that is the case with great Progressive rock music. Bill Martin stated that he was "prepared to wager" that the attraction of Progressive rock is that "it speaks to the soul and to deep and significant human possibilities" (Martin 1998 p.15). Edward Macan agreed with this emphasis, suggesting a "quest for spiritual authenticity" (Macan 1997 p.222)[7], and with Progressive rock groups sharing:

> "the same cosmic outlook, the same preoccupation with the infinite and otherworldly, the same fondness for monumental statement […] and the same concern with expressing epic conflicts" (ibid. p.41)

Participants did not appear to share Macan's "preoccupation", with their views covering a wider range of bases than suggested. Whilst distinctions were drawn between differing tracks, and bands, regarding affordance, transcendent aspects were not so delineated, indicating that there was a more general meta-genre-level appreciation in play. This would be consistent with Jeanette Bicknell's view that "listening to music can be an intimate experience such that the listener is intimate with himself" (Bicknell 2009 p.115). The participants who discussed the transcendent nature of the experience, represent a significant percentage given the deeply personal nature of the subject matter. They were comfortable in proactively offering their views on this nature of the music. This strongly suggests that this aspect, given its nature, and the linguistic difficulties associated with expression, is at least as, or possibly even more, powerful than that captured by the quotes herein.

Whilst the majority of the consumption practice was a solitary activity, participants also described communal activities. These were typically small, with "five or six" being the largest that was mentioned. Only a few participants referred to any discussion regarding the music's meaning after listening to an album (which was the 'listening unit'), with the most typical views being:

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[7] Macan also makes comparisons to high priests, temple musicians, and liturgical allusions, all acting as an optimistic antidote to cynicism and providing a route to spiritual authenticity, and how the Hammond would represent a "substitute pipe organ" (Macan 1997 p.32).

"It was probably a very small number. So we would listen to the prog stuff, just if it was him and me…. so, it would typically not be with more people […] there were less distractions. It was more about [being] able to actually focus on the music, and that's the type of music that maybe needs a bit more focus than just something playing along in the background" (William)

"I think there was not a lot of discussion, … I think it was more of a silent listening" (Miguel)

"I think there would have been a bit of in-depth discussion, but possibly, you know, in the school playground kind of thing rather than while we're actually listening to stuff" (Oliver)

"it was just all about music and noise and getting into rhythm and stuff like that. There really wasn't an awful lot of discussion about, you know, where it had all come from and where it was all going to" (Steve)

Colin carefully explained that for him any such discussion was a "fan-type conversation", a relatively superficial one along the lines of 'like/not like', rather than one that explored the text or the artists.

For other participants, the exchanges were more animated. For some, there was a desire for discussion:

"I think Prog Rock is for listening to, but it's also for discussion because it's so intricate and there's so much going on. You want to, 'oh, did you hear that section?', and how they're engineered, … It should be partly discussion as well, it's not just for enjoyment, well part of the enjoyment is discussing how it was put together" (David)

"we'd talk about it and, you know, decide whether this album was better than the last one or, I'm not sure it was deep, you know, musical terminology, but we'd certainly chew it over" (Murray)

"We would listen to an album and dissect it and that included the artwork as well…., a minimum of two, but maybe 3 or 4 [people]" (Alan)

This dissection did lead to some, such as Nigel, reflecting that they'd have "loads and loads of arguments" over respective merits, but this was more an exception within the research. Alan's comment that his 'group' was "maybe 3 or 4" is mirrored by other participants. Derek noted how "even if we didn't go around each other's houses, we did discuss these records on the phone, on our parents ever-inflating phone bills", although he also referenced how "we did get together to play records every now and again. Most of it was on our own".

Frank's mash-up CDs as a form of sharing was evidence of an activity that sought no reward or, most likely, feedback. Whilst ostensibly for the benefit of others, as he himself recognized the primary beneficiary would most likely be himself. William remarked on how he used to write fanzine articles for The Enid, noting that this was unlikely to lead to any direct engagement.

Of those that were in a group of some description, participants were clear that the focus was on the listening rather than social practices. Jim Curtis refers to the 'archetype' of the listening

audience: "a group of friends sitting on the floor in a candlelit room passing around a joint" (Curtis 1987 p.130). Curtis sited this in the context of 'more complex psychedelia', and Macan believes this is comparable to Progressive rock audiences (Macan 1997 p.51). Curtis's characterization is not one that any participant cited (although it must be stated that references to drugs might have been considered unwise in the interview environment).

Macan also draws parallels with the 'intimate environment' of 1920s radio listening, nineteenth-century salon settings (ibid. p.51), and Paul Stump refers to the 'reverential and contemplative aspects' of Progressive rock music appreciation, and suggests that this "passivity" reflects historical bourgeois consumption practices (Stump 1997 p.121). The respect afforded the music by participants has already been commented upon, and this can be seen to be consistent with Macan's, and Stump's views. Of the few participants who mentioned a larger group setting (Hugh, Nathan), it was described as "back-to-back" listening, with either the host or attendees making choices, and no discussion between albums. For Nigel, the advantage of communal listening was simply to be exposed to a wider range of bands/artists, otherwise he would be alone, "just pumping brilliant music into my head".

Participants' characterizations of their listening practices most closely accord to David Riesman's 'minority group'. Correspondences can be seen with Riesman's emphases on: its small nature; active listening; a preference for arrangement or technical virtuosity over melody or tune; animated discussion over technical points; uncommercialized and or unadvertised small bands preferred over name bands; the development of a private language within the group (and the distancing from it if and when subsumed within a wider, less discriminating mass appeal group); an appreciation of idiosyncrasy, an egalitarian attitude, an international outlook, with the music as foremost, and a reaction against stylized body images (Riesman 1950). Whilst Riesman's characterization receives some support, there is still a presupposition of a group environment, and a degree of homogeneity. As the previous Chapter made clear, technical virtuosity is praised, however it is required to be in service to the music, Riesman's 'melody or tune', and Progressive rock's visceral affordance should not be marginalized. The emphasis on animated discussion is likewise only partially supported, not least due to the typically solitary experience, although the opportunities provided by group experiences were welcomed, on their rare occasion, and this will be discussed during the concluding Section of this Chapter. Finally, Riesman's orientation to small and or uncommercial bands would require contextualization as to respective definitions: participants would clearly hold differing views, just within progressive rock's meta-genre, as to which category any band might belong (which in itself could be influenced by the stage of the band's career).

For participants, this (very) limited mutually appreciative listening circle has continued throughout their lives, and is wholly ingrained as a norm. Reflecting on the current day (or recent past), a significant number of participants commented on how their wife (in all occasions, this was the case) did not care for the music.

> "my wife, you know, I won't subject her to it […] and I wouldn't enjoy it because I know she wouldn't" (Alexander)

> "my wife doesn't like that stuff so basically, I listen to it by myself, but I enjoy it, you know, … it's my guilty pleasure to listen to by myself" (Charles)[8]

> "she goes out quite a bit, so I quite enjoy putting it onto the telly, we've got good broadband now, fortunately, so, sit for 20 minutes while she's out, on the telly, and *that is important*" (Steve, original emphasis)

This did not appear to be an issue for participants, and it is reasonable to assume that this accorded with their preferences, as well as historical practice. David Chaney has noted a trend away from the "public, communal, [and] collective" towards more "private, personal modes of participation", a trend that he describes as "decentring" (Chaney 1996 p.113). Bernard Lahire has asked whether technological developments encourage "solitary consumption, in which the individual no longer fears the exterior (disapproving) look and (negative) cultural judgement?" (Lahire 2008 p.176). This thesis finds that the positive aspects of such developments are appreciated by participants, however the solitary listening experience, and indifference to others' views render Lahire's 'balancing action' irrelevant. Furthermore, regarding Chaney's 'trend', for participants this has been a constant over time, with regards to their Progressive rock consumption.

The discussions earlier in this Chapter, and previously, have drawn out consumption motivations linked to perceived depth within the text, and its production. Whilst this leads to a desire to discursively explore this, there was an understanding that these opportunities in a social context would be rare, although for those that had this opportunity, in whatever environment, it was clear that this was valued. Macan's suggestion of a parallel between friends communally listening to albums and nineteenth century salons and the Romantic era (Macan 1997 p.51) indicates a level of regularity and ritual that the majority of participants would largely not recognize. Across the participant group, *en masse*, it can be seen that the level of discursive activity was quite low. Whilst the positive valence of these moments was clearly significant, the frequency of them, and their role in participants' overall engagement with Progressive rock,

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[8] Charles' (and others', throughout this thesis) reference to 'guilt' could be seen as analogous to Janice Radway's 'furtiveness' with female romance novel readers (Radway 1991). Further research would be required to investigate the degree of correspondence.

means that their significance in determining meaning at the personal level should not be over-stated. Participants would necessarily, and as discussed already, happily, discern meaning for themselves. Just as with the listening practice, this aspect was not seen as a barrier to enjoyment, more as a constituent part of being a fan of Progressive rock. The relatively minor role that this played in participants' reflections indicates that the journey that this music could take them on was largely independent of the need for external calibration.

The views above advance theories proposed by Jenny Garber and Angela McRobbie (Garber and McRobbie 2002), Reed Larson (Larson 1995), and Siân Lincoln (Lincoln 2012) regarding private listening, and take up the challenge made by Lincoln to shed further light on male[9], private music-listening habits and motivations. This thesis demonstrates that in these settings, participants were not only comfortable with private engagement with, and consumption of, the music, but also that this was a preference. Even within group settings, the music and the affordance provided, achieved primacy, and this mode of listening would not change over the lifecourse. Building on prior points regarding depth, complexity, and immersive listening (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction'), this personal contemplation facilitated meaning-making, and the journeys that participants went on were viewed in transcendental terms. This private, or solitary, listening environment afforded participants the opportunities to create and sustain their own 'mea cultura' as a constituent part of their Progressive rock fandom.

5.3 The Live Experience

> "We were sort of that ilk that went right up to the edge of the stage to watch them very closely to see what they were doing and how they did it" (Charlie)

> "To have the possibility to see Mike Mangini or John Petrucci nail 'The Dance of Eternity' without any single mistake, I think that that's a turning point" (Miguel)

The Progressive Rock Live Environment

In this Section, we will explicitly explore the live experience, and, as will be seen, there are certain dynamics associated with this environment that differentiate them from home listening, and participants' views are more akin to conventional theoretical views, although important differences are evident. The demonstration of authenticity via the ability to reproduce (or improvise) was a clear factor in participants' valorizations.

In his research, Lars Lilliestam notes of his 42 participants, that "[m]any informants speak with great affection about going to a concert and experience music live" (Lilliestam 2013 p.14). When

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[9] Although female participants were also engaged in the research.

this aspect arose in interviews, I would often pursue it by offering that it might be 'trite' to ask why it was important. Walter's[10]' response is instructive:

> "it's not a trite question, it's a good question…there's something very, there's something wonderful about loving music and hearing it at home and then seeing the people that made that perform it in front of you" (Walter)

Daniel said that it is "atavistically enjoyable", and Charlie reflected on:

> "the physicality of the music as it vibrated within your body and you. It was quite, it took you out of yourself. Certainly it was really quite an amazing feeling that, the music entering your body and just playing itself through you. We just got off on that, definitely" (Charlie)

Walter went on to refer to its "primal feeling", which echoes Nick Prior's comment:

> "[t]o witness the live performance is to assume privileged access to an originary and un-automated materiality – Benjamin's 'aura', if you like, or what Antoine Hennion calls the 'primitive scene' (Prior 2008 p.311)

Various authors have commented upon the primitivity, the aura and the quasi-spiritual nature of the live event (which echoes the points made immediately above regarding transcendence). Michael Anthony directly refers to the 'quasi-spiritual', and notes the contrast between "the 'lightness' of a gig, marked by its brief temporal duration, and its 'weight' in the lives of those who have been moved by it" (Anthony 2012 p.67). This 'weight' is evident in Phil's quote:

> "Oh, incredibly important. I can't, I can't tell you how important it is… there is something *different* about the live experience" (Phil, original emphasis)

Almost all of the participants commented directly on the live experience, mostly very positively, and Simon Frith's view of it being a constituent element of fandom is noted (Frith 2007 p.5). Participant views reinforced expected notions of it representing a rite of passage, a form of escapism, and the elements of anticipation associated with such events, particularly in early-teen years. However, Frith's view that music fandom is necessarily based upon gig attendance is not supported by this research. Logistical, financial, and other reasons prevented some participants' attendance; however, their music fandom was apparent on many other levels. Within the Focus Group environment, attendance at any particular or generic live event was not prioritized or used discursively as an exclusion mechanism.

Regarding the live environment, only Paul explicitly referred to the chance to see his 'heroes', although it appeared from language and tone that other participants shared that sense: words such as 'mind-blowing', 'awesome', 'incredible', etc., frequently peppered participants' memories of certain gigs. There were differing emphases arising from participant interviews.

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[10] Walter organizes live events for an entertainment company.

Most of them commented in general terms on the experience, and how the viscerality played a role in their overall appreciation. Walter specifically discriminated between "great music" and "great musicians", and how he attended not to necessarily see the latter, but to hear the former. However, one-third of participants expressly commented upon how they would studiously focus upon a particular musician to witness their playing, with Steve Howe attracting most comment:

> "Steve Howe with his, one or two things he was doing on the guitar were just so, so much more explosive in front of you than listening to the album" (William)

> "most of the time, I'd be watching the guitar, not because I could play it, but just because I could, I knew enough about it to recognize it when it was being done well and I was fascinated by the people doing it and couldn't take my eyes off them" (Fred)

> "it was that combination of the volume, actually *seeing them* play, wondering at how good they were playing their instruments" (Frank, original emphasis)

Respect was, again, another factor in participants' appreciation: George considered this attention to their abilities as paying due respect to their "craft and musicianship". Participants drew attention to the ability of the musicians to replicate the recorded versions, to improvise (the role of improvisation will be explored in the next Chapter), and their own ability to discern differences and nuances. Charlie and Miguel's comments above are representative of participants' views, who, consistent with other observations, were attracted to points of detail: Julie commented upon different solos by Steve Hackett from gig to gig, and tour to tour, as did Mark regarding Martin Barre (Lee Marshall has commented upon the live experience as being "where differences arise" (Marshall 2003 p.60)). For Geoff:

> "you hear the music rather than just the sound…you hear the intricacies of the keyboard [laughs], and you have to hear everything that's going on [laughs] otherwise it's not prog Rock, you know. It's the skill of the person that's doing it. It's, there's more to it than just noise and vibration" (Geoff)

Barry commented that he'd be "looking at what they're doing to the extent that maybe actually I need to sort of sit down and chill a bit. So that's quite personal, isn't it really?".

More generally:

> "the bands would perform them differently in concert, and in another concert, 10 years later, they might perform differently again. Maybe there's been a personnel change, or maybe the song has, as well, their playing of it has developed and I just found that that progression interesting, and the fact that there were different versions of the same core song. So very often, as I say, I'd collect those different versions. And there's no particular interest other than, I don't know, hearing how different it could be" (William)

William would collect these different versions initially via bootlegs, and then with official releases. His, Julie's and Mark's comments all underscore not just an attention to detail, and an encyclopaedic memory, but also the self-reflexivity associated with recognizing that these

differences are only of interest to the self[11]. This aspect is one of the key elements in participants creating their own worlds and cultures.

For Alan, the live show was about context, an opportunity for the band to present their latest interpretations, at that stage of their careers (see Benjamin Piekut's "reports from an ongoing investigation" (Piekut 2019 p.6)[12]). When asked about his primary gig-going motivation:

> "It was hearing the music but in a slightly different context, so it was a contextual thing rather than just a straight forward experience. *This*, I want to hear *this* in how they're presenting it *now* kind of thing, is the best way I can answer" (Alan, original emphasis)

Similarly, Derek described how bands such as King Crimson would not only vary their setlists from gig to gig, but also their renditions of the works, with subtleties and nuances that attracted him. These differences, whether actual or perceived, provided another layer of attraction for participants: Focus Group 1 in particular described how hearing the live version revealed depths previously not appreciated, and led to them re-visiting those tracks once back in the home environment, with added appreciation at that point. This is the interchange between William and Hugh:

> "we were fairly close to the front, and actually seeing what was going on, as well as listening to it gave me an extra layer and I went back and listened later and then understood a bit more because I was actually watching Steve Howe and what he was doing. And I was watching the interplay going on, which gave me a bit more depth than I'd had from years of listening to those albums without actually ever having seen Yes before" (William)

> "I was lucky enough to see the Wall at Earls Court, Pink Floyd again, and I'd had the album for probably seven or eight months by the time I'd seen the show, but even that, I, when I went back to listen to it at home I had slightly different, the interpretations and some songs which I didn't really think much of to begin with, having seen the show I thought 'wow' […] you have a different interpretation of it, once you see it being played live" (Hugh)

This would accord with the agentic aspects suggested by various authors. Lars Eckstein sees the live performance as an opportunity to make sense of the lyrics (Eckstein 2010 p.87), and Marilyn Nonken believes that the 'physical situatedness' of the live performance "affirms the agency of the audience as active listeners rather than passively hearing subjects" (Nonken cited in Klett and Gerber 2014 p.286). Mark compared this dynamic to classical music, and the ability of conductors to draw out "different textures".

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[11] Comparisons with fans of other genres in all these regards may be an area that others wish to study.
[12] Peikut's comments are drawn from observations of Henry Cow's live performances, which are fundamentally different from those of, say, Genesis, in terms of the degree of performative structure.

The Live Environment as a Site of Authenticity

This focus on musicianship *per se* did lead to comparative comments between various bands; for example, Phil commented upon Pink Floyd:

> "the only way they could eventually recreate stuff they did in the studio was by bringing in, like an army of guitarists and keyboard players and backing singers and orchestras, you know. It was ridiculous" (Phil)

Phil's points about a band's ability to recreate the music on stage, which was echoed by many other participants, was a key aspect of 'authenticity' for them. It should be noted that participants' perspectives were very largely drawn from an aesthetic base, rather than ethnomusicological or social ones (see (Prior 2008)). Comparison was often made to musical proficiency, both in the compositional and in the performative roles, vis-à-vis more mainstream popular artists, and echoes previous discussions in this thesis regarding Progressive rock musicians' abilities as a key positive discriminator. The live environment provided the musicians, and the participants, the ultimate opportunity to demonstrate the truth of this belief, to authenticate their authenticity. As Tim commented:

> "these guys can *really* play. They're not, you know, they're not just turning up and miming, they can actually do it. And that's our credibility as a generation. Well, that's a bit of a statement, but somehow it felt like that. It was validation that these were worth listening to, 'cause these were, you know, these people were competent and were expressing ideas that we wanted to hear. It sounds a bit pompous to be honest, but there we go" (Tim, original emphasis)

Robert drew an explicit link between ability and authenticity: "I think what it meant to me was also authenticity […]. These people were just *really, really good* at what they were doing" (Robert, original emphasis). Rush generally attracted less comment than other bands, however, in the live context, they figured more prominently. Connor[13] had this to say (similar comments were made by Rebecca and Ash):

> "Neil Peart, when I was 15, 16, and one of the big things he said was that they never recorded anything they couldn't reproduce live…. the stuff that interests me is where you put together a complex piece of a complex album and being able to reproduce that thing in front of people. … I think there's a real skill in reproduction of the recorded art in the live environment. However, I don't think everyone appreciates that" (Connor).

This ability to faithfully reproduce the recorded work, as a mark of authenticity, is a nuanced area: participants also commented upon musicianship in terms of improvisational ability (Mike Barnes has noted how Genesis's ability to recreate was critically equated with "sterility" (Barnes 2020 p.157)). This will be returned to in the next Chapter, 'Progressive Paradox'.

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[13] Connor is a professional drummer.

Milton's attendance motivation was to see "if they could portray the music that you really like, to get it across to you on the live scene". Miguel's introductory quote regarding Dream Theater's ability also supports this point, as does Rebecca's: "I'm there for the music first and foremost […] how do they manage that? How many fingers have they got to be able to play that riff?!" These comments correspond with Frith's views of the live environment as being the "truest form" of expression, whereby all actors can assess how 'real' the musicians' abilities are (Frith 2007 p.8), and he links this opportunity for (seeming) spontaneity and 'direct responses' to the audience with a characterization of "synthesizers, drum machines, tape recorders and so on" as 'unnatural' instruments, reducing this ability (Frith 2004 p.112). This aspect was brought out by Klaus, who commented upon how the live experience is "very important 'cause I think it can't be replaced by any technology, because you don't have the same vibe like you would have in a real stage experience. You can feel it differently". The opportunity to authentically perform complex arrangements in the live setting, with minimal mediation, not only reaffirms the band in its and its fans eyes in terms of musical ability *per se*, but also reaffirms "'extra-musical knowledge and beliefs' such as a group's image, its use of cover art and iconography, and the mythology of the band" (Auslander cited in Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.125).

At a general level within the overall music scene, the increasingly easy, and complex, means by which performers can mediate their performances via technological innovations can lead to reduced perceived authenticity in this regard. Participants' early love and appreciation of their music was largely borne out of an age when this was markedly less possible, if at all, and hence enabled a greater sense of wonder, and consideration of authenticity. The use of technology as an aspect of live performance had two primary dimensions: these were the ability to see, and marvel at, the instruments that the musicians played; and also how concert hall technologies provided an opportunity to hear aspects not easily appreciated at home. As Colin said, with regards to Rick Wakeman:

> "97 keyboards all around him. You know it was quite dramatic because somebody who was just used to a record player, or a little tape cassette… You know the technology that you saw on the stage was awesome, you know, Moog synthesizers and all the rest of it, it was 'just far out' as they used to say in those days. And you came away thinking 'great value for money" (Colin)

Participants also commented upon 'technology' in the sense of the venue's sound system:

> "it was so clear and you could pick out the individual instruments. It sounded different to the record, but at the same time it was still the same as the record, if that makes sense. But the fact you could pick out the individual instruments more clearly, and it was *so loud* and it went through you, I love that" (Wayne, original emphasis)

For Daniel:

> "musicians playing good music so when they're doing it live, it's the, you know, all the production barriers stripped away so it's just you and the music" (Daniel)

It is clear that the live environment, in its relatively unmediated expression, was critical to participants' appreciation of the musicians' authenticity, and connote a primary level of importance to it. As noted by Peter Wicke, the "reproduction now functions as the original, the live performance is measured against the recording" (Wicke 1982 p.235).

The role of tribute bands represented an interesting dynamic in participants' perspectives on that which represented authenticity for them. The very strong personal role that music plays in participants' lives can be seen in the following:

> "I have a personal relationship with music, I have a personal relationship with the artists. I don't ever want to see somebody else's re-enactment of that personal relationship" (Phil).

Others' representations, for example, such as those by tribute bands, therefore represent an inauthenticity to Phil. Other participants were more equivocal, seemingly able to view the experience in more dispassionate terms ("it all constitutes entertainment" (Mark), and "it's only a tenner, why not" (Colin)). Most participants, including Colin, qualified their comments with observations on the expected standard of musicianship:

> "the musicianship was equal to the originals, they played the music exactly as it was. I mean, one thing, a tribute band can't do, is go off piste you know, I mean otherwise there's no point. So, they have to be equal and they are, they were equal in musicianship and playing it as it was, you know, and then you can appreciate it" (Colin)

> "if you're trying to emulate a band like Rush or you know any good prog rock band, you've got to be bloody good, you know, if you're not good, you're gonna get criticized" (David)

This was a key point for participants, with little latitude being given for sub-standard musicianship. For Fred one moment was sufficient to almost offset the whole experience:

> "I remember when we saw The Musical Box, the keyboard player hadn't quite got that right and it *really grated*. And it, it's so almost, it's good when it's good. But the problem is when there is a gap, you notice it, and it almost feels a bit painful… I just can't, from those opening bars it just got better, but I remember those opening bars, thinking, 'oh God, that's disappointing'…. I can cope when somebody can't quite reproduce a *really difficult* keyboard solo or guitar solo […] So no complaints. It was just that I remember that bit. It's one of the things I remember about the night" (Fred, original emphasis).

Come See The Show

> "You're supposed to be there to play the music, not to show me how clever your lighting technician is" (Tim)

This recurring emphasis on the primacy of the text was also borne out in discussions regarding the spectacular aspects of performances. Ian recalled his first experience of seeing Genesis, a band hitherto unknown to him:

> "This fella comes out, you know, in a dress with a bloomin' fox's head on, and all that sort of gumf and sort of thing, and I just loved it. Absolutely loved it" (Ian)

Ellen Willis noted that in the live experience, "personality is every bit as much the 'substance' of what a performer has to offer as his music per se" (Willis cited in Sikes 2017 p.157). Compared to the views on paratexts in the previous Chapter, participants' views were more mixed with regards to contextual appeal, although the overall view was that the music affordance retained primacy. For a minority, the spectacular element was considered to be an intrinsic element of the overall experience, and Hugh, Ian, and Scott referred to the enhanced sense of 'theatre'. Mark and David did likewise, with an emphasis on that being an expectation given the ticket cost: "Extremely [important]. You know you're going to see a show, aren't you? You're paying to see a show" (David). For Colin:

> "it stood out because it's such a show you got with [prog bands]. You know it was much more, much less just sweating at guitar strings. It was a proper show, so it was a real night out… it was a *total* experience compared to seeing the other types of music where you basically just went to hear them play the tracks that you wanted them to play and there wasn't much visual stuff going on at all…. with prog rock you wonder what the hell was going to happen next and it was pretty mad, some of it" (Colin, original emphasis)

The 'Big Six' bands seen to be at opposite ends of the spectrum were Pink Floyd and Jethro Tull: Pink Floyd in the context of a relative lack of musicianship and personality, and therefore a consequent need for spectacle; and Jethro Tull, who, "with very limited technology", were able to produce "amazing" spectacles. Frank recalled seeing *Thick as a Brick 2* and the effect that it had on him and others:

> "probably most people on the planet will think 'well what on Earth was all that about?' and they can't, they won't be able to sit down and concentrate but everyone in the Albert Hall, it was 5,000 people, we were just sitting there, mesmerized from beginning to end. And it was just stunning" (Frank)

However, the majority of participants were keen to stress that the theatrical and spectacular elements were ultimately secondary in terms of importance. As Lily and Milton said:

> "if I watched a band that I liked and they didn't have anything like that, I don't think it would worry me unnecessarily 'cause I'd be interested in the music more than anything else" (Lily)

> "If you're gonna sort of dress up and you know do odd things on the stage, then I think, as long as the music's there to back it up. With Genesis it was, but with some other bands you can see that kind of disguised they weren't that good [laughs]" (Milton)

The Gabriel-era Genesis attracted particular focus in this regard, representing a borderline for many:

> "For me personally, I was less interested in Peter Gabriel and his music at that time because arguably it went into almost complete performance. I mean, you had some great songs, but you got the feeling that the image and the performance was everything to him" (Colin)

Edward Macan notes how over time "the relationship between music and image became increasingly tenuous" (Macan 1997 p.63): if the music can't progress, then progression had to find some other form, or so it seemed. As regards this spectacular element of the live performance, commentators' emphases have skewed towards commentary on ostentatious, over-blown theatrical elements, although this by necessity recognizes that a degree of spectacle, however delivered, was a constituent part of many Progressive acts' live performances. To some degree this was necessitated by the more popular bands' success, a move to larger stadia, and a need to provide more spectacle[14].

Participants' emphases on the music rather than associated elements is a further indication of their agentic relationship: they sought to self-determine meaning and value via their personal relationship with the music, rather than through others' representations, just as videos and other paratexts were disparaged.

Many participants also commented upon the viscerality, the sheer physicality, and the loudness of the music as being an attraction, a view that might be somewhat at odds with some perceptions of Progressive rock as being fey and pastoral. Phil explicitly referred to this:

> "it was very visceral and had a looseness to it. I love music when it feels like it's just collapsing over the edge" (Phil)

Progressive rock did, after all, *rock*. For Fred, "the sheer scale, the volume of it all … it was quite an overwhelming experience". As Chris Welch commented

> "The music was universally loud, fast and flashy and driven by the kind of physical lust that even Heavy Metal has yet to match … I venture to suggest that if ELP could be reformed today and placed in battle position - say on Salisbury Plain – with half a dozen of the world's most powerful HM combos, then they'd blast the latter into submission by the fourth round"[15]

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[14] It is this dynamic that prompted Macan to regard this as the time when Progressive rock ceased to be a subculture (ibid. p.154).

[15] Welch, Chris. 1983. "Welcome back my friends to the show that never ends!" *Kerrang!* 36:16–23.

This viscerality appealed to the heart as well as the head: Ewan commented upon how the music could inspire bodily movement. For him, the metrical changes that are seen as a definitional part of Progressive rock, led naturally to bodily participation. For him:

> "you would go from 1234 1234 to a 123 123 123 and go back to 1234. Those time signatures, just naturally, organically kind of influence the way you would move, you know, the way we would jump around or the way we would groove" (Ewan)

In sum, the overall experience could provide for participants, in an evocation of Lacanian *jouissance*, "a combination of pain and pleasure that is unbeatable" (Colin).

Of course, almost all live experiences would have been enjoyed in the company of others, previously known or otherwise.

The Progressive Rock Live Experience in a Social Context

> "Some of the people you'd see in some of the gigs were the sort of people you might see in a pub and think 'Oh my God, I'll avoid them' but actually inside that environment everybody was pretty much everybody's, you know, mates" (Fred)

> I don't think that I interact with any of my friends when I go ... I don't think it's extremely important that my friend is next to me when I'm looking at the live performance. I enjoy the sounds" (Miguel)

Participants' views on the social aspects of gig going were of particular interest. There was approximately a 2:1 split between going to a gig within a group setting or alone. Participants who attended by themselves were clearly unconcerned by this: "And I still don't mind, I will go on my own because my wife, you know, I won't subject her to it" (Alexander), and "I don't get involved at all, and no, no necessity to really…. If I go to a gig, I keep myself to myself" (Jeremy). The definition of 'group' for participants was 'more than one': in these instances, the group was typically characterized as 'with one or two mates', and in only one case was the group considered to be 'large' in the sense of more than half a dozen[16]. This is a further demonstration of the personal and private nature of consumption as already discussed, as well as the relative lack of attraction to consumers. However, there is evidence of a greater level of participation in gig attendance as part of a group, suggesting that the live experience, as an experience in itself independent of the music, was attractive to some who would not otherwise self-regard as fans. Regardless of whether attending within a group or solo setting, some participants would note a sense of community evident with others in attendance:

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[16] Nigel was the Participant, although he referenced this in relation to attending Neal Kay's Heavy Metal Soundhouse and other venues, indicating non-Progressive rock events.

> "I felt part of a community whilst we were there because the number of people in the auditorium who really knew all of the solos and even their children who were young knew the songs and the solos" (Rebecca)

However, the dominant view was that there would be minimal, if any, direct engagement with other attendees. Even if a participant attends with friends, the experience is frequently a solitary one as Miguel's introductory comment makes this clear, as does Oliver's:

> "I like going to gigs with people, but you know, I guess I'm so into the music once the music starts that's kind of it. And it's not that I'm sort of antisocial, it's just that, you know, the music is what I've come to see so, you know, I'm perfectly happy going to a gig on my own and I've been to many gigs on my own" (Oliver)

Focus Group 6 spent some time discussing this aspect, building on Miguel's point. Within this Group, the emphasis on the music was agreed upon by Barry and Ash. They also discussed how post-gig interaction and review was occasional. This solitary enjoyment was echoed by others, who were there "just in the moment" and oblivious to whoever was around them. If they were aware, then this would likely be for negative reasons, as with Lily:

> "The only time I would interact with people is probably to tell them to put the camera down if they're stood in front of me, [laughs] which I do frequently" (Lily)

The essential immateriality of others' presence, save that of contributing to an atmosphere and inspiring the musicians, reinforces the personal, 'mea cultura', dimension to meaning making: others' appreciation and interpretation of the experience is of minor importance.

For those that did refer to a sense of 'community' when attending live experiences, Milton remarked that there's "definitely still the community spirit", and Mark drew a comparison between the blues festivals that he attends and the Progressive rock ones, where the latter is "more like a community". Rebecca commented that:

> "although you don't know anyone in the auditorium, you've got this wonderful sense of collective enjoyment and spirit, which adds to the ambience" (Rebecca)

Fred's introductory comment refers to how other gig attendees might be people he'd normally avoid in other social settings. This interesting observation gives insights into fans' typical demeanour, Fred's self-reflexivity, and how a gig environment, where the music, rather than a pub context, is the dominant focus, and acts as a social leveller creating a community spirit.

What is noticeable is the relatively low level of interaction even within such social contexts. For most participants, the community interaction is passive. Duffett has referred to how a rock gig "promotes the virtuosic pleasures of live musicianship in a context of shared appreciation" (Duffett 2020 p.501): this is supported, with the caveat that the sharing is frequently at this passive and personal level.

Wayne drew a comparison with football crowds, and said how for him:

> "every now and then you know, I turn around and I see everybody was clapping and jumping up and down and it looked great. I wanted to kind of watch the crowd as much as that, and I do remember that tension between how much do I turn around and how much do I watch the band.... I do remember going to gigs and wanting, especially you know, when I was kind of 18, 17, 18 wanting to debate these things and wanting to meet people, but I never seemed to meet people at gigs" (Wayne)

Paul spoke about the interest of seeing others' t-shirts (the importance of 'display' will be explored later in this Chapter), and William commented upon how this would engender a sense of "fellowship". However, they, and others remarked upon how this would rarely, if ever, lead to interaction, although 'nods of recognition' were cited. As Alan said, "I'm more into the music than actually watching what's going on around me". These comments can be seen in the context of secret signals, and Fred commented upon how there was "something about the camaraderie, all these other people you knew were in on the secret".

Victor Turner developed the notion of 'communitas': "the thrill of experiencing a sense of belonging within a mass gathering" (Turner cited in Duffett 2020 p.501). Social contexts will be further explored later in this Chapter, however Turner's idea of 'communitas' is worthy of brief discussion here. His ideas draw on sacred imagery and language, whereby a "pilgrimage to a shared convention site is a liminal journey of transformation to find *communities*" (Turner cited in Geraghty 2014 p,94 original emphasis). In this liminal period, Turner sees society as an:

> "unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (Turner 1969 p.360 original emphasis)

For Turner, there is a sense of 'high' and 'low' in standing within the 'sacredness' of the communitas, but a 'high' that is tempered (through rites of passage) by humility. Turner's views on communitas found limited support: whilst not fully subscribing to his defining characteristics, as can be seen participants did experience a thrill, and a sense of belonging. However, notions of hierarchy are over-stated. As discussed throughout this thesis, participants deeply respect the musicians and their music, and are frequently in awe of their capabilities. However, their agentic role in defining meanings for themselves is a fundamental element of their valorization, and the notion of 'submission' finds no support. Participants were comfortable with (temporarily or otherwise) disassociating themselves with musicians and their works on aesthetic grounds: the music was paramount, and the setting and socialization secondary.

One participant who evidenced a somewhat different approach to gig attendance, for one artist, was Julie. For her, trips to see Steve Hackett, with half a dozen like-minded fans, are vitally important, and a significant amount of pre- and post-gig socializing takes place, although

attention to the show itself is paramount once it commences. Group t-shirts are worn, although Julie stressed that these are to act as memory markers, rather than for display purposes.

In closing this Section, this research finds that for participants the live experience has many parallels with the private, domestic listening experience. The private nature of consumption is fundamentally the same as within a public setting. Consistent with Nonken's, Piekut's, and Wicke's, views, the ability of the music to take participants on a journey, as part of an active, agentic relationship, is extant, and is sited more viscerally at a gig, Moreover, the live experience enables participants to continue, and to develop, their relationships with the music. Their ability to interact only to the level they desire, to be comfortable with the limited nature of this, and their largely unmediated interaction with the music, primarily, and contextual elements, secondarily, reinforces their own cultural formations.

5.4 The Collecting Experience

> "what I used to do with the programme was put it into the album with the ticket stub. And when I got into photography, I take some photos and put them in there in the album sleeve as well, and so the album became like a mini museum" (Phil)

> "I say [ticket stubs] are not important to me, but I keep these things and I do look at them and they do draw memories … so they must be important" (Walter)

> "my records and my CDs and my DVDs *all* have to be in alphabetical order. It's just to me, it just seems logical, like when I say, when I when I meet someone, *sometimes* I do find myself rearranging their record collection, so it's in alphabetical order, which is quite…. bad, isn't it?" (Ewan, original emphasis)

With regards to the collecting practice, two recurring themes in particular emerged: the acquisition practice; and the purpose. Collecting has been defined as:

> "the selective, active and longitudinal acquisition, possession and disposition of an inter-related set of differentiated objects (material things, ideas, beings, or experiences) that contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from the entity (the collection) that this set is perceived to constitute." (Belk, Wallendorf and Holbrook 1991 p.179.)

Approximately one half of the participants commented on the active collecting of t-shirts, ticket stubs, concert programmes and or musical artefacts themselves. All of these have some display aspect to them, and this is most pronounced for t-shirts. Discussion around them in particular is covered in the next Section, 'Display'. Ticket stubs were the second-most commented upon subject, and approximately one-half of the participants mentioned that they had retained these, although they had no idea where they were, how they rarely, if ever, looked at them, and were unsure as to why they were keeping them. In Geoff's phrase, "they are knocking about somewhere". William's view was typical:

"I've done a bit of moving house and came across stuff as I was moving house that I've forgotten about. … So, I've got one or two things which, from over time, and I guess it's in that category that I've never really thrown away. I don't know why because I'm not overly, erm, sentimental in, you know, generally […]. I know I've still got them. I'm not entirely sure why I've still got them" (William)

It was apparent that participants believed that re-looking at the stubs would represent an opportunity to resurface fond memories, and Oliver and Tim both spent some time explaining the significance of a particular stub from a particular gig. However, this opportunity for positive nostalgia was not a practice that was routinely indulged in. Oliver mentioned that he had the stub from every gig he'd been in, and when asked where they were remarked:

"They're in my study in various envelopes and boxes [laughs], they generally stay there. Generally, as I add to them, I mean, when I was at university, I used to blu-tack them all to pieces of A4, stuck on the wall at university, so I've still got some sheets of paper somewhere with the early ones stuck on. But the others since, they're just filed away somewhere" (Oliver)

When asked if they ever get shared, his immediate answer was "No". Regarding Tim's 'special' stub's whereabouts, the response was "in a wallet, somewhere" [17]. Frank likewise commented that "I used to have a load of ticket stubs, goodness knows what happened to them", and for Alan:

"used to keep them, lost them and then started in in earnest when I came to London and the first gig was Yes doing the *Tormato* tour. They are in [laughs], they are in a crate" (Alan)

There appears to be a cognitive disconnect between the ascribed value being given to certain objects, such as ticket stubs, and the ability to locate or retain them. This is in accordance with Belk's view that collecting "may be in service of whatever motivations or needs dominate the individual at any given time, and may satisfy different personality needs at different times" (Belk 1994 p.318).

It is conceivable that participants' inattention to these stubs is captured in Murray's reflection:

"to my great regret, I got rid of them, but yeah, I had all the ticket stubs stuck on my door…. I think as I got older I didn't want to be seen as a sad-o. And it's only later in life that I realized I am a sad-o, and I wish I'd kept them. I've still got a few, but I haven't got all of them. It would have been nice to have had them all. I wish I had kept them … those early ones are like gold dust" (Murray)

Murray's quote brings several dimensions into play: emotional value attached to a memento of his past; an aspect of display (although quite possibly visible mostly only to him); some reflection over his lifecourse that the collection indicated a degree of being a social misfit; a sense of

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[17] Michael Anthony relates a story of a cherished artefact, what might be Fish's earring, in a box, *somewhere* (Anthony 2012 pp.206-7 original emphasis).

growing comfort with his demonstration of attraction; some regret over his decision; and a desire to have kept an item with rarity value. Several others also remarked upon how they wished they'd retained their stubs, most frequently because it would serve as reminder of gigs that they had attended, and have subsequently forgotten about.

Similarities were evident with regards to programmes, although these were remarked upon less frequently. Acquisition cost was frequently mentioned as a deterrent. Only one participant, Frank, explicitly referred to re-reading programmes: he commented upon how the "literally thousands" that he has take up a 'crazy' amount of space, and how he would occasionally "come across one" and then "10 or 15 minutes later, when I should be doing something else, I'm still reading the programme". Otherwise, comments made with regards to ticket stub collecting are analogous to programme collecting. Derek reflected on why he had kept programmes, and said "I don't know why really…. I mean, some of them aren't worth having, but, it's a reminder. It's a reminder, isn't it?". Re-acquisition of programmes was noted by a couple of participants, with eBay providing an opportunity to (re)purchase those that had been lost, or never bought in the first instance, for particularly important gigs[18]. This practice could also be extended to posters, as it did for Alan[19].

Bennett and Rogers have referred to theorists such as Anthony Giddens, and David Chaney, in considering that collections of ticket stubs[20], t-shirts, posters, autographed photos and brochures, fanzines, badges, and sew-on patches act as a means of individuals gaining agency (Bennett and Rogers 2016 p.29). This research finds limited support for this: the display aspects of autographed photos, sew-on badges, and patches, and brochures were not foregrounded by participants (and t-shirts will be expressly discussed in the subsequent Section). Whilst ticket-stubs and t-shirts are evidence of agentic behaviour, the relatively short-lived retention and or physical attachment to them demonstrates a temporally limited agency that merits further theorization. This research continually demonstrates that paratextual elements, whatever their form, are all afforded secondary importance to participants: primary affordance was centred upon the music itself, and its ability to allow participants to generate meaning(s) that evolved, and were their own, thus representing the greatest form of agency for them.

For Susan Stewart, "souvenirs present the collector with both a metonymic piece *of* an experience and a prompt to re-enter the narrative or memory of that experience" (Stewart cited

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[18] Derek tracked down programmes for Yes shows (1978) and Peter Gabriel (various).

[19] Alan was keen to purchase a poster for Fruup that referenced a gig at his local music venue, having spent a year deliberating whether he should or not.

[20] In their study, Bennet and Rogers surveyed 91 people, and determined that over half retained ticket stubs.

in Bennett and Rogers 2016 p.37 original emphasis). These souvenirs, it is suggested, are integrated into a process of 'degradation and replacement', in that they are exchanged for financial currency, digitized, and given away (ibid. p.37). Participants' perspectives only partially support this view: the three 'exchange categories' identified above all connote a degree of active involvement, whereas for participants simply losing their objects of value was a common feature.

A few participants commented upon aspects of curation, with Phil's introductory quote being most vivid, although this was also practiced by others such as Lily. Phil commented upon how, having invested time, money and emotion into the activity of inserting into the album "some incredible stuff", he sufficiently forgot that he had done this, such that when he sold them, "some lucky record collector somewhere has had a bit of a surprise". Lily's collection, which included personal pictures of meeting Keith Emerson, "is around… somewhere". Others have simply amassed considerable collections of music: Randy and Trevor, both Americans, have (or had) 20,000 and 17,000 vinyl albums respectively, with similar numbers of CDs.

With regards to the second recurring theme, that of 'purpose', both Randy and Trevor, and Jerry amongst others, commented upon how these collections were not for display:

> "[collecting] was about knowledge, about the things, rather than "have you seen this record, have you seen my record collection, it's 2 meters long and look at that?", it wasn't really about that" (Jerry)

For Jan Van Dijck, collectors place an emphasis on display, hence a preference for tangible over intangible music acquisition (van Dijck 2006). Throughout participants' discussions, there is little, if any, intent or desire for display in the sense of cultural capital. Collections are comprised of constituent elements of a, *pace* Colin Campbell, self-referential, intimate world (Campbell cited in Pearce 1999 p.9). The non-sharing of these collections is partially due to the absence of others who shared participants' passion, but also due to their deeply personal and private nature, with an understanding that others would see little of value in them, mirroring participants' views on the attractiveness of Progressive rock as a musical style in itself in microcosm. This is *contra* Roy Shuker's view that social status is one of the leading motivators for music collectors (Shuker 2004 p.323).

As part of their collecting, participants referred to box-sets[21]. Despite the deep knowledge that participants have of the original text, and their "massively expensive" (Hugh) nature, and even if participants lacked the domestic technology to fully avail themselves of certain features (e.g.,

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[21] For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Weinstein (2014), and Reynolds (2012).

5.1 Surround Sound), then they are still considered an essential mundane capital purchase for some:

> "The ELP ones you can buy and then there's usually something else on there, the Genesis ones, the Jethro Tull ones are fantastic value so it doesn't feel like I'm buying stuff that I've already had. Well, I might have it illegally if you know what I mean, some of the live stuff, you know, and as long as it's nicely done, like Jethro Tull, when you get the book and all the other paraphernalia" (Murray)

> "Of course with the old bands, now they've started coming out with box sets and I don't know about you, but I *love* box sets (Graham, original emphasis)

Participants were aware that different renditions of a text were only of interest to them. Susan Pearce situates this as being borne from "antisocial reasons, where the fascination lies in their worthlessness for other people, which matches the special qualities as that only the owner can perceive in them" (Pearce 1999 p.172). She draws on Colin Campbell's view that "commodities are not valued for their use but understood as possessing a meaning which is determined by their position in a self-referential system of signifiers" (Campbell cited in Pearce 1999 p.9), the meaning of which resides with the collector. Pearce is also evoking post-modernism, with a severed link between signifier and signified to the outside world. The objects themselves have arbitrary meaning, but via the collector's code they attain non-arbitrary status (Pearce 1994 p.12). This research contests the notion that participants' motivations are "anti-social". Any perceived anti-, or a-, social practice is more due to a lack of opportunity, or expressed interest, than it is any fundamental antisociality. Participants routinely demonstrated a (theoretical, if not practicable) desire for inclusivity rather than the contrary, and notions of hierarchy were anathema to the vast majority of them. Participants would dispute the view that should others come close to their collections, or seek to recreate them, then this would be tantamount to 'profaning holy ground' as the collections demonstrate such "a strong sense of singularity and of the unique importance of themselves as individuals" (Pearce 1999 p.231).

There was evidence of a completist trait amongst several participants, although some, such as Jerry, equated this with a natural childhood habit[22]. For William, and others, this has extended through life:

> "I really got into Porcupine Tree and just as I've done with Golden Earring, with Enid, certain bands I've really loved and then gone out and bought out every album they've done…., there was no particular system…. there were certain tracks that would appear on different albums, or different bootlegs at the time, and I would collect as many different examples at the same track as possible and just see how it was played differently" (William)

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[22] See Walter Muensterberger (Muensterberger 1994) for observations on psychological aspects. NB his Freudian views are not recognized in this research.

Within Focus Group 4, Alan discussed his interest in hearing how Jon Anderson's voice changed over an extended series of shows captured on a boxset[23], and how he felt he ought to be sharing that detail, with someone, although he recognized that this would not occur. Focus Group 6 spent most time commenting upon collecting. Frank had recently purchased Yes's 'Union Tour' box set, noted how it "made his day", and if he was to be asked what the attraction is, then he likened it to climbing Everest, "because it's there", and his collection would be 'incomplete' without it". Subsequent discussion brought out how Daniel, now having the financial resources, saw these acquisitions as "a treat", having commented earlier upon the collecting habit as being akin to a Boy Scout collecting badges. Rebecca agreed with these sentiments, and noted that she has a 'completist' trait: once she is attracted to a band, then she has to learn all about them. Collecting, or hoarding, as a 'Progressive rock fan thing' was commented upon by several participants: "in prog it's different, like really, prog rock lovers, they like to collect and stuff" (Klaus), which was largely supported by participants' anecdotes. Walter Muensterberger (Muensterberger 1994) has suggested that collectors' motivations can be seen in a desire for immortality, their collections representing a pseudo-life after death. However, no evidence of this existed with participants: they were aware that their collections would perish along with themselves.

John Dougan has noted how the 'expert collector' places greater value of quality, over quantity. For him, the 'taxonomic and aesthetic structure' of 'the collection itself', is that which is valued, the means by which it develops in a "pedagogical, edifying manner" (Dougan 2006 p.46). Ewan's introductory quote is probably the most extreme in relation to this aspect. Ewan rationalized his approach as an opportunity to help educate people in their appreciation of music, a point that echoes Alan's above. Both were sufficiently self-reflexive to note that this might not be wholly welcomed. Dougan's point shifts the focus from the individual objects to the overarching collection. This view is not supported by this research: participants valued individual elements at least equally, something that Dougan considers to be a 'negative marker of fetishism'. Participants were able to exercise discernment over which works were worthy of inclusion in their collections. Canonical status, however conferred, did not necessitate acquisition: participants acted independently in this regard.

As noted above, there were remarkably few examples where completism for its own sake was the driving motivation. Dougan's characterization of 'ur-collectors', those proficient in insider discourse leading to connoisseurship to the exclusion of outsiders (ibid. p.57), is likewise not supported. This evokes Bourdieusian notions of cultural capital and will be discussed later in this

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[23] Alan was specifically referring to the box set *Progeny: Seven Shows From Seventy-Two.*

Chapter. Nor is the practice gender-biased. Although both Gábor Vályi (Vályi 2010) (in his research into 'crate diggers') and Will Straw have drawn attention to collecting's "largely male character" (Straw cited in Shuker 2001 p.201), this research does not support this. As well as Rebecca's comment above, Julie has moved to this country, and brought her ticket stubs with her, which likewise are not for display:

> "I didn't want to, I don't know, I didn't want to leave them at home, which is silly 'cause it's just paper, but oh, they're so important to me. I brought them with me and they still stayed at the bottom of my suitcase. But if I do one day organize them, I would probably put them in date of seeing them" (Julie)

The majority of participants did, and continue to, collect to some degree, and in so doing they exercise discrimination. The variations between items in the collection are frequently minor in nature and discernible to few, certainly within the participants' social circles. External approval, whether in the act of acquisition or purpose, was clearly not sought, and participants self-regulated. Whilst the music retains primacy, other motivating factors are in play. The private nature of these collections, hidden even from their own view at times, is another indicator of how participants create their own worlds, museums, and cultures based solely upon their own aesthetic considerations. The motivations behind these practices are not clear even to themselves, and further (psychological) research into this may be of interest.

5.5 Elitism

> "I don't think it's elitism in a sense of …. looking down on other music, but actually I suppose it was, we did look down on other forms of music" (Daniel)

> "I started to get the feeling or the sense that the fan base of progressive rock is like high IQ or intelligent people" (Miguel)

> "maybe it's connected to an intellect thing. Maybe it works on a higher level that some people don't quite get" (Walter)

The charges of elitism, and intellectualism, that are attached to Progressive rock music have previously been discussed (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction). As covered there, participants' views should be viewed in conjunction with those already shared by them with regards to their perceptions of perceived depth and complexity, musicians' virtuosity, and their reasons for repeated listening. Almost half of the participants recognised traits of elitism, or of nerdiness, or both, in themselves. The introductory quotes give an indication of this. In expanding upon his above quote, Miguel equated intelligence with curiosity, and suggested that Progressive rock music, ideologically, is predisposed towards exploration and curiosity, and hence the link with IQ.

Daniel's above quote, in his slight rethinking of his point, indicates a certain cognitive dissonance, between an egalitarian ideal and a belief that Progressive rock is an elevated form of music. This was also witnessed in others' comments, either in their in-the-moment self-reflexivity, or in their semi-apologetic introduction of their views, for example: "I don't mean to be arrogant/pompous/elitist, but…." (Frank, Fred, Wayne, Walter).

Others took similar stances, with Randy proposing that underappreciated artists such as Jan Akkerman are "almost too good for the common man", Bruce saying that "it's the thinking man 's music", Trevor stating that the average listener just doesn't have "the musical chops" to appreciate the music, which is comparable to Philippe's view that a lot of listeners don't have "the keys to understand it", evoking an image of its depth and meaning having to be unlocked[24]. Barry's view was that most listeners didn't have the "discernment" to appreciate it. Only Sophie, in Focus Group 6, explicitly took issue with this stance, noting the number of tradesmen that she knew that played and enjoyed Progressive rock, an argument not necessarily contrary to those put forward by others. Participants' comments could be seen as self-justifying; however, they are borne out of two primary drivers that have already been discussed: others' reactions to the music; and this thesis's contention that 'adaptation theory' effects are in operation, i.e., increased exposure, or immersion, in Progressive rock leads to enhanced appreciation and facility with degrees of complexity, setting the listener apart, i.e., reinforcing his notion of his own 'mea cultura'.

Theodore Gracyk believed that artistic elitism is "antithetical" to rock (Gracyk 1996 p.201)[25]. This is a stance that participants would strongly refute. Previous discussions (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction') demonstrated that participants drew a strong correspondence between striving for a higher, or more rarefied, goal with laudable ambition and the creative potential for great works. Views to the contrary were discounted on various grounds. From their perspective, rather than "antithetical" this would be regarded as intrinsic to Progressive rock. As Henry commented:

> "I personally think some of the music I listen to, you know, is far and away *exceeds*, in terms of quality and musicianship, exceeds a lot of the mainstream stuff. And if other people don't see that or don't get that, that's their problem, not mine" (Henry, original emphasis)

Participants' demographics would belie any charge of them belonging to the financial or cultural elite, although aspects of cultural elitism are harder to discern. Their quotes indicate, strongly

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[24] Philippe's first language is French.
[25] Gracyk equated this with Romanticism, a correspondence made by the leading authors.

in parts, that there does exist some merit in such an observation, however participants' private, non-spectacular consumption practices would run counter to Bourdieusian notions of subcultural capital exploitation. Regarding the utility value of subcultural capital for participants, the relative absence of others who shared an interest in their passion meant that this was marginal. However, it is clear that for participants, when they were able to find others who were sympathetic to their valorizations, then the opportunity to exchange capital was highly valued. Participants referred to being "in on the secret" of Progressive rock appreciation, echoing Sarah Thornton's 'secret club' (Thornton 1995). This reflects Simon Reynold's views of authority deriving from taste and cultural expertise rather than the ostentatious claiming and wielding of such (Reynolds 2012 p.101). Parallels can be seen in the live experience (see discussion earlier in this Chapter) with the sense of community being felt when among others, although, and importantly, interaction was typically very limited or non-existent, and not considered important. These information exchanges were seen as being between equals, i.e., non-hierarchical.

However, one related aspect is worthy of exploration here. For a couple of participants, their knowledge represented a pedagogic opportunity to educate others. Ewan's need to arrange others' CD collections 'correctly' has already been noted. As well as that trait, Ewan commented on how he likes to "educate" people:

> "Telling them about the history or talking or walking them through how, what influenced them, when they wrote the album or even picking up my own interpretation of other bands who *may* have influenced their sound as well. So yeah, I kind of go into a bit of a teaching… you do tend to find that people zone out or they get bored because you're going into so much detail. They don't actually care, and I find that quite offensive" (Ewan)

Trevor also commented on his CD mashups for those unfamiliar with the music:

> "I'll put on it all this vast array of music by different artists, and I'll create some liner notes for you to where I'll point out for you the elements that I think you should pay attention to and try to understand about this song, or about this song, or about that song, and maybe even to the point in certain songs of getting into the song and say 'now, at 3:03 of this song, here's what's going to happen', so, you'll be listening for 3:03, and then here's what happens, and pay attention to that at the 3:03 mark. That's the kind of education experience I would want to take a neophyte through" (Trevor)

Whilst these comments could be regarded as counter to this Chapter's theme of 'mea cultura', they need to be seen through the light of how they are apparently received, rather than how they are transmitted. Ewan, Trevor, and other participants as frequently observed, rarely have the opportunity to socially interact with others on matters of Progressive rock valorization. Their life-long creation of worlds of meaning-making, privately and un-spectacularly entered into, conducted with relish and attention to depth and detail, finds few outlets. The drive to educate

is not necessarily reciprocated by any recipient's desire to learn, and Ewen self-reflexively notes the lack of engagement, with people "zoning out". There is no extension of participants' cultural constructs into a wider sphere, the cultural constructs they develop remain largely their own.

David Simonelli has suggested that the Progressive rock audience saw itself as 'select', and that it "came to see itself as the taste arbiters of youth culture, upholding the best standards in rock music and planning to rebuild society around them" (Simonelli 2007 p.106). This observation receives limited support. As noted above, there is a degree of believed selectiveness by participants, and, echoing the point above, Fred commented that it "almost feels like you're a member of a bit of a select club and the others don't get it". However, Simonelli's further two points indicate a level of activity and aspiration that was not in evidence. As has been consistently stated, participants' quotes reinforce their valorization of Progressive rock fundamentally on the basis of the music itself. Any connection, in this case to possible contextual opportunities more aligned to counter-cultural ambitions, are of minimal, if any, interest.

Clearly, Ewen's, and Trevor's, examples demonstrate a high degree of enthusiasm, and also a degree of nerdiness. Consistent with points already made, Paul noted that, with regards to attention to detail "all Prog fans are like that, I know they are" and proceeded to provide detailed examples from various tracks. Various other participants commented upon the attraction of having 'encyclopedic knowledge', pride in being a geek or a nerd, being able to identify a track within a few seconds, noting the differences in various versions of live tracks, and how re-masters and remixes enhanced or degraded the original. Again, the benefits arising from such knowledge were acknowledged to be likely purely personal. Focus Group 5 spent the most time debating this, with Frank, Paul, Rebecca, and Daniel initially stating that knowing such a level of detail is "a worry" before agreeing that is actually "a joy", and then proceeding to compare various items of trivia, with obvious relish.

Participants' perspectives echo the work of Kristina Busse, who has suggested that nerds (or geeks)[26] have complex feelings about self-identification, a mixture of pride and shame being 'habitual', with the knowledge that their enthusiasm and knowledge can be 'too much' for others. For her, the key underpinning factors of authenticity as a geek include: attachment regardless of prevailing fashion, or perceived quality; length of interest; commencement date relative to popular awareness; ownership of rare artefacts; comprehensiveness of collections; and, having suffered in some way (Busse 2013). Clear correspondences can be seen at play here, although participants claimed that they had not suffered in their Progressive rock music fandom.

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[26] Busse's focus was on female fandom.

Participants' recognitions of their levels of 'nerdiness', their attraction to esoteric minutiae, and a sense that Progressive rock works on a "higher level", and their limited interactions, all contribute to the notion of them generating and maintaining their own 'mea cultura'.

5.6 Fashion and Display

> "I'm not sort of going around, saying, 'Oh, I went to see Steve Hackett at the Brighton Dome'" (Alexander)

> "a lot of the bands I listen to, the average person doesn't know who they are, and so if they recognize [the t-shirts] then absolutely it's a good thing" (Scott)

> "we called ourselves pseuds for [carrying albums under our arms], and recognized that we were doing it for effect [laughs], yes, and that happened" (Alan)

For the majority of participants, their appreciation of Progressive rock started, or grew, at a period of time that was coincident with the arrival of Punk. Given the importance of these early- and mid-teen years to the formation of personal identity, and the importance afforded to the punk movement by subculturalists[27] and its emphasis on fashion and display, participants' reflections on these aspects are of particular interest.

With regard to a general fashion style, or 'look', participants largely considered that there wasn't one, and for the few that did, briefly, adopt a visual persona, they were uniform in their assertions that this was not due to anybody's, or any group's, expectations, although this inevitably raises a challenge around post-revisionism. These adoptions were typically identified as growing one's hair slightly longer, or wearing an Afghan coat. Focus Group 6 spent some time discussing the (lack of) fashion aspect. Like others, they drew comparisons between Progressive rock and Heavy Metal fans, and also hippies[28]. Sophie commented upon how there was no "uniform", and Progressive rock fans' enjoyment of a broad swathe of music militated against them adopting any one fashion. Barry, Ash, and Miguel all agreed, with Barry noting that wearing denim was as close to a fashion marker as existed[29]. Rebecca noted that Progressive musicians did not themselves, largely, promote any fashion style[30], which also served to downplay this aspect's importance. Her summary encapsulates what many said: "jeans, T shirt and a slightly ever so slightly nerdy look, probably. But I didn't do any of that [fashion adoption]".

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[27] Attention is drawn in particular to the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS).
[28] Throughout the research, participants clearly differentiated Progressive rock from 'hippie music' and being a hippie, an aspect that is blurred in Paul Willis's *Profane Culture* (Willis 1980).
[29] In Mike Barnes's *A New Day Yesterday*, of the dozen quotes from fans, half of them are in relation to fashion choices (Barnes 2020).
[30] Rick Wakeman's golden cape was singled out, precisely for its perceived unique role in this regard.

These views would support Edward Macan's that, "Progressive rock never really developed a definitive dress code in the manner of certain other styles of music" (Macan 1997 p.64). Paul Stump refers to Simon Frith's 1972 study, and states how in Frith's view, whilst there was an 'active rejection' of 'an image', or an "identification with a collectivity, an image *was* in the making" (Frith cited in Stump 1997 p.93 original emphasis). However Frith's observation was geared towards the underground, which, as noted (see Chapter 3, 'Contextualization') had minimal resonance for participants. Moreover, Frith's reference to 'active' indicates a degree of purpose that was not evident in this research: participants typically did not draw a linkage between their Progressive rock consumption practices and their choice of clothing. The purposeful generation of an image, and its maintenance, to a degree that warrants a label as such, is not one that participants would support: their generation of cultural markers was independent of this. As Rebecca commented:

> "I think that says a lot actually about prog rock. That we could, you know, it didn't really matter what you were dressed like or you know what your other tastes in music had been, actually, it was if you enjoyed the music, you were there to listen to the music and appreciate the music rather as paramount" (Rebecca)

Participants' perspectives mirror Laura Vroomen's participant Barbara, who noted: "you can't really categorize/pigeonhole a Kate Bush fan. They don't look a certain way" (Vroomen 2004 p.238). Frith and Howard Horne suggest that "progressive rockers responded by becoming as unglamorous as possible" (Frith and Horne 1987 p.149), and it is possible to see participants' non-adoption of any fashion code, the adoption of which is stereotypically seen as an act of rebellion, as ironically an act of rebellion in itself, albeit an unspectacular one. Focus Group 6's conversation concluded that rather than fashion being a dominant factor, it was "the other stuff" that was important, again stressing the importance of the text over the context.

Scott's introductory comment was echoed by Geoff: they were aware that there was very little chance of anyone recognizing the band t-shirts they wore. As Julie said, "I'm not bragging, but I wear really cool shirts all the time and no one says anything". This indicates a willingness or even desire to seek engagement, and also how the ongoing non-reciprocated practice demonstrates a private motivation rather than a social driver. For Wayne, he reflected that because so few people saw, or recognized, his Marillion t-shirts, it couldn't have been "some big statement about display", although, importantly, he recognized that it was a constituent part of his "building an identity" for himself, an activity that was conducted effectively in isolation.

The wearing of t-shirts at a gig was discussed earlier in this Chapter, noting that the recognition of this would likely lead to little more than "nods of recognition", or some limited interaction. For some, the gig was an opportunity to demonstrate band affinity with a t-shirt, possibly from

many years ago. For others, it represented an opportunity to wear another band's t-shirt, showing, in Ash's words, "how widely travelled you were". There are clear connections here to subcultural capital, although, as discussed in previous examples throughout this Chapter, the lack of need, or desire, to interact with others, limits the perceived utility value of the practice. The wearing of t-shirts (and possibly other items of display), enabled a form of agency for participants, albeit in an understated way, although this agentic behaviour is afforded less coverage than that associated with, for example, the equivalent for punk rockers. This form of agency can also be seen as participants wearing (near) identical t-shirts, yet believing that theirs was different, and that it meant something different to them, because their relationship with the music and or the band led them on unique journeys, or so it seemed to them.

Public display of album ownership attracted a significant degree of comment, with a similar number of participants positively remarking upon this practice. Some participants clearly distanced themselves from it ("categorically not" (Tim); "I saw other people doing it, but I wouldn't" (Hugh)). For a significant number of participants, albums were scarce, and the cost relatively prohibitive. As discussed earlier, (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction'), album artwork frequently played a role in acquisition decisions, and the display of artwork was a significant motivation, as well as the precise band being (partially) exhibited. Participants who did engage in this practice revealed through their comments that a greater degree of subcultural capital was in play. Alan's introductory quote provides some insight into this, and Geoff referred to how 'obscure' choices would be privileged. Phil commented that:

> "I'll never forget, whilst everyone else would be walking around with, like Floyd, I'd have Henry Cow. Secretly at home, I preferred to listen to Pink Floyd to Henry Cow, but what I was doing was asserting my authority with my greater knowledge of music" (Phil)[31]

Nathan also commented upon this "peacocking" dimension, with others displaying albums that "they purported to like" (although Rich distanced himself from this practice, as did others in a parallel with comments above regarding the use of t-shirts). Similar to Phil, Frank commented that:

> "it was absolutely required, wasn't it, to walk to school with an album under your arm. I mean you had to do that because it made a statement, didn't it?" (Frank),

and for Murray:

> "You walked around and also, it's to show people 'you know, I got this album and it's really heavy stuff and I'm really connected, you know, I'm really into this music'. I think it was a badge of honour" (Murray)

The most ostentatious example provided was by Paul:

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[31] See also Barnes (Barnes 2020 p.342).

> "I used to walk around with a big cassette player, playing my Emerson, Lake and Palmer, you know, just to me, didn't even have headphones in those days. I remember that, that was for a little while as well. So yeah, that seems to be a bit strange when I think about it now… really weird, I know" (Paul)

There are various elements of cultural capital[32] under consideration here, for instance in the display of relatively expensive and scarce artefacts. This aspect has been commented upon: Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers describe how "personally ascribed aesthetic value" replaces economic value (Bennett and Rogers 2016 p.30), and Martin Johnes suggests how, as albums were relatively costly, they were carried as signs of prestige (Johnes 2018 p.121). Participants made frequent reference to their enhanced purchasing power in later years, and their acquisition of box sets has been discussed above. Regarding this aspect of display, the private enjoyment of box sets is *contra* the view of Simon Reynolds, who has stated that they:

> "don't seem to be actually made for listening purposes but for ownership and display, as testaments to elevated taste and knowledge" (Reynolds 2012 p.161)

Both the wearing of t-shirts and the youthful display of albums polarized participants' views. For some, there was a recognition that these were practices that they engaged in, however, on an equal basis, other participants clearly distanced themselves from such. For the former group, it is clear how their non-engagement was another element of their private generation of their personal cultural reference points, and ones that were clearly distinguished from fandom associated with other musical styles. For the latter grouping, there are clearly other motivational factors in play. For this subset, which iso equate to less than one-quarter of participants, there is a need on some level to demonstrate an allegiance to the meta-genre, although the ability to do so at this level would have been unlikely. However, participants who engaged in this practice were aware that recognition, and social capital, would likely not accrue. Hence, their motivations appear to likewise be internally driven, although more research, possibly from a psychological basis, could form the basis of future research. That these differences exist, underscore the heterogeneous nature of Progressive rock fandom, exemplified through the lack of a fashion code, or code of practice, against which a wider membership could be assessed. As Rebecca commented:

> "it was always about the music. It wasn't about us having one over each other, you know, in terms of style of dress […] the music you see, I do think that that is the important thing rather than the lifestyle or the overall societal message" (Rebecca)

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[32] Pierre Bourdieu identified various forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and informational.

5.7 The Role of the Media

> "radio and media was largely hopeless, didn't want to acknowledge its existence despite the fact in album charts it was everywhere" (Fred)

> "I didn't buy any magazines or anything like that. Music was something I listened to" (Ian)

> "definitely *Old Grey Whistle Test*. I don't think I ever watched the *Old Grey Whistle Test* and didn't go out and you buy an album by somebody who were on it" (Liam)

Whilst almost every participant had a point to make in relation to the role of the media, they were generally relatively brief compared to other aspects that were raised by them. It was also noticeable that none of the Focus Groups spent any significant time on this area. This would *prima facie* suggest that the media played less of a prominent role in their listening, acquisition, and consumption practices than might be assumed.

Of the major music papers, *Melody Maker* ('*MM*'), the *New Musical Express* ('*NME*'), and *Sounds,* none was especially favoured across the group, each attracting about 20% of the overall participants[33]. For a comprehensive overview of the histories of these papers, their positioning with regards to Progressive rock, and music generally, and how their editorial policies developed see Anderton and Atton (2020). Only a small percentage said that they read any of them on a regular, weekly basis. Phil, exceptionally, commented that:

> "there was always like two or three really cool people in the class who read *NME, Melody Maker* and *Sounds* every week and were the informed ones and I was one of those, I have to say, and we kinda looked down on everybody else and their music tastes (Phil)[34]

MM attracted the most positive comment, with participants referring to its gig listings, and perceived leaning towards Progressive rock. *Sounds* was marginally more read: this may be due to its tendency for longer interviews, accompanied by more pictures/photos; or because its coverage was slightly more skewed towards the 'heavier' end, which aligns with the entry point to Progressive rock for many participants. This would also accord with *The Friday Rock Show* also being highlighted with regards to radio programmes[35]. The *NME* was either praised for being "the bible" (Colin) or, more frequently, criticized for being too drawn towards certain bands or styles, and "jumping on the bandwagon" (Liam), due to its perceived desertion of Progressive rock for punk.

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[33] In terms of receptivity to Progressive rock (under whatever appellation at the time), *MM* was the first to accord the relevant bands attention in the late 1960s, *Sounds* was launched in October 1970 with a self-proclaimed manifesto where 'categories no longer mattered', and *NME* turned its attention to this music around 1972 (when its fortunes were at a low) (Lindberg *et al*. 2005).

[34] Phil later pursued a career in music journalism.

[35] The Friday Rock Show was not launched until 1978, which indicates that participants were initiating and or sustaining an interest in Progressive rock at a time of its relatively low critical reception.

Participants appeared to have a conditional relationship with the papers, with Walter's quote covering a couple of aspects:

> "the anticipation of trying to hear something 'cause you're reading about, somebody, a journalist, somebody telling you that you've gotta hear this song. 'This song is going to blow your mind'. And then that sort of the pursuit of finding it. And there's something great about that as well, when you were a kid…. Every now and again I would buy *Sounds* if I had the pocket money for it, but not very often. Usually if it had a flexi disc or something with it that was, you know, that was collectible or something that made it a little more appealing than just reading it" (Walter)

Walter brings into play a journalist's ability to act as an information source, and (potential) taste-maker, his desire to explore 'mind-blowing' music, the irregularity of purchasing music papers, and the attraction of a 'collectible' which raised the worth of the paper above just something to read.

For Frank, and for Phil, the press was "very, very important", however, significantly more participants expressly stated that they never bought or looked at the papers, either on financial grounds, or lack of interest in what others thought ("it would have bored me senseless", Nathan). In this, there appears to be an 'anti-press sentiment'. Jerry referred to his information source as being the local library, where he would look at "encyclopaedia-type things", and find out about bands:

> "'oh, ok … so they did some of these records I've never even heard of', and then trying to find somewhere I could get hold of them" (Jerry)

The role of paratexts as information sources has already been noted (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction'), and from participants' emphases they clearly outstrip the media in this regard. The scarcity of finances, and hence the relative lack of importance afforded to the papers is also demonstrated by Hugh:

> "you spent what seemed to be quite a substantial amount of pennies on a *Melody Maker*, you'd read through and there was nothing in there, well, of any interest and you'd think that you wasted your money … but sometimes there was" (Hugh)

Fred referred to a 'structural issue' of music journalism by saying that:

> "occasionally the journalism gives you the insight, but I find it hard if somebody's trying to describe the music musically, because it's very difficult, I think" (Fred)

and he subsequently provided examples of his present-day purchases being exclusively conditioned by listening to *Prog* magazine's free CD, as opposed to any associated review. As well as this structural issue, Nigel railed against reviewer (or editorial) bias, stating that the reviewers were either incapable, unwilling, or not encouraged to be balanced in their reviews of Progressive rock music:

> "I'm looking at *Melody Maker* and I'd see things like 'overblown', you know, 'ridiculously long, everybody was bored' and these are all sort of journalists who haven't got a clue, and that they think that the Zombies are good, or you know, and '*Sergeant Pepper'* is like, that was the pinnacle of everything, or something that you know that, no one's ever gone further than …it's like, it just blows your mind out how genuinely ignorant the comments were, they didn't look at the music, they didn't look at the musicians. They didn't look at the audience" (Nigel)

Nigel's quote brings into play not just issues of 'ignorance', but his defensiveness of that which he considers worthy of respect can be seen. Similarly, Frank commented on how critics frustrate him:

> "they haven't got off their arses and written a piece of music, and they slag off somebody who's made the effort" (Frank)

which indicates both the regard in which he held the music and or the musicians, and his ability for self-discernment, not least because of the relative lack of people corroborating his view. Fred noted how he distanced himself from his preferred paper choice:

> "it used to wind me up no end when people would slag off bands, you know, that previously those magazines have been lauding. And I got to a point where I stopped reading them for a long, long time" (Fred)

Macan, Martin, and Stump, have all commented upon the negative media coverage extended to Progressive rock. Macan has referred to the "largely antagonistic relationship" with the rock music press and provides an overview of Dave Marsh's, and Lester Bangs's unwarranted critiques (see Chapter 1, 'Introduction'). Martin contends that rock criticism's inability to allow for the "possibility of profundity in modern music" (Martin 2015 p.90) led to a discussion centred around sociological or consumer loci. As noted above and earlier, (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction') participants were attracted to perceived depth and profundity, and this focus would have been contrary to their preference. Stump has commented that "[t]echnical ability is anathema to rock criticism to a degree found in no other cultural sphere" (Stump 1997 p.13), although his point needs temporal situating. In the early 1970s, some of the journalists in *MM* did discuss this ability. American journalism of the 'gonzo' variety (such as Marsh and Bangs, see above) moved away from this, and British journalists followed suit, such that by the mid-1970s, with the advent of younger left-wing writers gaining dominance, drawn from the worlds of *Oz*, *IT* and the like, an outlet for this anti-ability stance was found in the 'ground zero' of punk[36]. Stump's general point is valid however, and Martin Orford, a musician of long-standing[37], has

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[36] For a journalistic historical recast of the 'prog/punk divide' see https://www.udiscovermusic.com/stories/punk-prog-more-in-common-than-you-think/ (accessed 22nd July, 2022).

[37] A founder member of IQ, and Jadis, who won the Classic Rock Society Award for best keyboardist in 2004, and appeared on two Big Big Train albums.

stated that he felt the British press were uncomfortable with dealing with musicians who were more intelligent than they were, and gives examples of critical lambasting (Romano 2014 p.225).

MM's early focus on areas valorized by participants would have pre-dated their exposure to that, or other, papers. By the time of their engagement with printed media, there was, as noted by the leading authors above, a relatively low level of support and promotion for their preferred bands and music. For this, and other reasons as noted above, participants drew not on the papers but on their own aesthetic discrimination to determine music choices: this further underscores the generation of their own cultural reference points through their personal 'mea cultura'.

As well as 'tastemakers', papers play other roles[38], with one of the most commented upon being the advertising of gigs, Murray specifically bought *NME* because it came out a day early and gave him a ticket purchase advantage for gigs. For others, there was less of an informative role, and more of an affirmation, which would have been important given the very limited numbers of people in like-minded social groupings:

> "we tended to buy *Melody Maker* rather than *New Musical Express*. But [pause] it was more of an affirmation of what we liked rather than finding out new stuff" (Alan)

Regarding the current day, *Prog* magazine was occasionally mentioned, and received relative praise compared to its sister (or mother) publication *Classic Rock*, ("basically most of the articles are being recycled now because they've just about covered all the classic rock bands", Oliver). Lily commented upon one aspect of *Prog* that she enjoys:

> "[It} introduced me to a lot of the contemporary bands that I tend to listen to more now and that really kickstarted it, you know, with the free CD given out with each issue, and I discovered *so many* bands" (Lily, original emphasis)[39]

Other music magazines such as *Mojo*, and *Q*, likewise attracted brief, rare mention, as did digital technology, although only a few participants noted any usage of digital radio, and none of them stated that they have engaged in digital subscriptions to music magazines.

Aside from the print media, with radio and television, *The Old Grey Whistle Test* ('*OGWT*') was very occasionally referred to, with Liam's introductory quote the exception rather than the rule. Simonelli stated that the *OGWT* was "dominated by progressive rock bands" (Simonelli 2007 p.109), and the music's marginalization on radio afforded it an "elite cult status" (ibid. p.107).

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[38] For an overview of this, see Vaughan Schmutz's summary which encompasses 'tastemakers', 'gatekeepers', 'intermediate consumers', and 'reputational entrepreneurs' (Schmutz 2009).

[39] The role of *Prog*'s free CD will be expressly addressed in the next Chapter.

Mike Barnes, in his analysis of the *OGWT* notes, however, that very little 'prog' appeared on the programme (Barnes 2020 p.375). As the 1970s wore on, it was the 'Progressive Pop' bands, such as David Bowie, Roxy Music, Queen, 10cc, ELO, and Steve Harley, that were afforded televisual exposure to a degree that far outstripped their Progressive rock predecessors and peers (Bennett 2020). More frequently, participants made reference to the *Friday Rock Show*, national, local and pirate radio stations, such as Radios Caroline and Luxembourg. The three American participants particularly found FM radio to be valuable in their quest for new and interesting music. For Trevor, whose college years were in the mid-70s:

> "you had FM radio stations that in the late night hours who'd play whole album sides and introduce artists that you've never heard of and stuff like that. And college radio began to take hold, you know this left of the dial weaker signal, produced by your local college. Well, they're not going to play Petula Clark, you know, or The Monkees. They're gonna play this exotic stuff you've never heard before…. Yes and Gentle Giant and a little bit of Hatfield and the North. That kind of stuff was really, that kind of stuff was really hard to find over here. You had to stumble into, stumble onto it, like at the used record store, and take a flyer on it and hope it wet your whistle" (Trevor)

Whether for American or British participants, the difficulty and irregularity of finding 'end of dial' FM stations or pirate stations clearly reinforced the sense of being in a 'secret little club'. Participants would listen to these stations for their own benefit, alone, and would not have a social group with whom such discoveries could be shared. Participants also commented upon how selections played by these stations (and not otherwise seen in the papers) would be difficult to acquire, again building upon the esoteric nature of their attraction.

The role of media outlets such as *Top of the Pops* and Radio 1 were, unsurprisingly, referenced only in negative terms, or, at best, for enabling an awareness of current music so as to engage in school conversations.

Sarah Thornton has regularly championed the role and importance of the mass media, its "diffuse role" being "an essential resource for all participants of music scenes" (Thornton cited in Driver and Bennett 2015 p.106), and how it is responsible "for providing youth with many of the visual and ideological resources which they incorporate into collective subcultural identities" (Thornton cited in Bennett 2001 p.22). The findings from this research would contest this. Participants to this research make clear its relative lack of influence and would not support Thornton's views on its essentiality. There was clear value afforded to those rare occasions when music papers, the radio, or the TV, promoted the music and was significant in providing inspiration and a form of reassurance to them; however, across the range of participants this was less marked than Thornton proposes. In his thesis, Matt Brennan found that researchers have determined that "music criticism somehow does not hold enough influence on consumer

choice to make it worthy of investigation" (Brennan 2006 p.222), which echoes Shuker's view that "there is general agreement that rock critics don't exercise as much influence on consumers as, say, literary or drama critics" (Shuker 2001 p.93). (See also (Jones 2002; Frith 2001)). Whilst no comparison was made by participants, the lack of influence stated by Shuker would be supported.

Martin has suggested that Progressive rock presents a paradox for the critics: if rock is an adolescent medium, then do we have to grow out of it, and what does it mean if we don't? (Martin 1998 p.87). 'Progressive' doesn't claim to be adolescent, but it is definitely rock. Participants to this research have clearly not grown out of it, and they demonstrate an enduring passion that underscores their long-held beliefs in the depth and range of meanings that they music holds. Deena Weinstein commented that "rock criticism has always defined the meaning of music in only one way: the ability, or anyways the desire, to shake up the world" (Weinstein cited in Macan 1997 p.173). Rebellions come in many forms, some less spectacular than others. Progressive rock instilled in its listeners a desire and a capacity to think for themselves, to explore other opportunities, and in their own way, to rebel against dogma. Participants found meaning in their Progressive rock musical choices, and associated contexts. Their meaning-making was conducted largely non-spectacularly, and mostly independently: this does not detract from, and, rather, could reinforce, the depth and duration of their personally generated cultures.

5.8 Socialization Practices

> "the community it's … it seems to me that it's more motivated by musicianship, all the things which you kind of admire about prog rather than just this, kind of, rock and roll lifestyle and wanting to be part of it" (Alan)

> "It's always very difficult finding people who share my taste in music to be honest [laughs]" (Frank)

Several Focus Groups spent considerable time discussing the social nature of music-listening. This in itself is noteworthy: individuals, unknown to each other, volunteered to discuss the isolated nature of being a Progressive rock fan, throughout their life, and the impact that that had upon them. For Focus Group 1, each of them described how they were considered weird or unusual at school, and how within their 'friendship groups' rarely, if ever, did others share their musical passions, and if so, not at all to the same extent. William explained how the small group that he was in didn't feel special, or that they were part of 'being something', to which Hugh immediately agreed. For Roger it was "just camaraderie". For each of these participants, they

were attracted to the music during the late 1970s, i.e., when it was, at best ignored, by the mainstream music press, and not considered fashionable. Within their group contexts, the participants shared how their interest rarely attracted negative criticism, that no "stigma" was attached to it, and on the few occasions that comment was made, it was relatively benign and or was considered irrelevant to them ("I don't care. I don't go along with others' views", Charles). Scott, in his late 20s, shared how his friends considered it to be "music of the past" and "dismissed" it. William remarked how he had never seen what he would consider to be "an army of prog rockers", and upon the Group being asked whether they had ever felt part of a group or tribe, they all immediately responded that they hadn't.

This Group's views represented the majority of the participants', with only a couple of exceptions: Roger and Ian both commented upon how at times they felt "ostracized" due to their musical preference, although that was due to indifference and others promoting their preferences rather than active criticism of the music. Mark's friends would say:

> "I'm not sure why you really, why you listen to that', but there's no antagonism or nastiness around. No overtones of malice as such, just differences of opinion, which is healthy" (Mark)

With regard to the Focus Group's view on 'an army of prog rockers', Julie, as discussed in 'The Live Experience', described how she and friends form an army of 'Hacketeers' with matching t-shirts for gigs, although it should be recalled that this was not claimed to be for display purposes, but to act as a "memory marker". This action was unique amongst the participants.

These comments reinforce the ease with which participants conducted their private Progressive rock enjoyment. At a formative time of their lives (as well as subsequently), their taste in music was typically met with indifference: a strong, meaningful reaction from peers could have led to a similarly active defence and necessary exposition of the music's relative merits. However, in the absence of this, participants were necessarily alone with their valorizing processes, and determining their own markers of meaning. This personal generation of values and culture underpins their enduring association with Progressive rock. Focus Groups 5, and 6, similarly reflected on this, noting that whilst *in principle* interacting within a wider group would have been beneficial, *in practice* this was not practicable, due to the absence of others sharing an interest.

Social Standing

> "The music was for me, and if other people liked it, then fine. And if other people didn't, I wasn't really that bothered" (Jerry)

Regarding social capital, and attendant benefits of being a fan of Progressive rock, elements of being (seen as) a nerd, have already been noted in this Chapter (see above, 'Elitism'). Participants routinely commented upon this being a non-issue for them. This is taken at face value: their apparent clear happiness with private listening and enjoyment; the role that Progressive rock played for them; and their claimed facility to, superficially at least, engage with others on matters of 'their' musical taste, all corroborate their proclaimed stance.

Regarding instances of explicit criticism, which may have had amplified significance during formative years, participants consistently expressed how this was of no matter to them and took the view that it was borne out of ignorance, of one form or another:

> "I think the majority of people who criticize Prog people have not really listened to it properly" (Connor)

> "that's your thoughts and I'm not going to kind of sit you in this chair to listen to '*Topographic Oceans'*, "this will change your mind", because it probably won't and would probably reinforce prejudices, so yeah, it doesn't bother me at all. In fact it's quite funny" (Alexander)

> "That's their taste. You know, I didn't. I'm not gonna get in argument about it because I know I'm weird" (Charles)

> "if you get it, it's fabulous. if you don't get it, then I'm not going to waste any time trying to explain to people who don't get it, why they should get it, if that makes sense" (Henry)

What is clear from the above is participants' indifference to others' indifference. There is an understanding, and a self-reflexivity, coupled with an ease with a non-spectacular engagement that provides them with a form of protection against negativity. As Philippe made clear, for him it all comes back to the music, and only two types exist: 'good' and 'bad' in the ears of the beholders.

Alexander and Henry's comments demonstrate an understanding that only a limited number of people will be attracted to Progressive rock, as discussed throughout this thesis (the sense of being in a 'secret club'). Further to Jerry's introductory comment, he went on to remark:

> "I wasn't the one saying 'you're so stupid, you need to listen to this music', I wasn't proselytizing in that kind of 'you must listen to this'. I would just be saying to people who I knew would probably like it, you should share this… And anybody else then they can listen to whatever they want to. Didn't really bother me" (Jerry)

This passive stance is representative of the vast majority, with only one participant, Wayne, describing how he was "properly evangelical" about trying to convert inhabitants of small Welsh villages onto a love of Marillion in the mid-1980s. Wayne's precise motivations, and successes, were not clear, and can be regarded as a significant outlier. Participants' listening habits in terms of private consumption, recognizing that their partners do not appreciate their preferred choice

of music, has already been commented upon. Steve said he was opposed to "foisting" his choices upon others, including his wife: "everyone is different. I mean I'm not into this sort of 'I think my idea is better than yours, go and listen to it', it doesn't work".

Wayne, and Jenna, both commented upon how they found comfort in being 'a bit different'. They gave insights into how this played out in the University environment when both met seemingly like-minded people: Wayne by his own admission, perversely reacted against others liking the same albums as him, as he felt his differentiation to be somewhat undermined, especially if their appreciation appeared to be relatively superficial; whereas for Jenna, University afforded opportunities for a greater sense of inclusion, albeit in a very small grouping, and one whose musical interests were tangentially related to Progressive rock music. Wayne's comment could be seen as an aspiration to social capital, or as a perceived threat to his sense of identity; however, it was clear that his reaction to this was one of withdrawal rather than any proselytizing. He found comfort in a group of only two.

As identified earlier in this Chapter ('Listening Experience', and 'Sharing Experience'), there were opportunities for participants to engage with others in small social groups. These can now be returned to, and viewed through the lenses of social or intellectual capital.

Participants, as discussed, are interested in the details associated with Progressive rock. Within small groups, this mundane capital[40] had value:

> "someone could learn something about an album, who produced it or who engineered it, which obviously we're very interested in, or something, you might find that one of the songs with the lyrics was written by somebody else, that somebody else told you, that you'd be generally, you would be *genuinely interested* 'cause it was more knowledge, I don't think there was a rivalry or anything […] you tend to stick together, you know [laughs]" (David, original emphasis).

David's assumption that *obviously* fans were interested in more knowledge is supported by this research. Alan characterized this as "organic exploration":

> "The motivation is kind of exploratory and it was fairly organic exploration. You'd find that because we were into the Nice you kind of look at what Keith Emerson was doing. So we looked into ELP and that led onto, you know, Crimson with the Greg Lake connection. But also, you know, sort of the Brian Davidson, Lee Jackson connection led to Refugee and it was, we didn't kind of just sit on these things. We would spread the word…it was a case of spreading the word rather than just sit on it" (Alan)

This desire to share and learn is also demonstrated by Murray, and Paul:

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[40] See Keith Kahn-Harris (Kahn-Harris 2007)

> "I don't think we ever got into a one upmanship thing. It was really to know more about the band and other people would tell me what they'd learned" (Murray)

> "I don't really think it's one upmanship. I think it's, it's very, it's all interesting to know what other people know and I think that most prog people are like that because they wanna get a sense of what other people are interested in. And I particularly noticed it, I went on that Prog Cruise, The Cruise to the Edge, and it's great for getting to talk to people about Prog because they've, because there are a lot of Americans on that so they see it from a different point of view as well. But they're all interested in the English bands. So yeah, I don't really think it's one upmanship, I think it's just trying to find the knowledge base of another person with something a bit quirky sometimes" (Paul)

Paul's enjoyment of 'Cruise to the Edge' can be seen in the same context as festivals, which were discussed earlier. Consistent with other findings, Paul went alone.

Regarding the utility value of this cultural or informational capital, whilst for most participants this knowledge base was for personal use, largely by necessity, other participants did comment upon its usage. The more extreme example was Ewan's, with Fred's, Julie's, and Jenna's, quotes being more typical:

> "it's really interesting, meeting other Floyd fans, because you ask them, 'are you pre-, or are you a post-Barrett, Syd Barrett fan?' And it's quite interesting when people, and I said that I like the early stuff, so when people say to me they don't like the Syd Barrett stuff, in my head I categorize them as the 'commercial Floyd fan'… *Dark Side* is a, it's a phenomenal record, it's an incredible, incredible record. But it's the one that everyone's got in the record collection. Whereas do many people have *Relics*, you know, is that in people's collection…. you can judge what type of Floyd fan they are, you know. There's like, there should be a Floyd scale shouldn't there!" (Ewan)

> "but I almost like the fact that sometimes I listen to stuff and think 'God, only me knows about this' and it's fantastic… occasionally you could drop that into the conversation at the pub about 'oh, did you know, X did Y', or what have you and maybe there is a bit of one-upmanship in that. I don't know. But it was also part of a desire inside me to have the knowledge for my own sake as well" (Fred)

> "it wasn't so much like what we were discussing earlier, like a prog snob situation of 'oh, I know this and you don't, it was more of a 'this is really cool, I want to tell as many people as I know because I think they'd really like it too'. So it wasn't about being exclusive and keeping it to myself, it was more about being inclusive and getting other people into it as well" (Julie)

> "I do enjoy that sort of thing, but not in a like 'oh well, you don't know, wow, my music taste is far superior to yours'' sense" (Jenna)

Observations have already been made regarding participants' private consumption practices, recognizing their partner's lack of reciprocated enjoyment. Ash's quote below indicates that a desire to share knowledge and interest can find other outlets. He referred to his recognition of relatively unknown extracts of Progressive rock pieces that are used on television, which would occur whilst he is watching with his wife (who is not a fan of this music), and when asked whether he commented on them in such situations:

> "I'm afraid I do, and for nobody's interest other than my own, I think so, but yes, I would do that" (Ash)

Jerry likewise commented upon how he recognized extracts of Progressive rock used on the 'test card' that used to be played when programmes were not scheduled for broadcast on BBC2 during the day,

Ewan's comment indicates a level of zealotry, (and pedagogy), probably beyond Wayne's "evangelicalism". Ewan's earlier quote on rearranging others' CD collections so that they are in the 'correct' order is recalled, and other participants volunteered comments upon their 'OCD-like' behaviour. Ewan's quote very much represents an 'outlier' position.

Scholars such as Matt Hills have commented upon "social hierarchies", with competition for "fan knowledge, access to the object, and status" (Hills 2002 p.46). Likewise, Henry Jenkins has stressed the importance of 'expertise' (Jenkins 2013 p.86), and Paul Booth has referred to how hierarchies emerge through "things like deep knowledge of the text, devotion of self to fan activities or quality of fan output" (Booth 2015 p.87), and a "hierarchical or antagonistic relationship with other fans" (ibid p.89). These characterizations are seemingly based upon a social grouping size and structure that is not evident, in this research, in participants' reflections. Moreover, the conceptualization of 'true fandom' along such hierarchical lines is clearly not supported by participants' quotes demonstrating an egalitarian and inclusive attitude. Julie's comment about not being a 'prog snob' is relevant in this regard. Participants had very few occasions and outlets for their sharing, and discussion, of Progressive rock knowledge. The utility of social and informational capital was very limited, both in terms of immediate and enduring value. The generation of this capital was largely for personal purposes, reinforcing and building upon participants' already largely formed perspectives, and contributing to their own 'mea cultura'.

Vroomen proposed a wider perspective through her research. She drew a distinction between "fans and regular audience members" (Vroomen 2002 p.68). She states: "for many fans issues of worth, how they are seen and see themselves in a cultural hierarchy, are crucial" (ibid. p.68), whereas regular audience members react without recourse or basis to "investment", and their emotional range can be varied, and independent of prior association. Fans are distinct from these members, and are invested in readily attainable artefacts and experiences, and are prone to emotional display; aficionados are involved with "objects of 'high' culture", and are more likely to be "cool and measured" in their reactions. This research partially supports Vroomen's findings. Participants' comments have demonstrated that they perceive their appreciation of Progressive rock as something that mainstream music audiences can't, or won't, appreciate,

clearly inferring a form of cultural hierarchy. However, Vroomen's distinction between fans and aficionados receives limited support. Vroomen's 'regular audience members' has more resonance with Kate Bush fandom than Progressive rock fandom, and this, structurally if not psychologically, does not permit the emotional dichotomy she proposes. Whilst not universally true, and not pan-meta-genre, Progressive rock fans can be seen to be, and see themselves to be, aficionados, and their passion, and their range and depth of emotion accords with Vroomen's 'fan'.

Subcultures, Communities, Scenes, and Tribes

The basis of this thesis's research is Grounded Theory. With reference to subcultures, communities, scenes, and tribes, all of which have been subject to extensive theorization, these conceptualizations were of limited relevance to participants. However, a survey of these social groups will help reinforce the differences between participants' lived experiences, and the consequent generation of their own worlds and cultures, and the assumed social nature proposed by various theorists. All such theories are structurally constrained, and participants' quotes, and analyses of them, underscore the concerns raised by Walser, and Bernard Lahire: Walser comments upon the complexity, multiplicity, and contradictory nature of personal tastes that undermine "sociological abstractions" (Walser cited in Keil, Cavicchi and Crafts 1993 p.xiii); and Lahire states that there is a need to recognise that individuals are "characterised by a plurality of social and symbolic relationships, carrying out their practices in multiple places and at multiple times", hence we should focus not just on '*inter-class variations*' but also '*intra-individual variations*' (Lahire 2008 p.167 original emphases).

With regards to communal activities, the relative unimportance of fashion has been noted above, consistent with a generally non-spectacular and individual engagement by fans with the music. Participants have also demonstrated an egalitarian "take it or leave attitude" towards others' indifference, or even negative reaction, and welcome the heterogeneous nature of the meta-genre's affordance. This is *contra* subculturalists' Gramscian notions of counter-hegemonic resistance, homogeneity of outlooks and musical preferences[41]. Participants did not engage in a defining of "boundaries of group membership as against other groups", a practice viewed as a prerequisite by Erik Clarke as one of the "main functions of distinctive subcultural style" (in Muggleton 2000 p.108)[42]. Cornell Sandvoss concluded that fandom, "cannot be

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[41] Kahn-Harris (Kahn-Harris 2007) provides a detailed critique of these elements, paying attention to their historical antecedents, and situating his critique in relation to extreme metal. The reader is reminded of the relatively close analogue of 'metal' and Progressive rock in terms of aesthetic appreciation, both by fans and by critics.

[42] For other explorations of these areas see Hill (2014), Dowd (2007), and Hesmondhalgh (2002).

defined through inherent principles of resistance" (Sandvoss 2005 p.42), and this is borne out in this research. Participants did not display or indicate resistance against any hegemony, other than through an aversion to 'Top 40 music'.

Macan claims that in the early years of Progressive rock there was evidence of a "music-based subculture in the truest sense of the word", one that was "united not only by aesthetic tastes but also by lifestyle and worldview" (Macan 1997 p.152). Whilst participants clearly did provide some evidence of a similar worldview, and lifestyle in terms of their consumption of Progressive rock (a wider perspective on this could not be drawn), their aesthetic tastes need to be differentiated from a macro-level alignment to 'progressiveness with no pre-set boundaries'. Macan based his assertion on Paul Willis's homological analysis of hippies (Willis 1978), and his reading of English counter-culture. Participants' unity of view was not achieved through subcultural social abstractions as discussed above, and the theories posited by the BCCCS are largely not supported by this research's findings. Willis's sample of hippies in 1969 bear little resemblance to the Progressive rock audience researched for this thesis. This research supports Andy Bennett's suggestion that subcultural theory should now be considered "unworkable as an objective analytical tool in sociological work on youth, music and style" (Bennett 1999 p.599).

As noted in the introductory comments to this Section, participants did discursively refer to 'community'. As an advance on notions of subcultures, Will Straw has advocated the notion of community as a useful framework for conceptualizing the communal appreciation of music (Straw 1991). Participants' reflections on their social settings reveal that there was little, if any, sense of an organic centering of appreciation within an aligned, geographically-centered collective unit. Participants' discussions of a *Progressive rock community* need to be rooted in their sense of awareness that a larger grouping of fans evidentially did exist due to record sales, gigs, and the occasional interaction with like-minded people[43], however their engagement with this *soi-disant* community was not an everyday activity, and neither was it an essential element to their enduring fandom. John Shepherd has argued that for a notion of community to have analytical utility then its composition needs to be relatively stable, and its members' "ongoing exploration of a particular musical idiom [is] said to be rooted organically in that community" (Shepherd 2012 p.244). Participants would not subscribe to this characterization, and the conceptualization of 'community' for them should not be taken as one that has theoretical utility[44]. Paul Booth has commented that there is a tendency to find that "the term *community*

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[43] Related notions include Gary Fine's 'idioculture' (Fine and Kleinman 1979), and John Fiske's 'interpretive communities' (Fiske 2010).

[44] See also Kahn-Harris (Kahn-Harris 2007) for other counter-arguments.

is applied after the fact, by fan researchers who are reading *membership* as an organization that they themselves have defined *post hoc ergo propter hoc*" (Booth 2015 p.87 original emphasis)

Although the complete absence of the word "scene" as a descriptor in participants' reflections is striking, through their description of their consumption and enjoyment practices, 'scenic notions' were brought into play, including the role of festivals that was discussed earlier in this Chapter[45] [46]. As well as the lack of a geographically-centred locus for a scene at any national, or international, level, participants' discussions revealed that scenes essentially did not exist for them at a local level, aside from the live experience discussed above. As will be discussed in the next Chapter, 'Paradox', even with the advent of internet-based technology, participants have a low-level of engagement with facilitators of 'scenic'-based interactions. Bennett (in association with Peterson) characterized the notion of scenes as being 'local', 'translocal', virtual, and 'affective' enabling new forms of 'collectivity and connectivity' (Bennett 2013; Bennett and Peterson 2004). The absence of any 'centring locus' (or loci) militate against the utility of 'local', and 'translocal', characterizations for participants. Timothy Dowd has suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on fluidity of membership, and inter-scene linkages (Dowd 2007b p.31). Participants, by dint of Progressive rock's, and their own, natures, demonstrated a facility to explore other styles of music, whilst not necessarily, and not negatively, engaging in 'axes of differentiation and distinction' (Lizardo and Skiles 2012 p.12). The notion of 'membership fluidity' is both axiomatic and problematical: axiomatic due to an inclusive stance; and problematic due to the (very) limited number of 'members'. Participants' views on technology undermine the validity of 'virtual' scenes for them. With regards to 'affective scenes'[47], these could be seen:

> "through more introspective gestures, such as the retention of a generational mindset whose most physical manifestation comes through the consumption of particular media - for example, retro music magazines [...] or perhaps simply through listening to music in the private sphere of one's home" (Bennett 2013 p.60)

In terms of consumption practices, this emphasis on introspection, private listening, and the importance of the music accords with participants' views. However, as noted by Vroomen, all scenic notions tend to ignore music affordances ("just let the music do the talking" (Vroomen

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[45] Progressive rock has no scenic equivalent of *inter alia* Liverpool for Beatle fandom, Graceland or Dollywood for Elvis Presley or Dolly Parton fans, or Nashville as a centre for Country music. Only one participant, Paul, commented upon a cruise in the sense of this. The role of the Canterbury scene, which is mythologized (see (Barnes 2020; Bennett and Peterson 2004) played no part in participants' valorization of Progressive rock.

[46] For a general overview of Straw, and Bennett's (and latterly with Richard Peterson) theories regarding scenes, see (Bennett and Peterson 2004).

[47] This clearly has echoes of Lawrence Grossberg's "affective alliance" among globally dispersed audiences (Grossberg 2004 p.326).

2004 p,251), and she ultimately dismissed the utility of scene theory as being rather too much a "study of musical production and less so to that of the productivity of consumption" (Vroomen 2002 p.104 footnote 12). As remarked upon many times, for participants the latter is foremost for them, and Vroomen's challenge is supported.

As a recurring theme, participants did not see themselves as being tribal, and as a descriptor was used to denote others, and participants' lack of emphasis on fashion has been noted above. In the context of tribes, Rebecca commented that she:

> "didn't feel strongly that I needed to dress like any one of those tribes or talk like any of those tribes. I sort of enjoyed the music […] I got welcomed in by small groups to go and listen to music" (Rebecca)

Regarding tribes, Fred drew a parallel with football fandom, drawing out a key difference:

> "It was almost like you support a different football club. But actually, I'm not going to give you a hard time because of it" (Fred)

This non-adversarial attitude has been consistently remarked upon throughout this thesis, as has the lack of hierarchies. With regards to tribes, Michel Maffesoli characterized tribes (or *tribus*) and concluded that the "*tribus* becomes the highest social goal for their members" (Maffesoli 1996 p.x) and that inherent transcendental principles of beauty are secondary to the collective experience[48].

As can be seen from participants' comments, Progressive rock consumption and enjoyment was not oriented towards social goals, nor fundamentally towards collective experiences (at least, not as a collective). The essential focus on collectivism renders it unsuitable as a theoretical base for participants' motivations.

In conclusion, for most participants Progressive rock was a 'non-movement', something that in their lifetimes has never been seen as in fashion, and therefore could never go out of it. This appears to be part of the attraction: as a non-movement, it allows participants, through an agentic postmodern lens, to define Progressive rock, Progressive rock fandom, their relationship to it and each other, and the meaning(s) of such, in whichever way they wish: the generation of their own 'mea cultura'. This Section has explored facets associated with participants' lived experiences of and perspectives on the social aspects of Progressive rock enjoyment. These views must be seen in conjunction with the Chapter's prior exploration of participants' essentially private, non-spectacular enjoyment of the music, even within more public settings.

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[48] 'Neo-tribes' considered more loosely connected temporal alliances (ibid.).

5.9 Conclusion

Two recurring themes are evident in this Chapter: the largely private and personal nature of participants' consumption and enjoyment of Progressive rock; and the primacy of text over context. Participants' usually solitary engagement was seen not only in domestic situations, alone and with friends, but also in public settings, such as gigs. Whilst the ability to interact with others was welcomed when it occurred, which was typically irregularly, it was neither essential nor, for a significant number of participants, desirable. They were largely indifferent to others' views. The attraction of the music, and the interpretative possibilities it provided, were sufficient for participants to explore these within themselves. Interaction could detract from their immersive experience, which could be transcendent in nature. The live environment provided an opportunity for the musicians to demonstrate their authenticity, in as unmediated a manner as possible, and for participants to validate their understanding and respect for them. Simultaneously it provided them with opportunities to discern differences that were important to them, but not, as far as they were aware, to any others in their social circle. Artefacts were enjoyed and collected primarily for the participants' own aesthetic pleasures, and theories associated with collecting were largely not supported. Participants did not expect their collections to outlive them, thereby granting a form of immortality, nor did they expect them to attract any cultural capital. Participants demonstrated some cognitive dissonance between the stated emotional (and financial) value of some cherished items, and their inability to locate them, or recognition that they had been lost.

Whilst participants demonstrated a strong attachment to Progressive rock as a meta-genre concept, their personal considerations of aesthetic worth enabled them, unconstrained by dogma or fashion, to self-determine what was valued. Participants, in the main, chose not to actively read and be influenced by the leading music papers, and had limited opportunities to take advantage of radio or television programmes. Whilst it is inevitable that some 'osmosis effect' will have influenced participants, this thesis supports those authors who have claimed that the rock media had less influence than others have claimed.

Participants' individual approach to Progressive rock music fandom was driven by necessity and preference, not by antisocial tendencies. However, the result of this leads to social theories that associate social groupings with musical fandom questionable in relation to participants' Progressive rock fandom. The possibilities for groupings beyond a handful of people were rare, and for a significant number of participants need not in any case lead to much social interaction. Participants were not motivated by notions of hierarchy, social standing, or for group identity.

This lack of desire for a group identity or image leads to the second major theme: the primacy of the text. For other genres or subcultures, fashion elements and display are important, even primary, aspects of association with a preferred music choice. Participants were largely indifferent to these contextual elements. Whilst some display was evident via t-shirts and the carrying of partially visible album covers, this was not a participant-wide activity. Further, it was recognized that such displays would largely attract minimal social capital, or even be noticed, due to the esoteric nature of that being displayed. Fashion statements were largely eschewed. The secondary nature of these spectacular elements was also witnessed in participants' views on the theatrical elements of some bands' live performances. Whilst they were valued, and could be seen to be complementary, the demonstration of musicianship outweighed the importance of light shows, and other spectacular elements. Anything that detracted from the opportunity to engage with the music, music that did rock, and was visceral, was not appreciated. This primacy of text over context can also be seen in the importance of collections and lack of a need for interactions.

This Chapter commenced with a proposal that there was a need to introduce a term, 'mea cultura', to signify individual, rather than wider societal, approaches to understanding music appreciation and the valorisation of music artefacts and history. This Chapter has addressed this: however, participants' perspectives over the range of issues associated with a 'mea cultura', and their views as explored in the preceding Chapters, are clearly not wholly aligned, consistent, or self-evident. A number of contradictions and paradoxes are evident. The next Chapter will explore these.

6   Chapter 6: The Progressive Paradox

Introduction

In this Chapter, participants' views on the nature of 'progress' within Progressive rock, and the ways in which they characterize this, will be explored. It will be clear that participants hold a variety of views on the nature of progression, or evolution, and how they value this within the context of their Progressive rock fandom. These perspectives reveal conflicts both at the group level and also at the individual level: these contradictions demonstrate a paradoxical attitude towards Progressive rock.

6.1   Contextual Perspectives

> "the decline of so-called progressive rock into a series of nostalgia acts is one of the great tragedies of the movement, and why it will never, you know, I don't know, I miss the… *adventure* of it, you know?" (Derek, original emphasis)

> "the question 'is the prog rock genre progressing?' is better couched as 'is it still alive and is it still representing, still offering the elements that we all fell in love with, that characterized that genre of music?'" (Trevor)

> "The slow cancellation of the future" (Berardi cited in Fisher 2014 p. 17)

Whither Progressive? Participants' views on whether the music, or their own tastes, have progressed were illuminating. As well as arising in one-on-one interviews, all of the Focus Groups (FGs) spent some time debating this. Several key themes arose from these discussions, most notably associated with definitions, and 'progression' vis-à-vis 'evolution'.

Regarding definitions, and echoing the discussion in Chapter 3, 'Contextualization', participants would situate the 'progressing or not?' debate within an ontological frame of the unclear definition of Progressive rock. This lack of clarity, which this thesis suggests is as much an attraction as it is a barrier to valorization, would be magnified in FG discussion, and the variety of nuances that would subsequently be expressed. Given the personal nature of participants' relationship to the music, and its meaning for them, the lack of resolution on this was no impediment to a dialectical conversation. Rather, the latitude this provided enabled participants to openly explore the matter, recognizing its open-ended nature. As discussed in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura', this was welcomed as a rare opportunity for participants.

Out With the Old?

Analysis of participants' perspectives on whether Progressive rock is progressing, or evolving, or not, and their general reflections on preferred bands for current day listening, reveals how some expressly delimit themselves to music from what has been seen as the 'golden period'. However, for these participants, distinctions were still drawn between revisiting bands and music originating from that time, and exploring contemporaneous bands of that era that hitherto had not been heard. For convenience this distinction will be expressed as 'old old' and 'new/old' music, respectively. Other participants were still eager to explore music from beyond that timeline, up to the current day, the 'new new', although distinctions could still be drawn between that which was seen as faithful to or inspired by the progenitor bands, and that which had no clear musicological relationship to them, it was seen as remaining true to a progressive ethos. This can be captured in this simple graphic, which demonstrates that participants can be party to more than one of these appellations. There is an obvious risk of reductionism in such a depiction, noting that Progressive rock music is heterogenous, and fans are multi-faceted, however this will facilitate some discussion, noting that participants can straddle these categories.
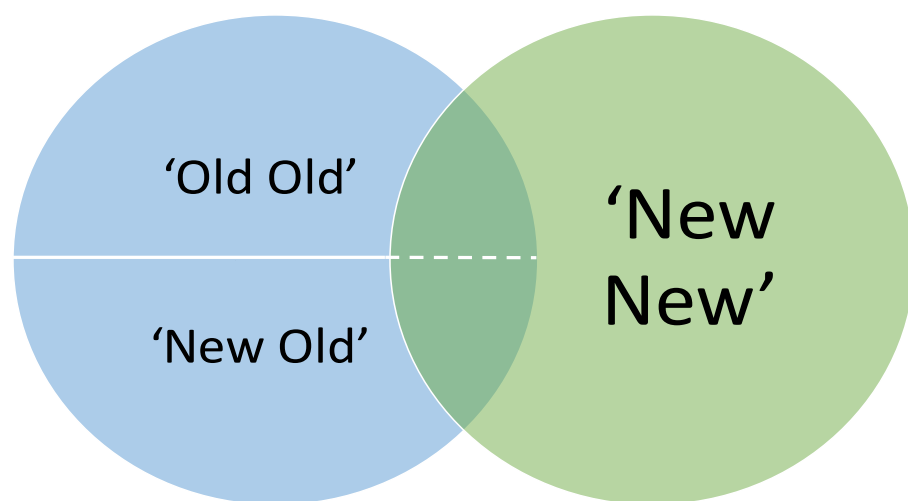
Figure 1. Conceptualization of Listening Preferences in Relation to Progressive Rock Music amongst participants.

Those whose preferences were geared to the past could be seen to be adopting a Romantic perspective, situating their appreciation in an idyllic past that they felt no need to (musically) move on from; whilst those whose leanings embraced the new (as well), could be seen to be adopting a more open perspective, consistent with their early engagement with Progressive

rock, where new meanings and new narratives could be explored. Perspectives arising from those within each of the above areas will now be investigated.

The 'Old Old'

Regarding those from an 'old old' perspective, Daniel was one who expressly positioned himself in the past:

> "I'm a bit of a dinosaur in the sense that I've got friends who try to get me into contemporary prog and I've been to a few gigs, I can't remember…. I'm a bit old school, for me prog started in 1968 and finished in 1978 and that decade of music I've got drawers full of CDs and an iPhone full of music, downloads of music and for me it's that decade that *is* prog, or what I think of as prog" (Daniel, original emphasis)

Aside from blurring what some see as a 'Prog/Progressive' distinction, Daniel's perspective clearly delineates a precise time period for when this music was of aesthetic value, and he resists attempts to explore beyond his self-imposed boundaries. Such a view was echoed by Walter ("I wouldn't say that I listen to a lot of modern prog bands these days. In fact, most of my listening tends to be from the 60s and 70s"), Liam ("this new stuff, it's just, I tried it, I didn't like it, and I'm not being biased"), Hugh ("I've *really* found *very little* in that what you would call prog rock that has particularly excited me", original emphasis), and Sophie ("I'm blissfully unaware […] I'm completely ignorant really of any Prog music after about 1978 I'd say".

Murray also commented upon 'new music':

> "I'm not really interested in the current bands. I know that's terrible, but I'm not, and I think a big part of the problem is there's so much I've got from the 70s that I could go around and not listen to anything new ever again. Terrible thing to say, but it's true. And with the Surround Sound new stuff coming out, your new versions of old stuff… So, for example, there's talk of Van der Graaf Generator coming out on Surround Sound and I get excited about that. I'd get excited more about that than I would the latest, you know, dwarf metal band from Norway or whatever it is, probably…. if I have time I'd rather go and listen to something I really want to listen to. I've very, I never listened to those CDs and if I'm honest they go straight in the bin…. because time is limited and I'd rather use my time to listen to stuff I know I'm going to enjoy" (Murray)

Murray's reference above to 'those CDs' is *Prog* magazine's 'free' compilation CD: participants were split roughly 50/50 on whether this was invaluable or never listened to. Murray clearly states that he would rather spend his listening time to "stuff I know I'm going to enjoy", recognizing how "terrible" this is, rather than explore new music, that will have variable and unpredictable aesthetic affordance.

As well as Murray, Paul, Scott, and Alexander stated how they found the free CDs of no interest:

> "I've just never listened to the CD that comes with it. Never. I never have, over hundreds of them. I don't know why" (Alexander)

In a similar vein, *Prog* magazine regularly has a column entitled 'Outer Limits' which explores bands not typically considered Prog(ressive). Likewise, participants who were aware of this, were split roughly 50:50 on whether this was of interest to them, with those stating their disinterest, accepting that it was from a stance of not reading it to discern how interesting it might be. For instance, with Lily, "If it's a band I've heard of sometimes I'll read it, but a lot of the time it's a band I'm not interested in or haven't heard of or, I don't bother too much with that column, I must admit". Lily's 'admission' indicates a degree of cognitive dissonance: a recognition that not wanting to learn about new bands is at odds with an overarching philosophy.

One of the issues that clearly concerns those who have listened to new Progressive rock is whether it appears formulaic (Scott) or a 're-tread' (Jerry). For Connor:

> "I don't think it's fully progressed yet. We have formulaic Prog. There's no doubt about that, you know. You kind of listen to some of the new bands, and as much I like bands like Magenta and Haken and the new Marillion, there's a definite formula to it and for prog to become a formula goes against what it started out to be. So, you know, we often talk about Crimson, whether you like or dislike whatever Mr. Fripp is doing, it's always progressive. It's always something different, and that's the ethos of what prog is about, to my mind anyway. Whether you like it or dislike it, is it progressive? Is it changing? Is it constantly evolving?" (Connor)

Alexander was one who reflected on an 'internal inconsistency' when it comes to engaging with new music:

> "I'm quite bad, I'll listen to something I haven't heard before, listen to a couple of minutes and if I don't like it I'll say 'nah', fast forward, move on to the next. So, I don't think I'd have the patience to listen to something I hadn't heard before, which is bizarre as it's totally against the point of it. Whereas there's some stuff I've listened to all the way through and thought 'ah, not sure about that' but have persisted and actually realised that yes, this is pretty good. So, I, it's just impatience really, and maybe I'm just not open enough, I just want to go in *slight* tangents to what I know rather than I'll give that a try, I've never heard anything like that before…. yes, it is internally inconsistent …. it's almost like a retrogressive thing for me, so whilst I'm open to new stuff I'm almost getting as much enjoyment from drilling back into back catalogues" (Alexander, original emphasis)

Alexander's refers to his "impatience", and "retrogression". In their early days of fandom, participants did not possess significant financial capital, and this, associated with the scarcity of purchase options (quantity and quality), necessarily imbued each historical acquisition with a degree of value that might not be accorded it in contemporary society with the almost limitless supply of (near) free music. Thus, symbolic as well as aesthetic value is associated with the purchases of yesteryear, and today's "sourceless" music (Marshall 2019 p.152) can be disposed

of, almost thoughtlessly. This enables those who are pre-disposed to views on current Progressive rock's aesthetic qualities to be able to disregard it in a way that would have almost certainly been at odds with the scarcity value associated with purchases in a pre-internet age.

Alexander's reflections reveal one of the paradoxes associated with participants' views on Progressive rock. These participants actively resist listening to, or reading about, new Progressive rock, from a dogmatic stance, at odds with their initial motivations and Progressive rock's attraction. Their initial attraction was based upon its originality, the elements of surprise, and the aesthetic attraction of dedicating oneself to an immersive experience. Whilst some participants still retain that approach, others, such as Alexander, recognize that they now occupy a "bizarre" position, one that is contrary to the ethos both of the music, and their valorization of what it stands for, for them.

This reaction against 'the new' also manifested itself within a Focus Group, when new possibilities arising out of technological developments were raised. Tim suggested that Progressive rock has:

> "kind of reached a point where it's time to move on to something else, and that signifies that an era has moved, not particularly that the title has moved" (Tim)

He suggested that a saturation point had been reached with regards to instrumentation possibilities, and also electronic development. 'Progressive rock' will move onto something beyond our current appreciation or knowledge, but it will progress. Parenthetically, Tim suggested that a form of VR- augmented 'progressive rock' will emerge, something that both Nigel, and Ash suggested in independent discussions. It is interesting to note that when these, few, suggestions were made, other participants did not react, either positively or negatively. This may be borne out of two key factors: firstly, age - participants were typically of an age where such opportunities are not appreciated, either in terms of technology or aesthetically; secondly, as discussed previously (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), and as will be revisited later in this Chapter, participants fundamentally want to retain and root their enjoyment in their own meaning-making experiences – VR-augmented technologies would be seen in the same, negative, light as videos, and therefore likely to be dissonant with participants' personally-generated interpretations. William commented that these aspects are:

> "certainly not what I'm looking for from Progressive rock music. I think it's a very different thing from a beautiful Roger Dean sleeve" (William)

Nigel was of a similar view, believing that "the imagination can be limited by the visuals."[1]

Whilst strict delineations are always prone to counter-examples, there was clear evidence that some participants gladly positioned themselves in the past, with the affordances provided through their engagement with, and understanding of, Progressive rock allowing them multiple and repeated enjoyable listening experiences. They were sufficiently self-reflexive to recognize the contradictions this presented.

The 'New/Old'

Related to the 'old old' and the "revisiting of old stuff" (as with Murry's quote above), participants also referred to how their exploration of the 'old old' led them to discover contemporaneous bands of whom they had no knowledge. This can be seen as a broadening out of musical exploration. It should be noted that the "old" for these participants was exclusively the first, or 'golden', period. In the current day, these discoveries are facilitated by new technologies (a discussion on these follows in this Chapter), and can be seen to be a modern-day equivalent of the exploratory techniques described by participants in previous Chapters (see Chapters 4, 'Complexity', and 5, 'Mea Cultura'). As remarked upon by Mark:

> "I'm still discovering new bands that were out at that time, that I'd never heard of before. And I think 'bloody Nora, that's amazing'. Sort of prog folk band called Trees. I just got a box set of their stuff and I think from '69 or '70, I think. How did I not listen to this before? … so I'm still discovering stuff from back then today. So no, it'll never happen, 'why the hell was I listening to this?', cause there's still so much stuff out there to listen to" (Mark)

Similar comments were made by other participants, for example regarding Nektar and some of the bands that had more of a jazz inflection, such as Gracious!, Jonesy, and Nucleus. As Nigel remarked:

> "I'm discovering stuff from the 70s and 80s and things like that I've never heard, and again, it just blows my mind. I wish I had listened to it at the time, but I didn't" (Nigel)

There is a blurring of these distinctions for some participants. The modern-day recreation of a '1970s sound' for today can be seen as an important aesthetic discriminator:

> "Wobbler I would class as an absolutely brilliant prog band. And they do have their own sound. But if you close your eyes, you would actually think that you were back in the 70s when you are listening to them. The Rickenbacker treble, you know, it seems to be a

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[1] It should be noted that in that Focus Group discussion, Trevor was of a contrary view: "I don't think it matters at all. It's kind of like 'to each his own'. And if somebody craves all of those other stimuli, then great, you know, bands can provide that to them".

Scandinavian thing. They all go for this kind of beautiful Rickenbacker sound. And masses of analog keyboards. Is that progression?" (Alan)

Frank, in another FG, also referred to Wobbler as being "enjoyable, but are they progressive?". This led the FG to discuss how new works by old bands could be received. Julie noted how Caravan and Yes had relatively recently, at that time, brought out new albums, which did not sound like their canonical works of the 1970s, which presented fans of the bands with a dilemma: how to balance judgements over their aesthetic qualities given allegiances, expectations, and desires. Whilst the bands are seen as 'Progressive legends' the albums were not seen by them as progressive. Tim concluded that the distinction needed to be drawn between that which you liked, and that which you admired, which was seen as a useful characterization in that discussion. Whilst these latter albums are liked, due to associations and attachments, they are not admired. This discussion should be seen in the context of the discussion in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura', which explored how participants are broadly comfortable with occasional perceived sub-standard works, recognizing that this is a natural, inevitable part of being a (Progressive rock) musician. The previous Chapter discussed how participants would be prepared to disassociate themselves from hitherto appreciated bands if their own aesthetic criteria were not being met. Their Progressive rock fealty was to the overall meta-genre (as self-defined) rather than necessarily and unquestionably, to an individual, or a band, as might be exemplified in other genres, and other fandoms. Participants within this segment were less polarized than those in the first, 'old old', segment. These participants were more likely, but not guaranteed, to (occasionally) listen to new music. Their grounding was still in the aesthetic of the first period, and not as philosophically open to new aesthetic experiences, as would have initially attracted them.

'New New'

> "If you haven't listened to it, how do you know if you like it? It probably takes two or three listens sometimes to get into it, but do you like it? If not then move onto something else but, you need to keep listening to new bands, definitely" (Milton)

However, for some participants, as indicated by Milton's quote above, there was a philosophical attraction to new music, and an openness of mind. As these participants, and their views, are more aligned to this thesis's explorations so far, these perspectives will receive less attention, given their non-paradoxical nature. However, some interesting aspects did arise.

Derek contrasted how, for him, King Crimson are genuinely progressive whilst Yes are not. He refers to a King Crimson tour:

> "that brief period when *The Construktion of Light* came out, they didn't even play that, they didn't even play anything at all from pre-'94, '95. And that's quite *brave*, and what

I'm trying to say is, I think a progressive band should be progressive, and when Yes fans want to hear Yes, like a classic album, they don't want to hear Yes make an experimental album that's genuinely progressive and sounds nothing like anything they've heard before, which is what they were doing in 1972. They want to hear Yes make an album that sounds like *Fragile* and that's what disappoints me about prog music in a way, and the fact that it's inherently become regressive" (Derek, original emphasis)

King Crimson, Peter Hammill, and Peter Gabriel have been singled out as examples of those who refuse to stand still, and seek to reinvent themselves (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.223). Chris Atton has noted how an attitude otherwise would be:

"problematic to a musician such as Robert Fripp, whose music has never been bounded by a single template, least of all the characteristic Romantic virtuosity of 'classic' progressive rock" (Atton 2001 p.43)

As Connor's earlier quote, and Derek's above illustrate, there remains an unpredictability about King Crimson that clearly retains interest.

As well as established bands from the first period, for many participants (Lily, Milton, Frank, Jerry, Derek, Paul, Julie, Philippe), there are numerous examples of new exciting bands and music, and they were able to articulate the names of these bands. It was noteworthy that the rollcall of bands championed by these participants was geographically diverse, significantly more so than the UK-centric perspective of Progressive rock's progenitors. Timothy Dowd has detailed at some length the growth of the Progressive rock festival scene, which has flourished despite the inattention from 'corporations, critics, and others'. He notes how 'festival events' grew from only two in the early 1990s, steadily up to more than 50 p.a. by 2011. The international nature of these is also highlighted, e.g., 29 nations hosting festivals[2], and 45 nationalities of bands participating[3] (Dowd 2014). Allan Moore, and Chris Anderton, have also noted the broadening and internationalization of Progressive rock, with 'very many more players than in its first phase', and the rise in audience consumption, despite its absence from mainstream media (Moore and Martin 2019; Anderton 2010; Anderton 2009).

Milton's opening quote refers to a philosophical state of mind, and this can also be seen in Nigel's, and Trevor's, quotes:

"if you talk to any progressive rock fan, they've been a progressive rock fan all their life, and they're willing to listen to new progressive rock. There's people who are massive, massive, Gentle Giant fans that like Spock's Beard, or … so, they'll listen to stuff. They'll open their minds to listening to stuff" (Nigel)

"flash forward to the past 10, 20 years, you've seen a real resurgence in Prog, not exactly like Prog used to be, but enough of all those elements to, for an aficionado like me, to sit

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[2] The most being held by the USA, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, and Italy.
[3] The most appearances being a band from Mexico, then Sweden, then Italy, then Netherlands.

back and say I'm excited, because Prog still exists, it's bigger and better than ever. It's never going to find the airwaves, you just need to figure out how to find it and find what of it that you like. Whether it's crossover prog or neo-prog or whatever…. who gives a shit? Who gives a shit! Artists will evolve how they evolve, how they choose to evolve, how they naturally evolve and what they become doesn't have to be a reflection of what they once were, but they in the process of so changing and evolving and growing or progressing or whatever term you want to use, part and parcel of that may be to similarly evolve out of one genre into another, or another, or another" (Trevor)

For some, Progressive rock's 'progressiveness', and attractiveness, can be seen in the 'new new' by virtue of positive comparison to alternative choices. Frank referred to his long-time subscription to the *Classic Rock* magazine:

> "I have to say in all those years I never found one new band that appealed to me. As soon as *Prog* mag started coming out, and the free CD that came with that, I've now amassed a list of nearly 200 new prog bands worthy of further exploration […] *Prog,* to me, are carrying the candle from way back when and they're taking it forward and they're doing it beautifully. So many of them, Kilver, Moonsorrow, God is an Astronaut, Cloud over Jupiter, Riverside… you know, tons of it. Love it. […] I suppose from that point of view my appreciation of Prog has increased because I think it's only in the field of Prog that they've kept the standard high, very, very high and naturally moved it on from where it used to be. I think any of those bands from back then, ELP, Yes, Rush, you name it, any of those bands would be delighted to see that their genre of music is being taken up and taken to new heights by the younger bands and I think that's brilliant" (Frank)

Frank's comment echoes those earlier (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity') where other participants have commented upon the depth, complexity, virtuosity and ambition of Progressive rock musicians, such that no boundaries are explored. This was returned to by Frank in 'his' FG, and Daniel and Paul both expressed their agreement.

Frank's quote also draws a line back from the current 'third' period bands to the 'first period' bands, with them paying due respect to their progenitors and being able to do justice to them. Moore has also lauded the 'extraordinary variety and vitality' of 'third generation' bands, and for him their musical inspiration being "born out of a deep fascination with the first generation is manifest" (Moore and Martin 2019 p.240).

Progression? Evolution? Or…?

However, whether this lineage represents genuine progression was problematical for some. FG2 spent the longest on this aspect. For Nigel, 'prog' is not progressive or progressing, rather it is replicating a sound from yesteryear. For him, there is a distinction to be drawn between

progression[4] and evolution[5], which, for him, is clear. For him, bands such as Arch Echo are of high aesthetic interest but whilst it's "just amazing musicianship":

> "this is really my point: is it any progression from Soft Machine or Mahavishnu? Those sorts of things that were going on at the time, and I and I don't see any progression in that, in that type of thing if you know what I mean. I think they're playing different stuff and they're maybe trying a few things out from stuff that's happened earlier. I think it's evolved rather than progressed" (Nigel)

Nigel went on to state that for him prog-metal, and 'prog-funk' belong to a different genre (despite the difficulties with genre definition), and should be excluded from discussion. Philippe and Trevor, however, spent some time disagreeing, believing that such styles are part of the same meta-genre, and Philippe cited Motorpsycho as a band that:

> "can be described as progressive, even if they can play some country folk music, some heavy metal some…, I think there there's a kind of prog feel in this band, even it's more present in their latest album, but they go from a sort of music to another one and in my opinion somewhat, it's what means the word progressive, is to be able to be influenced, not just a replication of well, the bands that we love, OK, but they bring something else" (Philippe).

Trevor agreed, noting that the "crossover" in musical styles is one of the characteristics of Progressive rock. His belief that Progressive rock continues to progress, and or evolve, was agreed upon by Philippe.

The discursive centre of gravity for this Focus Group was in the affirmative in regard to ongoing progression, and there was an emergent consensus that the distinctions between 'progression' and 'evolution' were essentially semantic. Within FG 4, the views were more polarized. For Alan, modern-day prog is seen as 'post-rock', with evidence of homogeneity and a formulaic approach, such that for him Progressive rock is "fizzling out". Tim sees Progressive rock as undergoing "a slow death". However, Lily and Julie both disagreed: for them, the prog-metal influence is one of the signs of ongoing vitality, with Lily's favourite bands typically drawn from the current period.

Derek suggested that the current understanding of Progressive rock needs to move on, and embrace other bands within its (ill-defined) boundaries. For him, in commenting upon current day Progressive rock bands:

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[4] Cambridge University definition of 'progression': 'the act of changing to the next stage of development', https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/progression, accessed 21st August 2022.

[5] Cambridge University definition of 'evolution': 'a gradual process of change and development', https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/evolution, accessed 21st August 2022.

"Well, I don't listen to them. And if I want to hear…I don't want to hear some five-piece band with a Hammond organ doing that old, great stuff in 2020. I mean to me a real progressive rock band of that kind now is Radiohead. They're a progressive band. They would be in with that lot if they've been formed decades earlier. That's exactly, and of course what they did, and this is what makes them more progressive than Prog, was they went from their proggiest album, which *is OK Computer* to *Kid A*, which is completely experimental. And that's what more prog bands should have done […] Prog and progressive are different. I think Radiohead and Bjork are progressive. I don't think Yes have been for decades and for that reason I'm not really, you know, it doesn't grab me in the same way" (Derek)

In 'her' FG, Julie cited Muse as an example of a modern Progressive rock band:

"They're very unique in terms of what you might call a more modern sound, or looking at their rivals, if you will, Radiohead. They don't use those kinds of progressions, but they're very much progressions that bands like Yes would have used in their keyboards, or Genesis for sure […] So, I think in certain ways, the characteristics of the first three waves of Prog are very much prevalent in modern music, and we're seeing that stretching all kinds of different genres like Avenged Sevenfold, definitely metal band, would be like all the prog, but the second, most recent album, *Stage*, that again had a 20-minute epic with a lot of orchestration, a lot of different changes. And their music, in itself, is very thoroughly composed, they have five or six different themes that they just kind of go through. They don't have like your typical ABA, or they don't have necessarily a journey perspective, like prog might have where you have your AAB, and then you've got this massive exploration of music movement and then back to what you know. But they're thoroughly composed" (Julie)

These views would support Hegarty and Halliwell's suggestion that:

"since the late 1990s progressive rock has renewed itself as a major cultural force without recourse to the musical vocabulary assumed to be the staple of all progressive styles" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011 p.2)

This thereby signifies that evolution and progression remain possible, with Hegarty and Halliwell providing a wider perspective than expressed by some, but not all, participants. (For Progressive rock's modern-day relevance, see Chapter 1, 'Introduction').

Simon Reynolds has proposed that music development is faced with a structural issue, in that post 2000 the absence of new identifiable genres demonstrates a lack of both movements and movement, hence, for him, the emphasis on retromania, the 20-year gap between origin and retro, and retromania's various manifestations with reissues, remasters, reformations, etc. (Reynolds 2012). Whilst the '20-year gap' hypothesis was not empirically tested, it is clear from these discussions, and those covered elsewhere in this thesis, that participants retain a keen interest in retromania as described by Reynolds, although they are split between those locating themselves in the 'old' and those embracing both this, possibly only via reissues and similar, and the 'new'. *Contra* Reynolds, as can be seen, for some participants new identifiable (sub)genres do exist, and forward movement is apparent. Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy tie certain music

to a fixed point, and see Progressive rock (and Britpop), as 'less easily mobilized genres', that are "intrinsically tied to an era, a mode of production [or] a Zeitgeist" (Borthwick and Moy 2004 p.3).

Participants' comments with regards to the 'new new' and 'the progression vs. evolution' debate suggest that the zeitgeist, *contra* Borthwick and Moy, can also be considered in terms of ideology. For them, and contrary to the above, listening to new (Progressive) music, is a *sine qua non* of being a fan of Progressive rock, regardless of its origin[6]. Whilst some participants contest that this 'new' is fundamentally not new, but a 're-tread', in the same light as Marillion[7], for example, were initially seen, and support Edward Macan's view on the exhaustion of possibilities reached in the mid-1970s (Macan 1997), others would refute this. Some authors, for example those identified in this sub-section, and some participants, as seen here, do subscribe to the view that genuinely new, progressive, music is being produced. For some participants, this 'new' exists in the form of extension into other genres, which is, as exemplified by Nigel, a contested point. This 'new' can be seen in the application of Progressive rock's ideology and aesthetics in adjacent bands and genres, whether or not they are considered 'Progressive'.

These differing views echo Mattia Merlini's work, drawing on Jennifer Lena, to suggest that there are two possible paths for genres to follow post their pinnacle: the "traditionalist revival" or a "renewed avant-garde".

> "So, now we have progressive and regressive. They are both continuations of progressive rock, but one of them is nostalgic and more faithful to the surface of the most successful amongst many forms of progressive rock (symphonic prog), while the other one is more faithful to its original philosophy and attitude, and so it is the only one being *literally* progressive today" (Merlini 10th January 2020 p.3 original emphasis)

Participant quotes cover this range, and internal inconsistencies and paradoxes are evident. Participants do not necessarily singularly align to one characterization, thereby highlighting the

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[6] Burns, and Hegarty and Halliwell, also refute such nostalgic characterizations (Burns 2018; Hegarty and Halliwell 2011).

[7] Given the Grounded Theory nature of this research, neo-prog's general omission from participants' enjoyment and valorization of Progressive rock means that exploration of their relevance is delimited from this discussion. The participants' quotes with regards to neo-prog were generally dismissive, seeing the bands as "copyists", and the music as a "pastiche" (which raises obvious questions regarding first period bands). This is best summarized by Randy: "I have sampled some of it, thinking I'm missing out on something and every time I do, I find myself thinking that's not up to the stuff, the level of stuff I like, and I can't even tell you why there's a difference. My gut instinct tells me it feels more sterile somehow than the old stuff, and I can't even tell you why [small sigh] …. stuff that's 'throw away' stuff for guys like Andy Latimer, if I'm listening to something like some of the bands that are neo prog rock, they just don't sound up to the same level for my taste for whatever reason… it just is not quite my cup of tea and I don't even know why".

risk of dichotomies. As stated earlier in this Section, Progressive rock music is heterogenous, and fans of Progressive rock are multi-faceted. What was very clear from discussions was the majority of participants were attracted to a relatively small number of bands, and an overall rubric of Progressive rock, consistent with the thinking behind it as a meta-genre. The depth, range, and complexity of Progressive music affords participants sufficient reasons for ongoing consumption, regardless of their elective practices.

The participants' split between Merlini's two characterizations was roughly equal, however this dichotomy fails to do justice to the nuances within. It was interesting that those volunteering for the FGs tended to subscribe more to the view that Prog was still progressing, or evolving, and were keen to hear and appreciate 'new new music', and enter into discussion thereof. It can be surmised that these participants viewed the FGs as an opportunity to learn from others. Those favouring 'old old' and 'new/old', again, as identified above, were roughly equally split, and can be seen to be more rooted to Merlini's 'nostalgic' motivation above.

These participant views provide insights into views on progression *per se*, and the progressiveness of Progressive rock. For some, even though they recognize the cognitive dissonance, whilst they were initially drawn to Progressive rock because of its unexpected nature, and the joy of hearing something new, exciting, and virtuosic, they have effectively delimited their experience, and valorization, of Progressive rock to a certain time period and range of bands. They have erected an ontological barrier between themselves and the 'new new', with various means of justifying their preoccupation with the 'old old' and, maybe, the 'new/old'. This paradox, as will be seen, is also borne out in other facets of consumption and enjoyment, such as the role of technology, and the improvisatory nature of the live experience.

6.2 The Role(s) of Technology

> "If there is any factor that is more ignored in popular music than the audience, it is technology" (Curtis 1987 p.3)

Regarding Jim Curtis's quote, this thesis addresses both the audience and new technology. The role of technology was raised by most participants, with YouTube and Spotify dominating their discourse, although the role of social media was also raised.

One-third of participants approved of and routinely used YouTube, with no-one actively critical of it. The proponents of YouTube uniformly remarked upon their joy in re-visiting the music of their yesteryear. Jethro Tull's Madison Square Gardens concert was one event that was regularly

mentioned, even though participants had not personally attended it (see discussion below on 'nostalgia'). Liam's comment summarizes what many said with regards to YouTube:

> "It's addictive…. you're on the all the time, you're surrounded by pizza boxes, going 'Oh my God, it's Billy Cobham from *Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1978, I remember seeing that'!... something pops in my head and so I look to see about that and usually it is there, it's never let me down really…. There's a couple of things on *Whistle Test* what I saw, and they're on there as well, but yeah, usually they've got everything, *everything is on there……* I do look for things on it, but not as much as I did. I was stuck on it for two weeks when I first got my laptop and it looked fantastic, so nostalgic, so moving, sometimes I were in tears or like 'oh God I can't believe I'm watching this again'" (Liam, original emphasis)

The relative absence of Progressive rock from *The Old Grey Whistle Test* has already been noted (see Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'), so Liam's rediscovery, whether imagined or real, of those moments has a rarity value that leads to deep emotion. He has now established a connection with this medium that 'never lets him down', and his less frequent usage suggests that this trust does not need to be tested. Regarding the 'old'/'new' schema, Liam had commented above, regarding 'new' music, that "this new stuff, it's just, I tried it, I didn't like it, and I'm not being biased", and this new technology enables him to sustain his rooting in the 'old'.

Frank, too, reflected on YouTube's addictiveness:

> "If you want to see Jethro Tull playing Passion Play in 1973, you can get that on YouTube and much better quality than the video I have, I think… I've managed to set it up on our TV, so I don't have to disappear up to the computer, and you get it on the bigger screen and it's so addictive" (Frank)

In this vein, Barry commented upon the 'exponential' nature of engagement with YouTube, how it "sucks you in more and more", akin to Liam's comment above.

Like Frank, Steve's setting up of his own 'home cinema' has already been noted, and for him this experience allows him insights that were hitherto beyond him:

> "I didn't get into *Tales from Topographic Oceans*. I bought it, well, I didn't really understand it 'cause it was 4 tracks, you know, each 22 minutes, and I think I got halfway through and had to go and do something else. And you can't do that with that music. You've got to sit and listen, and understand. Actually, now the way it's presented on YouTube, those four tracks, I particularly like the way it's been presented with the static pictures in the background" (Steve)

In the Chapter, 'The Complexity Attraction', it was noted that participants were generally not interested in music videos, instead, they have a strong preference for conjuring their own images. Steve's comment regarding static pictures, as opposed to a director's visual interpretation of the album, reinforces that point. Steve and Frank, and others, use technology to enable a more immersive experience, and find intrinsic and extrinsic value in so doing. Very few participants noted that they used YouTube to explore new bands, for them its role was

predominantly nostalgic. As with Liam, Steve is firmly rooted in the 'old old', with other comments of his throughout this thesis demonstrating that his enjoyment comes out of the discovery of new meanings upon repeated listenings.

Whilst YouTube was also mentioned in regards to its ability to recommend bands, Spotify was typically privileged, by those expressing a view, as the medium of choice in this regard. For example, Bruce:

> "I was listening to some playlist that Spotify put together for me that they thought that I should be listening to, and I heard a band called Airbag that I'd never heard of before, and I think I was ironing at the time, and I suddenly sort of sat bolt upright, this is pretty good, what the hell is this?" (Bruce)

Spotify's approach to recommending certain tracks, and how these were presented, attracted most comment. The one-third, with some overlap, who mentioned Spotify were split 50-50 between those who approved of it, and who described their usage in neutral language, demonstrating a utilitarian approach, and those who commented along the lines of Mark ("it can go to Hell"). Mark's comment was expressly made because of its commercial arrangements (he had also commented upon how he would buy directly from artists wherever and whenever possible). Others also referred to this aspect, albeit not so vehemently.

For Hugh, Tim, William, and Robert, the inherent nature of the music is compromised by Spotify. Hugh reacted adversely to Spotify 'chopping things up', and for Robert:

> "with Spotify, you always have, before you've even looked at it on the album, the ratings or how many people like the different songs on it. I don't want to see that. No, I want to listen to the album. And because the number of times it's being listened to is probably because the way it just gets broken down into individual songs and they get pumped by radio stations or whatever, rather than people listening to the transitions. If you think of something like … so with Coldplay albums, you know he puts little links in of about 20 seconds or something, which are very nice little musical interludes themselves. But [Spotify] stitch two things together, and somehow they are voted on as well and it doesn't make any sense" (Robert)

This 'not making sense' for Robert, and others, is driven by their perception of the algorithm privileging music/tracks that are most often played. Not only does this lead to a self-perpetuating circle of the popular attracting casual listeners and thereby widening a gap between the popular and the less, it also leads to a non-sequential ordering of the tracks. This prioritization of the popular and the "stitching together" is at odds with participants' preferred listening environments, as already discussed. It is also noteworthy that the participants identified prior to Robert's quote are all primarily situated in the 'old old' segment: as with Liam and YouTube, their engagement with new technology is motivated by a desire to revisit the old music of their past. Further empirically-based research could determine the extent to which

participants who share the views of those identified in this sub-section situate their exploration of the 'old' with the use of 'new' technology, and how they rationalize this.

As well as using new technology to access music digitally, a minority of participants explicitly stated a need for ongoing physical, rather than digital, acquisitions (Frank, Fred, Murray, Milton, Randy, Daniel), although this number is augmented when considered in conjunction with the sub-section on 'Collecting' (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), with box-set acquisitions. No participant stated that they had moved completely into a digital world. Younger participants also commented upon the joy of vinyl. As Mark remarked:

> "if the only way I could listen to it is to get the MP3, WAV, whatever type file, then so be it. I'll get that. But I wouldn't really be going out of my way to keep the video somewhere in my collection, 'cause I wouldn't find it interesting to look back on, frankly" (Mark)

These acquisition practices and preferences reveal no bias towards 'old' or 'new', age, or gender, and can be considered to be independent of these variables.

Other aspects of technology were touched upon. Online chatrooms and forums were considered by all who expressed an opinion as being something to be avoided, at least in terms of active engagement. (The reader is reminded that participants to this research were not found through online chat rooms. Data scraping technologies (see for example (Dowd, Ryan and Tai 2016; Ahlkvist 2011) rely on public commentaries. Researchers conducting a similar project to this, but using online sites to find participants, would likely derive different findings). Murray was unequivocal on his view of online technologies:

> "No no no no no no no no no, that way lies madness. I don't mind reading Progressive Ears[8] and I don't mind reading Steve Hoffman[9], but I think there's enough bad will and ill temper and just general social illness on social media. I don't wanna, I don't really want to get involved in that…. I'm not sure I want to engage with people, and I'm not sure people are interested in my view on, you know, neo-prog versus classic prog, or 'what is prog?' You accept it, of course, but you know… So I enjoy reading them, but I've got no desire to get involved…. It's a time sink" (Murray)

Fred and Derek are also wary of them. For Fred, "there's always everything up to 11 a little bit with the responses of some people", and for Derek:

> "I've learned to stay away a bit. I used to, and I got caught up in these tirades against people [laughs] and it's just not good for you… [Steven Hoffman's site is] the most bizarre place and I'm kind of addicted to it as a kind of horrified car crash onlooker, because that's full of people discussing mastering of records [laughs], and 'this is a better master than that one. Here is a graph I've made of the dynamic range of a 30 second clip I've heard on MP3 on YouTube, and that proves that's the better master'! And it's entirely full of people

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[8] A fan-based chat room forum for Progressive rock fans. http://www.progressiveears.org/forum/.
[9] A general music-based chat room forum. https://www.stevehoffman.tv/.

who don't listen to a record and see if they like it. They consult the graphs on their laptop before they make a decision. And they're often wildly wrong" (Derek)

Derek's 'horrified car crash onlooker' neatly summarizes the views expressed. As discussed in previous sub-sections, participants have an attention to detail, and an appreciation of what non-fans might perceive as trivial facts. Derek's observation that those obsessives are 'often wildly wrong' gives an insight into both this, and a reinforcement of participants' essentially private, solo enjoyment of their music. Fred's comment is in regard to Big Big Train's 'Passengers', a club he belongs to not for interaction, but so that he can get privileged access to tickets.

Participants' uses of technology, primarily for their own utilitarian purposes, and their active rejection - or minimal utilization - of it as a networking tool stands in stark contrast to how Matt Hills has referred to online activity leading to a "network of local cultures", and a consequent "nonstop process of social effervescence" (Hills 2002 p.181). Participants' predominantly lone consumption and enjoyment of Progressive rock was explored in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'. Whilst, by definition, the internet enables more 'in-person interaction', it must be remembered that this would be from a very low base for participants, as regards discussing Progressive rock. Hills's research privileges those already so engaged, thereby generating a self-fulfilling prophecy. As already discussed, participants to this research are largely 'unspectacular' and represent an under-researched area. To base research on them from a digital standpoint would be epistemologically flawed. As discussed in Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura', participants' behavioural and thought patterns do not align with those characterized by commentators on other music-based 'scenes'. There is limited, although not non-existent, appetite to take advantage of an enhanced ability to interact with strangers, and to develop relationships borne out of a possible shared appreciation of musical taste, via new technologies. Therefore, Hills's findings receive limited support, with no evidence of 'non-stop social effervescence'. Participants' engagement in these respects underscores the arguments posited in 'Mea Cultura': both music-meaning and music consumption are largely solitary activities, both by necessity and desire, and there is minimal attraction with spectacular forms of fandom, with the music itself being privileged.

Tonya Anderson found that:

> "the present-day Internet culture of Duran fans has not replaced in-person communications; rather it has become a networking tool that enables more in-person interactions to take place" (Anderson 2012 p.34)

For participants to this research, "in-person communications" have not been replaced, largely because they were rarely entered into, and so whilst it is essentially axiomatic that the internet enables more of these, to characterize it as Anderson does for Duran fans, would be to over-represent its worth in this aspect of socialization.

Improved technology has, however, enabled enhanced consumption practices, in terms of audio fidelity. A limited number of participants remarked upon the additional aural opportunities afforded by Surround Sound technology: the cost factor is likely to be prohibitive for some (as well as other domestic concerns due to sufficient space, or tolerance by one's partner). Julie was one who was able to experience this enhanced audio experience, and described:

> "new and exciting ways of listening, like the surround sound, I think is *really* special…, like the beginning of Neil Peart's drum chimes in 'Xanadu', like you pay attention, but you only pay attention so much when you actually feel like you're sitting in the seat, you can actually hear things you haven't possibly heard before" (Julie, original emphasis)

Steve commented in similar terms when re-visiting *Delicate Sound of Thunder*:

> "I played it and shut the curtains and the light show was absolutely tremendous, revitalized my thinking on music" (Steve)

These comments reinforce those made in Chapter 4, 'The Complexity Attraction', regarding immersive and repeated listening. Participants routinely find something new and of interest when re-listening to Progressive rock. This maintains the excitement and adventure that participant quotes made earlier in this Chapter emphasized, regardless of preference for 'old old', 'new/old', or 'new new' (Julie is clearly in the 'new new', just as clearly as Steve is in the 'old old'). As well as Surround Sound, the remasters that are now being issued was commented upon, although again these were relatively few, possibly reinforcing their cost-prohibitive nature:

> "I find that surround sound really opens it all up. It's just, I say that, you know, you listen to something like *Lizard* or *Close to the Edge* on Surround Sound, it just opens it all up. It's just like hearing it again, fresh…. I think Jakko tends to get a bit of stick, 'cause Jakko probably changes the mix. I think Wilson remains fairly faithful. For me I have no problem with someone changing the mix because you've got the original, and sometimes it's nice to hear something different, but I think Jakko really got it, he changed the mix quite considerably on *Brain Salad Surgery*, probably a mistake [laughs], but he really got it for that" (Murray)

Murray's detailed commentary regarding the respective styles of remastering engineers on these aspects set him somewhat apart from most other participants. His quote does, however, reinforce points already made with regard to attention to detail, and a personal appreciation of minor differences, a willingness (or even joy) in hearing different versions, and a tolerance for differing approaches.

In terms of a wider discussion, FG 3 spent most time discussing this aspect. Mark noted that:

> "sometimes some of these amazing albums that we listen to today would never ever have been released if it hadn't been for the fact that technology is changing" (Mark)

and Ian considered that the use of improved technologies was "additive", also noting that with:

"some of the innovations they came up with to produce a sound, and some of which you really have to work hard to actually hear the impact of what they'd done [laughs]. No, I think it's great news" (Ian)

Ian's comment, laughingly made, about the back-, rather than fore-grounding, of the benefits of technology reinforces participants' valorizing of the musicians' skill as musicians, and composers, rather than an emphasis on technology's use *per se*. This point in particular was discussed by Barry. He reacted negatively to the 'over-use' of modern technologies, with the proliferation of ProTools, over-compression of tracks, and the like. When challenged over his rationale, given Progressive rock's historical embrace of technological advancements, his response was:

"That's interesting isn't it because, so why do we now, why am I rejecting it in a way? Perhaps it's moved too fast. Perhaps it's gone beyond my mental sort of appreciation or capabilities" (Barry)

Barry's comment underscores how technology should not become dominant, and should be seen as supportive, rather than a goal in itself[10]. Paul Stump has referred in overarching terms to 'technology feeding ambition, which feeds technology' (Stump 1997 p.20). Participants' quotes can be seen as supportive of this; however, a crucial caveat is evident. The technology-ambition-technology linkage has to remain a closed loop system, geared towards the production of music that remains of value. Technology for its own sake is not valued; however, technology in service of ambition, which results in music that has aesthetic value to participants, is highly valued. This reinforces the points made in the previous Chapter, 'Mea Cultura', regarding the subsidiary role that technology, and spectacle, had in the context of the live environment, i.e., it was to be in service to the music, with as little mediation as is practicable.

The points made in this Section, taken together, demonstrate another paradox within participants' appreciations. Bands and musicians were praised, and appreciated, for their exploitation of the latest technologies, their forward-oriented explorations being seen as part of the *sine qua non* of being a Progressive rock musician. The Section on 'paratexts' in Chapter 4, 'The Complexity Attraction', noted how inner gatefold sleeves such as Rick Wakeman's *Six Wives of Henry VIII* attracted participants, with Wakeman being surrounded by a variety of new, technologically-advanced instruments. However, in contrast to Progressive rock musicians' forward orientation and exploitation of technologies, technology's role for a significant number of participants was retrospectively geared, its purpose seen as enabling of a new appreciation of the old. For these participants, the live experience could benefit from spectacle afforded by improved lighting rigs, for example, but not at the sacrifice of the music itself. Keyboard

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[10] ELP, and other bands, would sometimes be referred to in terms of 'techno rock' or techno flash'.

technology advancements, as another example, could reduce the number of keyboards required on stage, however there was still an expectation that the music would be played without the aid of pre-recordings. Streaming platforms allow for a more intense, personal experience, providing breadth and depth to the consumption practice, however, as a facilitator to greater interaction with other fans, this social aspect is not favoured. Technological advances were largely viewed through a narrow, utilitarian lens, and could be applied equally whether participants' leanings were towards 'new/old', 'old old' or 'new new'.

Attention has been re-drawn to the live scene. This environment provided an opportunity for Progressive rock musicians to improvise. As will be seen in the next Section, this, too, provided paradoxical reactions from participants.

6.3 Improvisation

"I prefer them to sound like the album, but noisier" (Jeremy)

'Why did I just pay £30 to listen to the album really loud? I'd rather they do it a bit different" (David)

"I don't buy live albums because I prefer to listen to the studio album […] I like the studio version, I like the perfection" (Lily)

"I want them to play, to improvise. I'm not one of those that, I bought the record, it must sound like that. I'm there first and foremost [pause] my passion is their passion, their craft, their musicianship. That's the underlying thing, it's the craft" (George)

Consumption practices, and their relationship to new readings, are not confined to recorded media, but are also evident in the live context. Participants frequently commented upon the attractiveness, or otherwise, of hearing something for the first time in this environment, and this both reflects on above points and also foreshadows a discussion later in this Chapter on 'the canon'. Whilst 'improvisation' is used as a catch-all term for this aspect, it is recognized that there is a clear distinction between genuine improvisation (such as more typically would be presented by King Crimson, or Henry Cow) or structured, pre-planned rearrangements of tracks (such as more typically would be presented by Genesis, or Yes). Participants conflated these aspects, and the research approach did not allow for a greater exploration of this. This might form the basis of further research, based on the findings below, although, as noted in this thesis, the bands more appropriately associated with genuine improvisation were less familiar to the majority of participants.

The role and importance of improvisation was frequently commented upon during the research, with almost three-quarters of participants expressing a strong view; most of these comments expressing a strong, albeit qualified, preference for it. The range of views are indicated by the introductory quotes above. For participants, several elements were in play: improvisation enabled them to feel part of a unique experience; for them to demonstrate, to themselves, that they were able to recognize and distinguish improvised sections; for musicians to demonstrate their musicianship; and for a sense of excitement to be generated. For those who were less enthusiastic, there was an acceptance that a limited amount of improvisation could be acceptable, however, this was clearly more an exception than an expectation, and 'messing about' needed to be avoided.

> "I'm not a fan of messing about too much with the tracks because I think they are a thing of, you know, I like… maybe live, the pieces change slightly if the lyrics, going a different way, that's OK, but I do get annoyed, some bands just go off and do a, you know, three-minute solo, of some description, that's just, you go, 'what was that?' I really don't get it" (Jeremy)

> "there are some things that are so classic, particularly some of the guitar solos or some of the pieces that it doesn't come, sometimes it just doesn't come over right if they don't play that. And I think a lot of those bands realize that, so I think they kind of play it straight and then they start improvising, so you end up getting extended versions of songs, which is fine. I don't have a problem with that. But I think, you know, if you turned up and you saw, […] my favourite Camel track, for instance, is 'Lady Fantasy'. I absolutely know that track note for note. So, it's kind of off-putting if one of the notes isn't there" (Oliver)

Manuel stated that it was the original versions that he fell in love with, and hence, that which he wanted to hear exactly reproduced.

Jeremy and Oliver's comments both reflect a degree of expectation around what is acceptable, and indicate a degree of inner dissonance if the basic text is not adhered to, a form of dislocation from their grounding in the music's resonance for them, and associated reflexive connections. Colin also referred to the dislocating aspect, although in so doing he reflects on his teenage self, whereas more recently he is more relaxed:

> "As a teenager, devastated, you know, because you knew every word, you know the riffs, you knew everything. So, you were sort of humming it, singing it and whatever, and then if they started playing it differently, you just, you just didn't know where you were" (Colin)

Oliver's quote above also more explicitly draws attention to canonical moments, or songs. This was an area of consideration for several other participants, with the importance of fidelity to the original at certain points being stressed:

> "I think certain things need to be played as they were recorded. You wouldn't really want to go and see Yes playing 'Close to the Edge', and then they go off on a tangent in the middle of that, I don't think that's really what we want as an audience" (Connor)

> "There are certain parts of every song or the arrangement that you *expect to hear*, and there are some bits where it's quite free really, and that's what you want. That means they're playing properly to me" (Tim, original emphasis)

This area is significantly nuanced: for participants, within Progressive rock, improvisatory elements can be expected, or accepted, depending upon a certain song, or the band in question. However, there was no consensus amongst them as to where the improvisatory locus is situated, or why. This is clearly a very personal decision.

> "I am quite puritan, really. I quite like pretty similar to the way it's set out, but some improvisation is absolutely brilliant. You wouldn't expect to go and see King Crimson and not get some form of improvisation. On the other hand, when Chris Squire, well, actually Billy Sherwood as well, when they do 'And You and I', and they use a bit of harmonica in it, it drives me crazy because A) harmonica is not a prog instrument and B) it didn't appear on the original kind of instrumentation in the album. They were doing it in kind of a fun way, but I don't actually like the way that some things are interpreted or redone. Most of the time I don't mind. There are a couple of Steve Hackett things when he does the Genesis Revisited tour, 'Los Endos', he messes around with, he inserts one of his own pieces in there. And that kind of loses a bit of the original feel. 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it', it's what I might say" (Alan)

Steve Hackett's re-interpretation of other tracks was also commented upon by others. In FG 3, Milton and Mark discussed how there seemed to be an attitude of "well, he's got a saxophone and he might as well use it" (on 'I Know What I Like'), with them concluding "well, some people seem to like it". Whilst Milton and Mark agreed on their point, they were prepared to acknowledge, albeit with an air of either bemusement or somewhat begrudgingly, that this was an aspect enjoyed by others.

Whilst this 'improvisation, but only to a degree' comment was not untypical, participants were unable to be precise over what texts, or sections of texts, especially some solos, were considered canonical. These observations need to be considered in conjunction with the views expressed in the sub-section regarding tribute bands (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), viz., the expectation that they reproduce the original material faithfully, although if it was possible to recreate a jam in the style of the originals that *might* be acceptable. ELP, and Keith Emerson in particular, were often cited with regards to improvisation, although the need for 'landmarks' or signposts was stressed by several participants, as a way of countering Colin's loss of knowing 'where you were'.

> "for the likes of Keith Emerson, I mean, he was very good at doing that. I mean, you know, you'd go there and see them and they would play the album as you know it. And if there was some improvisation in there, you know, it would fit in because you could almost follow the improvisation, and then he would go back and you would get back to the beginning and then continue to follow the structure" (Lily)

> "some similarity to jazz to some extent, if you wander off and do, I don't know, an unwise drum solo, a tautology some would say, but then it *bette*r be based on something that's familiar. Otherwise, what's the point?" (Ash, original emphasis)

Ash's "otherwise, what's the point?' was also echoed in most of the FGs by discussions around the perils of self-indulgence (with classic rock bands typically being cited as examples of such). Ian's comment summarized views, in that you need a "recognizable core", that can be "embellished", however if the musician strays beyond it being recognizable, then "it's for your pleasure, not mine".

For some, the improvisatory aspect was fundamental to the live experience. For Tim, it provided excitement and a sense of anticipation (he noted a stark contrast with REM's studio-quality reproduction in the live environment). For Nigel, he found this aspect "fascinating", and was "awed and inspired" by it, with it representing another opportunity for the musicians to demonstrate their virtuosity. Daniel and George both referred to this in terms of their "stagecraft". As Alexander stated:

> "if they just did hundred percent fidelity, recreated what was on the CD, then why did you leave your house kind of thing?" (Alexander)

A lack of improvisation represented a "missed opportunity" for William, Randy, and Mark:

> "My brother hates live shows and live recordings, because they're just not the same as what you hear on the radio. And I've always thought 'what?! What are you saying, that doesn't make any sense to my mind', 'cause I'm the opposite, and I want to hear varieties, improvisation. That's what drew me to Emerson, Lake and Palmer's early works, of course, was so much improvisation seems to be going into a lot of this, even though it's a studio album, it sounds improvised, and that's the beauty of progressive rock. That it can be, I think, more improvised than other types of music many times [....] if they can recreate it exactly the way it was on the studio., more power to them. But I liked that, I liked the unexpected nature of what improvisation meant and I would think that's what also draws me to progressive rock, as one of my types of music that I like so much, is that ability to be surprised, when I hear some music. Unpredictable, there's another way to say it, unpredictable" (Randy)

> "it's funny you should say that because the thing I love about Prog rock is it were, is the fact that it lends itself to improvisation, and it lends itself to extended sections" (Mark)

Randy's and Mark's comments bring into play nuances associated with 'apparent improvisation' in the studio, and the distinction between improvisation and extended sections in the live environment.

Most of the above observations can be seen to fall into the 'new/old' and 'old old' categories. One participant vividly explained a 'new new' experience.

> "I like them to do a bit more than just what's on an album. I don't expect word for word or note for note. And I mean one of the best things I think I have heard was Phideaux, when they came over to Summer's End they were writing their album *Snow Torch* and they'd got halfway through this, the title track, that they had written, and they admitted that they'd only got halfway through this track, and they said 'well, we don't know how to progress this track and what we want to do is, we want to improvise and we're going

to record the improvisation that we're going to do here and, and that's going to be how we're going to finish, how we're going to finish the song for the album, if that's OK with you'. And of course that was OK with us at the gig. And that's what came out on the album and I thought, '*wow*, that is jus*t unbelievable'*. I've never heard anything like it and I've never known a band to do something like that, and the skill involved in improvisation at that level is just unbelievable to me. And off they went, and they did it, and it's, what, like a 20-minute track. And it was *just great"* (Geoff, original emphasis).

Analysis of participants' responses with regards to the attractiveness of improvisation, and their place in the 'old'/'new' schema revealed that whilst there was a correspondence between 'new' and a preference for improvisation, and vice versa, statistically speaking this would be seen as weak. A secondary level of analysis reveals that Liam, who is clearly in the 'old old' category, refers improvisation, and is a keen fan of King Crimson. By contrast, Alan, who self-declares as "puritan" with regards to improvisation has an encyclopaedic knowledge of new bands, particularly from mainland Europe (who he regards as more truly progressive). This demonstrates the multi-faceted, and heterogenous, nature of Progressive rock fandom. Further research dedicated to this aspect, and possibly others, would likely bring out additional richness.

These diversities of views, and participants' motivations, not all of which they were able to rationalize, present challenges to musicians wishing to improvise on stage. If this aspect is desired by the performers, then a delicate balancing act needs to be established so as to cater to audience expectations and wants. As with participant comments with regards to landmarks and signposts, Bill Martin notes how "melodies are composed and improvisation is contained within a comprehensible structure" (Martin 1998 p.3), this being attractive to Progressive rock fans. Edward Macan has also commented upon improvisation, and the need for landmarks, as used by Keith Emerson (Macan 1997 p.161), and how "by and large progressive rock musicians showed a marked distrust of free form improvisation" and tended to reproduce studio works in the live environment (Macan 1997 p.160).

Macan situates this "free form improvisation" within the free jazz movement, and for Mark Shannon, Progressive rock fans were 'refugees' (Shannon 2017 p.75) from the innovative jazz of Taylor and Coleman. The reference to 'jazz refugees' is an important point. All participants valorized, although not exclusively, those bands drawn from 'the symphonic orthodoxy', and particularly bands from the first period, or golden age. Whilst some participants, such as Nigel and Connor particularly, commented positively on jazz-rock crossover bands, such as The Mahavishnu Orchestra (although there are many other examples), this thesis has brought out participants' general perspectives on jazz, and how virtuosity had to be tempered, as an excess display of it could be seen, negatively, as akin to jazz (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction').

Progressive rock was, for most participants, a relatively safe haven for them, albeit one wherein the role of improvisation was subject to individual contextualization.

As has been remarked upon, King Crimson occupied an interesting place in participants' views of 'Big Six' bands: their virtuosity, and their ability and desire to improvise, sets them apart. Macan cites Robert Fripp as a champion of innovation (Macan 1997 p.160), and their studio albums frequently contained live and improvisatory elements. This would set expectations regarding their live performances, as distinct from, say, Genesis. For the majority of participants, King Crimson's abilities were obvious, and they were seen as exemplars of Progressive rock, however, they were considered one of the more challenging bands to appreciate[11], being situated by most participants as being on the edge of accessibility. Their role in the canon of bands is explored later in this Chapter.

Participants to this research demonstrated internally inconsistencies with regards to their preferences, and 'accepted norms' were vaguely rather than clearly expressed. This aspect mirrors the discussion at the beginning of this Chapter with regards to participants' openness to new music, underscoring the paradoxical nature of their engagement with it. These views represent another paradox: participants' initial attraction was significantly due to the musicians' ability to produce new music, with unexpected twists and turns across the range of compositional possibilities. However, in the live environment, participants were largely expecting to hear that which was familiar, with a limited degree of artistic freedom afforded to the musicians. Whilst Tim sees some digression from the original text as representative of 'playing properly', i.e., in a form of demonstrable authenticity as accomplished Progressive rock musicians, others such as Frank have a 'puritanical' 'if it ain't broke (and it was excellent on the record), don't fix it' stance. In this, the improvisational preference tends towards Genesis's approach, rather than King Crimson's, and Macan's observation is supported. This presents a clear paradox for Progressive rock musicians, compounded by participants struggling to be precise over what constitutes an acceptable level of improvisation. Furthermore, in analyzing participants' views on improvisation and their location within the 'old'/'new' schema, there is no clear relationship: this provides another example of a paradoxical approach to hearing Progressive rock music.

Participants' public live experience is markedly different from their typically private home experience, and it is possible that this displacement (as with Colin's quote above, gives rise to an enhanced need for a sense of security. Musical consumption can have a transcendental

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[11] Further research focused on more improvisatory Progressive rock bands may provide further insights.

effect, as noted, and transports participants. The live experience, whilst communal in terms of the number of attendees, remains a largely intimate personal experience. It is possible that these dynamics lead to an increased need for a faithful reproduction of the expected experience so as not to over-burden the sense of dislocation. Conceivably, the recorded tracks have been made a part of an individual participant's sense of self, and their close listening to the 'original' text is valorized by their knowledge of what will be heard live. Divergence from this baseline text possibly invalidates their basis of knowledge and potentially their self of sense too. This is an aspect that psychologists may wish to explore.

The above comments implicitly and explicitly refer to that which is considered canonical, and this aspect will now be discussed.

6.4 The Canon

"the canon comprises the works and artists that are generally considered to be the greatest in their field. Yet such an apparently simple construct embodies a complicated web of values and mechanisms" (Jones 2008 p.1)

"a work's meaning and significance change[s] with every addition to the canon" (T. S. Eliot cited in Dougan 2006 p.54)

One possible means to bring clarity to the range of paradoxes already surfaced is via an appreciation of participant views on the canon, should one be seen to exist, and whether this does establish an agreed 'general consideration of the best', and why. Participants' grounding in either the 'old old', 'new/old', or 'new new' orientations does not invalidate this line of enquiry, as those predominantly rooted in 'new new' may still perceive 'old' texts to be most representative of a canon, despite ongoing musical explorations.

Several factors that have already been discussed are relevant to this discussion. Participants' relatively limited social circles (in respect of Progressive rock consumption), whether in-person or online, leads to reduced opportunities for a dialectic geared towards reaching a consensus on a text's inclusion in, or exclusion from, the canon, with associated rationale. Progressive rock's limited exposure to canonical discussions via media outlets, and participants' mixed engagement with these, exacerbates this. However, it is inevitable that external views will have fed into participants' ultimate deliberations, which of course are subject to change: participants mentioned *Prog* magazine (and would be aware of its focus on certain artists over time), as well as the BBC's 'Prog Britannia' and 'Brian Pern' documentaries.

Participants were, generally speaking, non-omnivorous[12] in their 'meta-genre-wide' approach and hence grounded their opinions in an overall subset, and at a personal level. The lack of a definitional boundary was another factor in a reduced ability to understand against which criteria a text could be judged to be canonical. Participants have also demonstrated that whilst they frequently maintain a lifelong association with 'their' band and or 'their' music, they do not *de facto* regard each and every album release as essential listening, and can be quite critical of various releases: "I don't put on pedestals particular albums and love every minute of them" (Jerry). This non-adherence to dogma has been discussed previously (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), and participants determined their own 'canonical lists' based upon their own aesthetic criteria. In terms of generating their own canons, only a couple of participants mentioned the generation of playlists for (possible) external appreciation. As already noted, 'mash-up' CDs were, if produced, essentially for personal listening pleasure. Whilst *Prog* magazine periodically generates 'canonical lists' of greatest albums or tracks, minimal reference was made to them by participants

The participants stressed that their views were their own, and both voluntarily and via prompting, offered their views on that which would be considered canonical. Within the semi-structured interview construct, this aspect was typically introduced, if not arising organically, towards the end, so that the researcher could better contextualize any answers given. Detail of responses can be found at Appendix E. In summary, the texts most nominated were, in order of most frequent mentions: *Dark Side of the Moon ('DSOTM'); Close to the Edge ('CTTE'); Foxtrot; In The Court of the Crimson King ('ITCOTCK');* and *Tales from Topographic Oceans*. In terms of bands, the ones most nominated were, in similar order: Yes; Pink Floyd; Genesis; King Crimson; Rush; and Marillion. The albums mentioned were released during a five-year span, 1969 – 1973.

Analysis of participants' views reveals some interesting insights. Regarding albums, a couple of the participants nominating *DSOTM* did so in a qualified fashion revealing a somewhat conflicted relationship with it: "even though 1000 people would groan" (Jenna), and Liam:

> "it's gotta be *Dark Side of the Moon*, it's gotta be. And it's not my favourite. I don't play it. I'd rather listen to a bootleg of it now than the actual album, but when I play it, it's beautiful, 'cause it's not a bootleg, it's beautifully recorded and it's got no hissing on it, no clapping, and nobody, no Americans going 'yay' and 'wow'" (Liam)

The comments indicate a conflicted relationship between participants and the band (not just in relation to *DSOTM*). The attraction of the album, given its mainstream commercial success, and

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[12] Richard Peterson's 'omnivore theory' (Peterson 1992) was not empirically tested. Participants' quotes would indicate limited, at best, support for it.

its generation of faux fans, and Pink Floyd's questionable status as Progressive rock musicians has been previously discussed (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction'). It is therefore striking that Pink Floyd figure so prominently. A significant number of participants queried whether they should be considered progressive during the body of the discussion, and particularly whether they deserved to be included in the 'Big Six':

> "to be honest, I kind of never really thought of Pink Floyd as a prog band as such, really, but they seem to be an essential part of the canon" (Sophie)

> "I think a lot of people lump Pink Floyd in with Prog and I don't think that's true, in terms of my definition of it, I wouldn't call Floyd Prog" (Connor)

> "I thought they were a bit overrated. I know that's probably sacrilege" (Lily)

> "I think there have been elements of prog in Pink Floyd's work, but certainly by the time the 70s came around and they discovered the merits of Top 40 singles it's hard to characterize Pink Floyd as a prog rock band" (Trevor)

> "I don't think Pink Floyd are a prog band for example, because they can't play well enough" (Derek)

Their inclusion within the list of most frequently nominated bands is heavily due to *DSOTM*, despite some participants' reservations. These observations indicate how an aura is established, and canonicity is assumed by audiences, academics, and or journalists, such that participants consider it 'sacrilegious' to challenge the orthodoxy. Derek's comment regarding their musicianship is a common theme, and Mike Barnes notes Pink Floyd's acceptance of their musical limitations (Barnes 2020 p.98).

Participants' views on the other albums have already been noted throughout this thesis, with them, and the tracks from them, typically being cited as exemplars of texts that have been listened to 'thousands' of times, and ones that require immersive listening. The one exception to this would be *ITCOTCK*, an album that far fewer participants discursively mentioned in these terms, and as such seems to merit its inclusion on the basis of what it, and the band, stood, and stands, for in terms of Progressive rock's historicization. It is an album that divided opinion more strongly than the others mentioned with many 'admitting' to either not liking it to any great degree, or being largely ignorant of the band as a whole. Despite this, and not only on the basis of *ITCOTCK*, King Crimson figured prominently, underscoring that whilst the role of the media is not as dominant or diffuse as claimed by other authors (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), some 'osmosis effect' is inevitable.

By contrast, nominations for Yes and Genesis were spread across the greatest range of albums (seven and five, respectively). This suggests that their inclusion is based upon a broader corpus, and validates their 'Big Six' inclusion. Regarding the 'Big Six', the omission of ELP and Jethro Tull

from the list of bands most nominated is also noteworthy. Whilst ELP were routinely considered genuinely 'progressive', Jethro Tull's, like Pink Floyd's, inclusion was often questioned. Not one participant reflected on the band's virtuosity, although Martin Barre's playing did attract some positive comment, and it was Ian Anderson's story-telling ability, and the band's spectacular shows, that attracted more attention:

> "are Jethro Tull really progressive, in that respect, you know? 'cause they're kind of on the folk-y kind of, rock-y kind of edge, really" (Milton)

> "Jethro Tull are they progressive? Well, it depends which album you're listening to" (Murray)

> "Jethro Tull: I was never quite sure with those guys" (Colin)

> "to some people they are more of a rock band, or a folk band even than a rock band" (Henry)

Participants' generally band-centric, as opposed to meta-genre-wide, appreciation is in play here. Jethro Tull's liminal status, in terms of canonicity, is indicative of a form of 'taste public', whereby their inclusion in the overall debate is noted for a few albums, and their contextual contributions, such as spectacular shows and theatrics. The importance of the Madison Square Gardens concerts to a few participants has been noted: it is notable that comment on this was based solely upon the theatrical element, rather than other aspects privileged by participants with regards to Progressive rock credentials, such as virtuosity (see Chapters 4, 'Complexity', and 5, 'Mea Cultura'). As the quotes above indicate, these aspects of Jethro Tull are insufficient to outweigh participants' reservations over their musical abilities and breadth of work. As Murray's comment indicates, whilst both *Thick as a Brick* and *A Passion Play* were seen by participants as representative of Progressive rock, these albums alone were apparently insufficient to motivate participants to consider Jethro Tull at the same level of the other bands mentioned.

Rush and Marillion both benefit from a number of albums being mentioned and relative longevity on the live circuit, although they received relatively little attention in other discourse. Participants would aesthetically bracket ELP with King Crimson, with both seeming to possess an astringent style, and texts such as *Tarkus* and *Brain Salad Surgery* do not feature as prominently in participants' mental lists as they do in book-length studies or publications' lists (*Prog* magazine expressly stated that their album and song surveys[13], were solely based on input from fans). It is possible that with regards to the fan-generated lists, those contributing views to publications are those also engaged in chat room forums, of the type that participants shun. A

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[13] The survey on albums was published in August 2014; the survey on songs was published in March 2018.

performative aspect may be behind the apparent differences in opinion, although dedicated empirical research would need to be conducted to ascertain this.

Participants chose works considered as more canonical than others from the period that they and commentators would recognize as Progressive rock's heyday: the first, or 'golden' period. However, regarding the point made in the above paragraph regarding differences in choices, closer examination of the cited texts, and the bands, reveals some differences from literature published to date. With regards to *Prog* magazine's 'Top 100' albums list, whilst there is some correspondence in the 'Top 10' (*Prog*'s Numbers 1 – 5 were '*CTTE*', '*ITCOTCK*', *Selling England By the Pound, 'DSOTM',* and *Thick as a Brick*), there were some significant differences, e.g., *Thick as a Brick* barely registered with participants, and there was very little correlation with *Prog'*s Numbers 11 *et seq*. Sample sizes are obviously one of the factors involved. Dowd et al. (Dowd *et al.* 2019) have provided an overview of surveys and studies conducted in this field prior to 2021, as has Carys Wyn Jones (Jones 2006). *Prog* magazine's survey was one of three 'agents of consecration' (Bledsoe cited in Dowd *et al.* 2019 p.126) used by Dowd et al., along with similar listings from *Rolling Stone*, and *ProgArchives* (both from 2015). The researchers data-scraped 28,360 albums from these 'agents' and tested 15 hypotheses with regards to the likelihood of consecration for albums released during the period 1965 - 2013. These hypotheses related to *inter alia* geographical origin, critical acclaim, and release dates. They concluded that chances of consecration were enhanced if:

1) The performers were "established".
2) They were in "early middle rather than twilight of their careers".
3) The works were released during the first period, or at the early stage of a new sub-genre.
4) The works were released during the "online era" (i.e., since 2000)
5) The band is from the United Kingdom
6) Critical acclaim is received from underground critics, rather than "mainstream".

Regarding the last of these points, Dowd et al. found that this acclaim tends to be "convergent with popular appeal among the broader audience for progressive rock" (Dowd *et al.* 2019 p.134), resulting in albums that do achieve mainstream chart success tending to lead to consecration.

Participants' choices are in general agreement with these conclusions with regards to those bands or works most frequently nominated. The regularity of the albums referenced in the 'top 5' from participants and other published sources does indicate that a broad alignment on canonicity has been achieved, by a variety of means, underscoring Jones' quote at the

introduction to this section on the definition of a canon. However, it is beyond this 'top five' that the areas of most interest reside. As well as the inclusion and placing of King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, and their works, supporting Jones's "complicated web of values and mechanisms", further analysis reveals some additional differences. It was noticeable that the participant group *en masse* had a very eclectic range of preferences. In total, 111 albums were referenced by them for consideration as canonical. Of these, 45 received only one nomination, and 8 received only 2 nominations, meaning that essentially half of the albums so cited were only privileged by one or two participants. Whilst it is possible that this exercise provided an opportunity for participants to demonstrate intellectual capital and suggest obscure texts, this is not found to be the case. The 'one or two nomination' albums are ones that would be familiar to the majority of Progressive rock fans. There is a clear distinction between the five texts most nominated by participants, and a very broad range of these others. This underscores the heterogeneous nature of Progressive rock fandom, the personal nature of valorization with a wide variety of texts providing meaning to consumers, and solitary enjoyment practices that allow (and facilitate) individual aesthetic choices. It is also noticeable that 40 nominations (36%) were works typically considered to be 'concept albums', and whilst the statistical significance of this would benefit from further empirical research and analysis, it is suggested that this aspect merits consideration for inclusion in Dowd *et al.*'s list of key parameters.

Dowd, Ryan, and Tai (Dowd, Ryan and Tai 2016) similarly scrutinized the *Dutch Progressive Rock Page* (*DPRP*). 5,118 reviews were analyzed over the period 2003 – 2013. This study concluded that as benchmarks, Pink Floyd, Genesis, King Crimson, Yes, and Dream Theater were most likely to be referenced, and were termed the 'first tier'. 'Second tier' bands included ELP, Gentle Giant, and Rush. Dowd, Ryan and Tai stated that "*DPRP* critics devoted relatively more attention to bands/musicians representing the subgenres of the Canterbury scene, neo-prog, and symphonic prog than did *Archives* fans, and relatively less attention to post-rock/math-rock, Indo-prog/raga rock, and Krautrock" (Dowd, Ryan and Tai 2016 p.119). Both 'neo-prog' and 'Canterbury' are important types of music in the Netherlands, with a lot of home-grown bands, so this may influence the interests of the fans who engage with *DPRP*.

There is a strong correspondence between participants' views and Dowd, Ryan and Tai's 'first and second' tier categorization, whilst the presence, absence, and profile, of some of the 'Big Six' is again noted, as is the inclusion of Rush. A further study would need to be conducted to investigate the relative consideration of the sub-genres identified by Dowd, Ryan, and Tai, although it can be stated that 'post-rock/math-rock, Indo-prog/raga rock, and Krautrock' were conspicuous by their almost complete absence from participants' discourse. Research that is

based on those participating in discussions promoted by *ProgArchives, DPRP,* and *Prog* magazine will likely magnify the choices of those who are more demonstrative and spectacular in their promotion of preferences. Participants to this research, as has been made clear, do not engage with such online 'communities', however a reasonable degree of fit is evident. This gives credence to Deena Weinstein's view that a 'collective aura' is constructed around canonical works, via interviews, album reviews, and concert reviews, such that an 'imaginary of their subjects' comes into being (Weinstein 2014 p.32). This aura can be pervasive enough so as to influence those, such as the participants, who are relatively unengaged in a public sense.

Wyn Jones has also suggested that a measure of canonical value is related to the degree of interpretation and effort required of the consumer in its appreciation, and therefore a text:

> "needs to be structurally complex and information-rich to sustain a depth of commentary surrounding it, but must also suit a wide variety of needs and interests" (Jones 2006 p.17).

Participants' quotes throughout this thesis have reinforced the importance of assumed depth and complexity, leading to a need for repeated listening to more fully appreciate the affordance that the text provides. King Crimson's status can be seen as an extension of this argument. This largely private consumption practice enables participants to construct their own interpretations, which can vary over time. In addition, the prevalence of concept albums in participants' nominations, and the 'ur-album' role that this plays for them, contributes to 'structurally rich and complex appreciation'. These findings support Jones's drivers of canonical value.

The most popular choices made by participants have all been subject to re-issues, and possibly deluxe boxset treatment. Such a process helps preserve the text's 'aura', and further cement its place in the canon. This virtual circle has been explored by Andrew Bottomley. He notes that literature is sparse regarding the power that reissues, and the associated discourse, has in this 'reshaping of the meaning and value' that is attributed to the texts. Bottomley draws attention to the complicated processes that can come into play: the addition of paratextual information can be of aesthetic value and can reaffirm or develop the notions of authenticity attached to the text or the band; the inclusion of different versions or the remastering of tracks can be a double-edged sword; and the commercial promotion of the product can lead to its rarity value being diminished (Bottomley 2016). Participants' comments demonstrate that re-issues, and the like, further cement their place in the canon, wherever that may be, solidifying the 'aura' that participants have agentically attached to it. New dimensions may be perceived through new versions (demos or live recordings), a process as much of reconfirmation as it is of Bottomley's 're-shaping'. Due to participants' repeated and immersive listening, a reissue could 'simply'

perform this (largely) confirmatory function, which in itself provides a further concretization of textual and personal meaning.

Participants' views on what constitutes canonical value brought out several key elements. Whilst it is inevitable that some degree of 'osmosis' will be in play due to inevitable exposure to external factors, participants' choices were largely self-determined. This self-generation is consistent with previous discussions regarding participants' necessarily, and by choice in later years, personal reflection on texts that they consider to have aesthetic worth. Their contextualization of Progressive rock in terms of its historicization, definition, and genre-fluidity (see Chapter 3, 'Contextualization') provides them with latitude to take a broad view on possible inclusion, and, critically, to exclude, or form contrary views on, works, or bands, otherwise considered canonical.

Participants' views on the 'big six' bands raised particular areas of interest. Despite participants referencing them throughout the research process, Jethro Tull were apparently valorized more for a small number of albums (two of which were concepts), Ian Anderson's storytelling abilities, and their spectacular live performances (with Anderson's failing voice a significant concern). By contrast, Pink Floyd were less regularly mentioned during interviews and Focus Groups, however, the 'aura' associated with them, and their canonical works, (and their spectacular stage shows) was sufficient for them to be mentioned more frequently, despite clear participant reservations, and previous emphasis on the role of virtuosity. King Crimson were typically mentioned during the research process in terms of their relatively difficult and more inaccessible music, whilst their progressive ideology was recognized. Adaptation theory has been discussed (see Chapter 4, 'Complexity Attraction'), whereby participants gradually become more attuned to complex works, and develop an appreciation of them, repaying the necessary investment. It may be seen that King Crimson's work is viewed through a lens of aspirational appreciation. ELP's relative under-recognition is likewise curious, given the relative frequency that they attracted comment elsewhere. Yes and Genesis appear to be the two bands whose credentials, in this regard, are unquestioned.

Jones's definition of a canon, that which is "generally considered to be the greatest works and artists" was, rightly, caveated with such being subject to a "complex web of values and mechanisms". These can be seen to be in play with participants' considerations. The rationales behind the above discussion demonstrate some inconsistencies and paradoxes. In terms of spectacle, virtuosity, accessibility, and mainstream recognition, participants would not distinguish significantly between Pink Floyd and Jethro Tull: however, the former rarely featured in discourse whilst the latter did, with a reversal in mentions regarding canonicity. The same

dynamic is seen to a similar, but lesser degree for King Crimson and ELP, with virtuosity and spectacle being foregrounded, and King Crimson being afforded more mentions despite reservations expressed.

6.5 Nostalgia

Nostalgic memories "keep the wolf of insignificance from the door" (Bellow cited in Sedikides and Wildschut 2018 p.53)

"I relate it to times. I think I relate music, and especially prog, to times in your life" (Barry)

"It makes [people] feel meaningful and brings a sense of comfort, especially if we're in uncertain times" (Julie)

Regardless of their motivations, as discussed throughout this thesis, all participants enjoy and value their ongoing relationship with Progressive rock. In this concluding Section, the nature of this relationship will be explored. In so doing, light will be shed on the extent to which nostalgia plays a role in their ongoing musical enjoyment, and associated activities, and how this is internalized.

From a research and analysis perspective, a structural issue is evident in terms of Allan Moore's 'fish in the water syndrome': Participants routinely referred to their enjoyment of this music as an inseparable part of their life, thereby rendering discussion of it slightly problematical. For Susie:

"I think there would have been a big gap if it hadn't been there. I don't think at the time you necessarily appreciate that" (Susie)

indicating how inseparable a role the music played for her, with only hindsight enabling her to appreciate it. Liam's inability to distinguish a separation from it, and his relative inarticulation was typical:

"I don't remember a time when it weren't around. I just think it just is. It is just, yeah, it's trying to think about it. When you try and think about it, it is a part of my life. It is a…" (Liam)

This intrinsic role that Progressive rock plays in participants' lives was also discussed by Lily: "I've never really moved away from prog completely. It's always been there", and Fred, "although at first I struggled a bit with it once it got inside me it never got out". For Rebecca:

"they've been a part of my listening list throughout my life, … But listening to music and prog rock being part of that has continued through my life. I can't live without [it]" (Rebecca)

John Fisher has noted, *pace* US musicologist Richard Taruskin, that "lifelong fealty" to a band embraced in childhood is seen in most "educated persons" (Fisher 2011 p.405). Participants have been seen to regard themselves, and their choice in Progressive rock music, as being relatively educated. Their lifelong fealty has also been noted. Simone Driessen's (2017) study of enduring fandom with Dutch boy bands commented that 17 years of attachment was a demonstration of loyalty; while for the majority of participants interviewed for this thesis the number is closer to 50 years. In the Chapter 'Mea Cultura', the role of music-meaning in identify formation was discussed. The scarcity of studies into ageing fandom has been noted by several authors[14]. Bennett, sometimes in co-authorship, is one who has studied this area. With Ian Rogers he suggests that researchers need to:

> "pay close attention to the more intangible and often locally nuanced ways in which popular music is experienced by individuals as bound up with both the present and the past" (Bennett and Rogers 2016 p.40)

Bennett and Richard Peterson have summarized some of the views to date, stating how older fans are neglected because society sees them as attempting to delay adult responsibilities, resisting 'social aging' (after Sarah Thornton), and positioning them as 'wistful emigrants' from an earlier subculture (after Weinstein, 1990) (Bennett and Peterson 2004). Ruth Deller has noted negative associations of ageing fandom, with, for example, newspapers being likely to depict female fans aged 50 or more, not as a threat but as a source of humour (Deller 2016 pp.197-8). Bennett too has noted how negative media stereotypes abound, with 'aging rocker', and 'old hippie', which he sees as "both essentialist and overly simplistic" (Bennett 2013 p.14).

For participants the inner, as opposed to outwards and spectacular, nature of meaning-making helped define personal values. For Ewan:

> "it's such a massive part of who I am. It's shaped me as a human being, it shaped my political agenda […] it's shaped the way I think. I think, you know, […] like all sorts, it's a huge part of me" (Ewan)

and for Nigel, "it's a music that really does root its way right into your brain and sort of forms what you do".

Participants are unspectacular in their fandom, exacerbating the possibility of being neglected in fan studies. Whilst unspectacular, their appreciation and enjoyment of Progressive rock has continued through life, and as will be seen below, positioned in a positive frame for them. The negative associations referenced by Deller are of as little import to them now as they were

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[14] See (Driessen 2017; Geraghty 2014; Harrington and Bielby 2010; Anderson 2012; Vroomen 2002; Bennett and Taylor 2012; Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2013).

during their early association with the music. Weinstein's wistfulness is not evident. In these ways, participants see their appreciation of this music as forming a bedrock and a 'North Star' for their lives. Geraghty refers to Annette Kuhn's "enduring fandom", and how this is a "vital part of daily life in the present" (Kuhn cited in Geraghty 2014 p.41), and Joseph Kotarba terms it a 'master script for life' (Kotarba 2009 p.118). These notions are counter the "common-sense notion of fandom as an 'all-consuming' stage in the lifecourse that will later be abandoned, or only nostalgically revisited" (Hills cited in Lee Harrington and Bielby 2010 p.432).

This thesis supports Matt Hill's reaction to this 'common-sense notion': whilst participants' engagement was often profound for them, the connotation of it being a passing fad, to be 'abandoned' and 'nostalgically revisited' is clearly contrary to their experiences. With regards to life-long relationship, Laura Vroomen notes that her findings dispute the:

> "assumption that intense popular music investments cannot be carried over into adult life, and that contradictory identifications and practices cannot be sustained" (Vroomen 2004 p.243)

Regarding the nature of this developing relationship, Vroomen found that although club or concert-based activities are limited, the ongoing investments are "a complex mixture of resistance and conformity to social norms" (Vroomen 2004 p.238). In this case, resistance should be seen in the light of stereotypical assumptions connected with ageing, rather than counter-hegemonic resistance. Being a fan of Progressive rock has always necessitated a certain navigation for fans in terms of their relationship to socialization (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), and their relationship to social groupings has been shown to be essentially one of non-engagement (in respect of Progressive rock fandom). This has neither been an issue for participants whilst initially engaging with Progressive rock, nor in their later years. This thesis found no evidence of a correspondence between ongoing investment through the lifecourse, and any concomitant navigation of this "complex mixture" above and beyond that already ingrained into participants' fandom.

The source of comfort that this fandom has provided over the years was made apparent by several participants. Steve discussed how when he was struggling at school in his late teens the music 'supported' him when he was on a "tortuous path", and Ewan described his relationship to music in a similar manner as he came to terms with inevitable life events[15]. Ian. was explicit regarding his relationship with Genesis, for him they were "a band that grew with me". Ian brings

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[15] Heewon Chang refers to this as "border crossings", i.e., "extraordinary events such as childbirth, new relationships, new jobs/schools, immigration/moves, a death, divorce, and other life crises" (Chang cited in Anderson 2012 p.55).

into play the notion of older siblings, and possible role models, an aspect that Driessen has commented upon. She particularly cites Bruce Springsteen (providing a sense of autobiography, and construction of the self), Kate Bush (empowerment in everyday life), David Bowie (how to cope with transitions), and ageing punks (with their passing on of knowledge about scenes and lifestyle) (Driessen 2017 p.118). Elements of these role models can be seen in participants' perspectives, though without a clear unequivocal correspondence to any one of them. Within Driessen's attributes there is a leaning towards contextual elements, for example with regard to the personae adopted by Springsteen and Bowie. In Nick Stevenson's (Stevenson 2009) research into David Bowie[16] fans' views, Bowie's celebrity idol status was shown to engender a degree of emotional, intimate attachment, albeit from afar, that was not replicated by participants' views on Progressive rock musicians. Stevenson also noted that strong connections were formed via online communities, and may lead to sexual relationships. These aspects were not evident in the research for this thesis; for participants, as repeatedly demonstrated throughout this thesis, their emphasis was on the text, and associations with role models as distinct people was less important than the ideology of what the music, and the musicians, represented.

Charlie also drew reference to the similar, or even identical, ages some fans had in comparison to the musicians, and how the musicians assumed a form of older brother role, their musical growth enabling a comparable feeling of personal growth. For him, they were a source of comfort, and inspiration. Personae, such as Driessen identifies, can be rooted to a time (and place). Participants' relationship, fundamentally to the music, and what it meant for them, enables the relationship to grow, and not be so tethered. Randy in particular compares his (positive) relationship to Progressive rock music - as a meta-genre, rather than in relation to one band or musician - to other (negative) relationships, and the distinction he draws is very clear:

> "But progressive rock was always a part of it, a slice of it…. the positive was though, that it gave me something to really always rely on. That's always been something that's been important to me through my whole life, is that I've been true to myself through my life and the music's been a big part of it…And with the music for me, it's developed almost into a therapy, to where I can, it's something, I've said this on my show from time to time[17], "hey, no matter what goes wrong in your life, always rely on music, it will always be there. It's a constant. Maybe your friendship circles, maybe your spouse or boyfriend, girlfriend, maybe they'll turn on you at some point. Music never will". And so that's kind of the way I think" (Randy)

This echoes Cornell Sandvoss's comment:

> "[f]andom provides one of the most stable eggs in the basket, one that through its point of reference in a mediated object of fandom is shielded against the usual risks of

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[16] Some participants referred to David Bowie as being 'progressive'.
[17] Randy runs a radio station in the US Midwest.

interpersonal relationships in marriage, employment and friendship" (Sandvoss 2005 p.48)

Randy's comment is comparable to one of the findings arising from Driessen's study of Dutch bands, which elicited this fan comment:

> "No matter what happens in my life, good, bad, nice, sad, it doesn't matter. Doe Maar is this perpetual element in my life…. For every situation you end up in, there is a song, or a piece of a song, a lyric or what not, that matches that [situation]" (Driessen 2017 p.170)

For summary overviews of the history of nostalgia's representation through the decades, noting how its original connotation was for home and or place, but is now seen as being for a time period, see (Wilson 2014; Bruel 2019). Wilson, in particular, comments on its negative positioning, with its original use as referring to a form of sickness, and with commentators and scholars associating it with 'reactionary thought'. However, participants couched their ability to draw on music-related memories in a positive way. Julie referred to "warm fuzziness", and "youthful innocence", Liam to "warm comfort", William to "joyful feelings", for Philippe it was associated with 'security' and 'comfort', and for Fred it "makes you feel that the world's in the right place". This brings to mind the notion of 'heimat', a well-spring of emotional warmth, security, and stability. Each of these comments were made in the sense of the present, rather than a harking back, wistfully, to a previous time. A connection was being made between the enjoyment of the past, and that of the present, with an anticipation of the future. Participants' comments, referenced throughout this thesis, underscore how for them Progressive rock has been a constant throughout their lives, how their relationship to the music, and the bands, is such that disappointments arising from certain album releases or band trajectories are readily discounted or accepted, and memories are associated with the text rather than with environmental factors. Barry most explicitly drew a line from the past to the future, stating how listening to the 'old' music typically inspires him to listen to 'new', and he finds this reinforcing a good mood. As Henry commented, comparing the support he finds in Progressive rock compared to other musical styles:

> "funnily enough my roots, as I said earlier, were reggae, but I never really returned to reggae. My roots, I class my roots as rock music, Hard Rock music and I still flirt with that occasionally, but I'm a prog rock man through and through now…. If I need to go off and have a quiet moment, I'd go off and I put the headphones on, or sit in the corner and play my music, you know, and I've always used music as a way of, you know, sort of, calming myself down if you like or, you know, cheering myself up, whatever, whichever mood I needed to stimulate. I've always had my music and it's *always helped*" (Henry, original emphasis)

It is interesting to compare the comments of participants to this research with the findings of Tonya Anderson and Laura Vroomen, in their research into Duran Duran and Kate Bush fandom,

respectively. Both authors explored how fandom can continue throughout a lifecourse, and provided insights from fans on their perspectives over the years. For Anderson, the reason for enduring fandom was frequently cited to be 'nostalgia'. Early fandom was rooted in an "intermingling" of the music and romantic attachments or desires (to boyfriends or band members), and current day fandom is seen as a return to the past, "feeling like a kid again", with songs being seen as "time capsules". Fans proudly, and loudly, refer to themselves as 'Duranies', "as a rallying call", and Anderson recounts how at a reunion they acquired matching tattoos. Anderson also found that a period of reflection is necessary so as to understand the significance of early fandom. Whilst maturity provides this opportunity, this research found that fans believed that they were sufficiently self-reflexive during early fandom so as to, to some degree, understand the role that Progressive rock played for them (Anderson 2012). There is clearly a number of differences in play here.

By contrast, Vroomen found that her respondents did not emphasize or characterize nostalgia in the same frame. Her respondents viewed their enduring fandom as more of a "forward moving force", with them formulating a "worldview" that enabled a "co-existence" of growing up and ongoing fandom. They engaged in this "regardless of public validation". Through this they could be seen not to be engaging in ongoing fandom as an attempt to stave off Thornton's social ageing (see above). There is clearly a higher degree of correspondence with Vroomen's findings, although, to her surprise, as she notes, given her respondents' liberal leanings, there was evidence of ageism in play. Her respondents clearly distanced themselves from younger fans, characterizing them as gullible and undiscriminating when claiming distinction for their own mature sensibility (Vroomen 2002). There was no evidence of this with participants (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura' for counter-examples).

For this research, participants were able to clearly draw a link from the past easily into the present:

> "it is secure for me, it is comfortable…. And I guess you'd say nostalgic too…. but every time, there's something new, it's always fresh, so yeah, listen to the old stuff a lot" (Philippe)

This ability to find something 'new and fresh' moves participants away from notions of nostalgia being rooted to a time, and having negative associations, into something more vital, dynamic, and forward-looking. These overwhelmingly positive recollections did not betray any sense of genuine regret. Only one participant couched an element of his response in a wistful manner, with Connor rueing:

> "That's where we were unfortunate. We're just that bit too young to have caught the good, the really good stuff, seeing Yes in '74 and seeing Genesis with Gabriel in '74 would have been quite something, so that's the nostalgic part for me. I go, I listen to *Selling England by the Pound* and I kind of imagine what it would have been like to see them in '74.... that's the nostalgic part for me" (Connor)

Connor is situating his nostalgia not in terms of his memories of 1974, but in terms of a mediated perspective on 1974. This was also borne out in 'Technology', above, with participants heavily engaged in using YouTube to watch footage of concerts that they didn't attend. Colin reflected upon his watching of various YouTube (or other) videos as a "voyeuristic" experience, emphasizing a mediated, distanced effect[18].

For Tia DeNora, strong relationships with songs provide empowerment via their 'biological reference point', in bridging from the past to the present, and onwards from the present to the future, a move from 'retrospection to projection' (DeNora 2000). Other scholars have thrown light on how nostalgia can be seen as positive in its grounding and development of identity. Svetlana Boym has referred to this 'prospective' nature, suggesting that nostalgia can be seen as 'reflective', 'restorative', and 'transformative' (Boym cited in Geraghty 2014 p.164). Even with Connor's comment, it can be seen that participants' relationship with Progressive rock is geared towards the present and the future: analysis shows that even those who are situated within the 'old old' and 'new/old' categories are not framing their enjoyment of the music in the past, and contextual nostalgic elements, but locating their enjoyment in the music itself, in the text. This can also be seen in Phil's quote:

> "when I listen to old Prog records, the nostalgia of Prog, is that trying to recapture that, losing myself that I had at an earlier age, that I don't get anymore because of the *huge* responsibilities of life" (Phil, original emphasis)

Participants' consumption practices take them backwards in time no more now than when they first started listening to the music. In the Chapter, 'A Contextualization', it was noted how the majority of participants were initially attracted to this music as it was in its first period decline, hence for many of them, there is minimal nostalgic connection to contemporaneous widely-recognized halcyon days and lengthy involvement as the meta-genre began to take root, and feeling part of that.

With specific regard to music-related nostalgic memories, Arno Van der Hoeven suggests that these are evoked via social settings or particular mediums such as 'exhibitions or nostalgic dance parties' (van der Hoeven 2018 p.210). As has been seen, this social dimension is significantly

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[18] See Mark Fisher for 'agency of the virtual', the memories of acts and events that didn't actually exist (Fisher 2014).

less of a factor, or a motivating impulse, for participants. Bennett references the nature of spectacle when he comments that it is suggested that as music fans age:

> "the meaning and significance of music become more steadily and subtly ingrained in their identities, to the extent that the "spectacular" forms of collective allegiance to musical styles often exhibited by younger fans become much less important than the personal connections one feels to music as an 'inspirational resource'" (Bennett 2013 p.5)

As already discussed, for participants the spectacular was never as important as indicated by Bennett, nor was this fandom demonstrated through "collective allegiance". For Bennett, over time, the music as an 'inspirational resource' assumes primacy over the spectacular: for participants, it was always this. Assuming that Bennett's point regarding this dynamic is valid for fandom associated with other musical styles, then the relative emphasis placed by participants on their "personal connections" becomes even more pronounced, and deep-rooted. Simon Frith suggests that the young listen to more and more music with it meaning less and less, with the inverse being true for the old (Frith cited in Grossberg 1997 p.120). This is explained by the contrasting views on materialism and idealism, respectively, with the old in search of an 'epiphany'. Participants' views would support this perspective.

Bonneville-Roussy *et al*. take a slightly different stance, agreeing with Frith on listening habits, but suggesting that whilst importance remains high through the ageing process, its degree of importance steadily declines (Bonneville-Roussy *et al.* 2013). Rather than its importance declining, for participants, that which was important then, remains important now. Whilst the volume of music consumed might diminish, the importance of it remains high. This is demonstrated by participants' election to listen to their favourite music in personal settings, i.e., as a conscious use of their own valuable time.

Moore has argued that whilst there is inevitably a time before which a musical style did not exist, it does not necessarily follow that there is an end point, and furthermore that rock music styles can have extensions through time in a similar manner as to that seen by art aficionados. His corollary is that for music to still be "useful", then either:

> "the cultural attitudes that enabled the formation of the music must still be prevalent, or the music is being used to serve a new function, that of the recreation of their attitudes in a spirit of nostalgia" (Moore and Martin 2019 p.252)

For participants, this 'either/or' appears to have limited support. The cultural attitudes were not as significant as they arguably were for other musical styles, or as they were for participants' initial attraction on the basis of, say, counter-cultural origins (see Chapter 3, 'Contextualization'). Nor would participants characterize their ongoing appreciation as serving a new function, and not one recreated in such a spirit. As stressed throughout this thesis, participants foreground

and privilege the music, the text, over associated contextual elements. It is this personal connection that retains primacy: participants' private relationship with it over the years has assumed a character that essentially shields it from other influences, aside from their own personally derived, and justified, aesthetic criteria. Serge Lacan introduced the notion of *point de capiton*, or 'anchoring point'. In Will Straw's analysis, this is the "marker of privileged antecedents from which eclectic exercise develop outwards". This development, in the form of temporal movement enables "cartographic density" to be achieved (Straw 1991 p.381). Participants' situating, and rooting, of their meaning deriving from music, as a constant resource in which the music is separated from its original social/cultural context, its "usefulness", and their 'in the present and forward' orientation towards repeated listening to very familiar tracks from yesteryear, demonstrates that for them a *point de capiton* does exist. However, crucially, the anchor is not rooted to external factors, but is derived from the music itself, and their interpretation(s) of it: their anchoring points therefore have an ideological, aesthetic, and personal locus, rather than a temporal one *per se*.

Simon Reynolds, in his exploration of 'revivals, reissues, remakes, re-enactments, retrospection, reformations, replenishing, relaunch, recycling, [and] renovation' wonders whether nostalgia is "stopping our culture's ability to surge forward, or are we nostalgic precisely because our culture has stopped moving forward and so we inevitably look back to more momentous and dynamic times?" (Reynolds 2012 p.xiv). This echoes the discussion around 'old old' and 'new new' in participants' perspectives, some of whom would concur with his basic proposition, and some of whom, would argue that Progressive rock music does continue to surge forward and evolve. Participants' emotional location of their enjoyment of Progressive rock is typically not tied to a particular event, or social occasion, or associated with a romantic relationship (the notion of "our song", or a first dance). Progressive rock, not having been seen as fashionable during the time of the majority of participants' engagement with it (see Chapter 5, 'Mea Cultura'), has never gone out of fashion for them.

6.6 Conclusion

The nature of participants' engagement reveals some interesting paradoxes. Participants were attracted to Progressive rock because of *inter alia* its adventure, its unpredictability, its uniqueness, and the joy of hearing these elements for the first time. Several paradoxical elements were evident in participants' reflections of their engagement with the music. These differences were captured in a schema: 'old old', 'new/old', and 'new new'. For a significant number, the perceived depth and complexity of the music allows them to tether their elective

listening practices to the first 'golden' period of Progressive rock's evolution, as new and enhanced meanings, and affordance, provide life-long enjoyment, whether situated in the 'old old' or in the 'new/old'. Re-issues and re-masters provide additional opportunities in this regard. Whether engaging in self-reflexivity prior to this research, or as a part of the interview process, participants noted the internal inconsistency with this mindset. The internal consistencies associated with self-imposed delimitations are discounted by participants on the basis of Progressive rock's scope, breadth, and depth of music still to be enjoyed. In some cases, this can be further rationalized due to the perceived lack of genuinely progressive new music.

Whilst it has been suggested elsewhere that for music fans in general, over time meaning increases, and the need for spectacular engagement diminishes, for participants to this research this has never been an issue. This could be interpreted as nostalgia, in the conventional, retrogressive sense; however, this thesis finds that participants' associations with Progressive rock are not rooted temporally: there is no such shift in this 'meaning over spectacle' dynamic, but a reinforcement. Participants, as fans of Progressive rock, have a progressive relationship to it, in terms of a rooting not to a particular time, person, or place, or to the genesis of a movement, or a fad, but to an ideology, an aesthetic, and a personal relationship on the basis of its affordance, that withstands temporal considerations. Whether situated in the 'old' or the 'new', participants find new, fresh, and exciting elements such that their basis is positive, and their orientation is forward and dynamic. This element reinforced previous discussions of the difficulties, and opportunities, associated with unclear boundary definitions, and genre theory.

This thesis also finds that improvisatory aspects of live performances reveal paradoxical responses along the same lines, with a weak correspondence evident between those situated in the 'old' and those less appreciative of such displays. This highlights a nuanced approach to aesthetic enjoyment that defies easy analysis, and proves troublesome in determining what the 'right' level of improvisation, i.e., adventurous, unpredictable, unique, new music, is at any moment. The importance of structure, and signposting was highlighted, and in terms of boundary conditions, free form jazz was held up as an example of an approach to avoid.

Participants' relatively low-level of engagement with new technologies, in terms of Progressive rock fandom, emphasized the preference for private engagement, and hence, personal developments of meanings. Whilst participants appreciate the adoption by Progressive rock musicians of new technologies, their relationship is nuanced, ultimately characterized by a utilitarian approach geared towards the primacy of the musical text. (This underscores the points raised in the previous Chapter, 'Mea Cultura'). For some, platforms such as Spotify undermine the aesthetic enjoyment of Progressive rock. The possibilities afforded by 'new'

technologies also enable those situating their preferences in the 'old' to further explore new meanings, and generate fresh enjoyment.

The heterogeneous nature of Progressive rock fandom, and of participants' varied, and at times conflicting, views were most vividly seen in the discussions concerning canonicity. Participants' comments demonstrated that canonical considerations are indeed a "complex web" and need to take account of "aura". This was most evident in the discussion of King Crimson's placing, with participants affording them greater recognition and status than would have been expected given their relatively unfamiliarity or reception of their work. The dynamics around canonicity in relation to virtuosity, complexity, spectacle, and aesthetic appeal are significantly nuanced. Whilst 'the text' has consistently assumed primacy over 'context' for participants throughout this thesis, the debate over canonical inclusion revealed that other factors are in play, although their articulation was problematical. The participants' views, taken *en masse*, showed strong correspondence with other, published, lists, at the level of the 'top five', yet beyond that significant differences were evident, although the small sample size and research basis could contribute to this. This thesis also found that concept albums assume a greater role than suggested within extant theories.

Progressive rock has been shown to demonstrate heterogenous qualities, and participants' perspectives are not only multi-faceted but prone to re-evaluation over time. That paradoxes should be manifest through this research process is, arguably, axiomatic. The points above, and throughout this thesis, lead to a richer picture of this form of fandom, particularly from those normally excluded from research, and provide signposts for further opportunities. The music itself, what it represents, and how it is interpreted, was sufficient as a role model, or 'North Star' in this regard. Whether a participant's particular preference was for 'new/old', 'old old' or 'new new', the emotional and aesthetic grounding was, almost exclusively, in the present. Progressive rock music and associated fandom was non-spectacular and non-fashionable for participants, and therefore could never go out of fashion. The deepest and most enduring associations may be the least visible.

7 Chapter 7: The Enduring Legacy of Progressive Rock - Conclusions

> "Some might think that monolithic descriptions of prog rock are evidence of the musical monolith, but such monolithic treatment is most likely a result of their limited analytical perspectives" (Kawamoto 2006 p.21)

The preceding Chapters have covered a broad range of factors associated with Progressive rock valorization, and there has been a high degree of interweaving between them. This is inevitable given the nature of the subject being reviewed and the research basis. This concluding Chapter will bring these strands together. A simple summary of each of the Chapters would fail to do justice to these interlinkages; instead, I will adopt an orthogonal approach, knitting together the various elements that have arisen, so as to best capture the whole.

Progressive rock has received both critical acclaim, and substantial criticism, since the bands that are commonly associated with it first started releasing music in the late 1960s. Its heterogenous nature has been recognized, and fans' views are fluid, dynamic, and multiple: they need to be considered at individual as well as group level, so as to avoid, as much as possible, reductive analyses. Some revisiting of Progressive rock's importance has been seen in recent years, and several book-length studies have inspired others to critically, and academically, review the role that it has played over the decades. There has been a general turn in cultural studies towards a recognition that perspectives drawn from fandom need to be heard and understood, so as to enrich the theories posited by various commentators. This is as true, and as necessary, in regards to Progressive rock as it is to other styles or genres of music, or other cultural fields.

To directly address this need, Grounded Theory ('GT') was employed as a research method to gain an understanding of what elements of Progressive rock were valorized by 51 self-declared fans, and why. Over 100 hours of interactions, drawn from one-on-one interviews, and six six-person Focus Groups (FGs), were captured and analyzed, enabling correspondences with, and differences from, extant theories to be scrutinized. Diversity of geographies, ages, and gender, were seen in the participant base, with very few of them aware of each other prior to the research FG phase.

The stated aim of this Thesis (at Section 1.5, 'Aims and Outline') was to "explore what it is that fans of Progressive rock value in their reception of the music, and why, and how this relates to existing theories". A qualitative research method was chosen so as to enable the range of motivating factors, from fans' points of view, to be most fully brought into play. The intent was

to allow these fans to give voice, in their own words, to that which they enjoyed, and to explore the underlying motivations. GT was chosen by me, in preference to other possible research methodologies, as it did not rely on psychology, and via semi-structured interviews it enabled the surfacing of elements that were most salient to the fans. Further, it provided me, as a researcher, with the broadest, and deepest, primary research data set, replete with analytical possibilities. This enabled me to address Lee Marshall's "big black hole" of lack of knowledge. The fans, as *amateur* aficionados*,* proved very capable of articulating the range of drivers for their enduring fandom. In contrast to other research in this field, such as the 'data scraping' approaches identified early, conducted by Jarl Ahlkvist, and Timothy Dowd et al., which relied on 'open source' accounts, and arguably fall prey to Kozinets' risk of consociality, the GT methodology foregrounded fans' perspectives *as directly applied to this specific research*, and provided both the subjects and the researcher the opportunity to directly and explicitly engage with the research subject. This approach led to a significant number of findings. Some of these findings were confirmatory of extant theories, and provide empirical heft to bolster them. Some other findings challenged and contested extant theories, and posited new ones, based on the verbatim accounts of the lived experiences of serious fans of Progressive rock. Participants' polysemic readings of the various texts, and the ways and means by which these are appreciated across the group, underscores the ontological and epistemological bases of this thesis: consistent with an interpretivist epistemology, there exist a wide variety of interpretations, and no one positivist 'truth'; and the GT approach facilitates the dialectic between researcher and participant such that findings can be constructed via participants' verbatim accounts and the researcher's analytical skills and knowledge of literature.

I suggest that a GT approach to qualitative research is worthy of greater consideration in future academic endeavours. The critical need for 'theoretical agnosticism' was remarked upon (see Chapter 2, 'Methods'). There were certain elements which, prior to the commencement of the research, I had presupposed would arise (e.g., the dynamic of Romanticism vis-à-vis postmodernist influences). The absence of these elements from participants' views essentially relegated them to parenthetical comment, at most. Correspondingly, certain aspects attracted far greater attention than I had envisaged: chief amongst these was the paradoxical consideration of 'new new' Progressive rock. Accordingly, a Chapter was devoted to this set of findings. I firmly believe that my background in coaching was beneficial to success with regard to this faithful approach to the GT process[1]. The wealth of data produced via this research

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[1] A technique I found useful was the maintenance of a daily diary during the Interview and Focus Group phases. Personal reflections, including areas of improvement ("Even better if…."), were recorded and routinely reflected on. As a 'worked example', during the first Focus Group I neglected to consider the

methodology did necessitate a disciplined approach to coding, and whilst tools (such as NVivo) exist to assist in this, and are useful, there is no substitute to deep and intimate knowledge, and understanding, of the data. Theses based upon this methodology are relatively few. The process is intensive and the volume of data collected is considerable, however the richness of this data enables a breadth and depth of analysis that affords the researcher the abductive opportunity to derive findings that are empirically based. 'The Sage Handbook' was highlighted in Chapter 2, 'Methods', and it is an invaluable guide to conducting GT. The process steps are clear, and a disciplined approach rewards the necessary investment (and I also believe that my competence in project management and systems engineering was of benefit). As other commentators have remarked, and as already stated in this thesis, there is no alternative to asking the audience what they think. By privileging these views, I believe that this thesis has relevance on several levels. Firstly, in and of itself it demonstrates the value of GT with regards to my field of study. Secondly, it provides a base such that other researchers can conduct similarly based research with the same parameters, and effectively calibrate these findings. Thirdly, research subjects delimited from this thesis can be interviewed so as to provide additional perspectives on the wealth of experiences and motivations attached to Progressive rock valorization. Finally, it invites researchers from other musical genres, and, importantly, other cultural fields to consider GT as a research methodology to bring to light findings in their area(s) of interest which are equally under-represented due to their unspectacular and/or under-researched nature. I contend that the GT approach is non-domain specific, i.e., it is scalable and transferrable to other cultural spheres where the lived experiences, and motivations, of 'consumers' merit further exploration and understanding.

My research found that participants generally struggled to define Progressive rock, and frequently resorted to Bill Martin's *via negativa* (Martin 1998 p.103) to describe what it was not, and to positively compare it to other genres that were easier for them to describe, such as 'classic rock' (which was seen as essentially not evolving), mainstream music (which was seen as too predictable and simplistic), and jazz (which was seen as possibly being guilty of excesses that Progressive rock needed to avoid). When describing Progressive rock, a summary of participants' views is that Progressive rock does what it says on the tin: it is progressive, with no boundaries, and it rocks. It is different from all other styles, not least because of it is always interesting, largely due to the musicianship, the playing abilities, the instrumentation, and the storytelling. The lack of a clear definition was seen in a positive light rather than being restrictive, and

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need for a 'comfort break', which was clearly needed and would probably have detracted from participants' full engagement in the subject under discussion immediately prior to this being taken. This was addressed in all subsequent sessions and pre-advertised at commencement.

participants' inarticulation is found to be due to both Progressive rock's inherently difficult nature, and participants' lack of opportunity, or need, to define it either to themselves or in social settings.

Participants broadly recognized a three period historicization of Progressive rock that is also found in both academic and journalistic discourse (see Sheinbaum 2008; and Moore and Martin 2011). Contra some widely publicized, and predominantly American, views, participants did not characterize Progressive rock as being borne out of the counter-culture. Participants' musical entry route into Progressive rock was typically via a disaffection with chart music, or on the basis of an enjoyment of heavy rock, and wishing to see what other possibilities existed. The 'middle' period, that associated with 'neo-prog', was broadly, but not wholly, dismissed. The rationale for this was that it failed to demonstrate enough distinction from the first period progenitors, which was deemed to have concluded by 1977, and was delimited from most analysis.

Genre, as a concept, was found to have utility in a pedagogic sense, and to differentiate at sub-genre level between differing styles. Otherwise, participants generally found genre theory to be restrictive in its labelling and pigeon-holing, and frequently resorted to 'like/don't like' considerations, which were independent of any dogma. However, the frequency of its use in FGs demonstrated that it has shorthand value in discursive settings. The notion of meta-genre was found to be of most relevance to participants' characterizations of the music, albeit a term that whilst best describing their understanding of Progressive rock was not actually used by them. It was also found that participants' views on that which may be considered as 'progressive' has evolved over time; a temporal aspect that should be reflected in our use and understanding of the concept.

It was found that participants were eager to discuss and explore their motivations regarding their valorization of Progressive rock, both in interviews and in FG settings. It became clear early on in the research that, historically, participants had rarely experienced such opportunities. It was also evident that individual, rather than wider societal, approaches to understanding music appreciation and the valorisation of music artefacts and history were in play, which led to the creation and adoption of the term 'mea cultura'. Participants' consumption patterns had been largely private, personal, and un-spectacular, hence contrasting with stereotypical presentations and analyses of other forms of music fandom. Some sharing of music (albums or tapes) was evidenced, however discursive levels in terms of exploration of interpretations and meanings was relatively low. Partly this was due to the paucity of acquaintances sharing participants' passions, and partly due to an intimate relationship being formed with the music that was not easy to articulate. Even within small group settings, either domestically or in a live

environment, consumption remained a personal, reflective practice, with participants largely indifferent to others' presence, although this was not seen as anti-social, simply private. This thesis found that theories based on assumed levels of socialization (see Kahn-Harris 2007; Curtis 1987; Frith 1998; Roy and Dowd 2010; and Gilroy 1993) should be reconsidered in light of this. 'Mea culturas' are inevitably influenced by a wider culture and society; however, they are self-sustaining based on personally-derived values associated with aesthetics and ideology. This personal experience is seen through the lifecourse. Recent technological advances, such as the internet, have not fundamentally altered participants' interaction habits, continuing to prefer private, non-spectacular forms of fandom.

This individual approach to fandom has enabled participants to largely self-determine what Progressive rock is, and isn't, and to contextualize it consistent with their own definitions and characteristics. The role of the media was found to be less diffuse than has been suggested elsewhere (see Thornton 1995; and Schmutz 2009), and participants' engagement with it was mixed. With regards to the leading UK music papers of the 1970s, participants were aware of the publications; however, the majority of them clearly indicated the relatively insignificant role that they performed as taste makers or influencers. The visual media attracted a slightly more positive response, although the scarcity of it also contributed to participants needing to find alternative means of developing their appreciation, as well as deciding for themselves. It is inevitable that over time, the media has influenced participants' perspectives, although this was claimed to be minimal. The perspectives offered by participants, their general unawareness of scholarly, or academic, theories, and minimal allusion to dogma, all support the contention that their views are very much their own. As serious fans, they consistently demonstrated the worth of *amateur* (after Hennion 2005) aficionados in this research.

A recurring theme throughout the research is that the 'text' is privileged over the 'context', i.e., the music has primacy amongst all considerations, and other elements are secondary: they may, or may not, enhance the enjoyment of the music, but any detraction from musical affordance is not appreciated. The musicians' compositional and performance abilities were highly regarded, as was their virtuosity, and 'respect' was routinely cited as a motivation in participants' consumption and valorization practices. However, virtuosity was not a prerequisite, and simplicity had its place too. Virtuosity was not seen as an end in itself: it had to serve the music as a means to generate the aesthetic pleasure that was grounded in the song, and the meaning making that evolved from this.

The live experience acted as a site for musicians, individually and collectively, to demonstrate their authenticity, and virtuosity if appropriate. The musicians' embracing of technology was

one of the hallmarks of Progressive rock, and this approach opened up new aural and interpretative possibilities. However, in the live environment, the participants' strong desire was to witness performers in as unmediated a setting as possible (save for the benefits of an enhanced PA system). Participants placed great store on their ability to experience the musicians demonstrating their musical ability in their presence, such that participants could validate the bases of their appreciation. Consistent with the primacy of the text, theatrical elements, spectacle, lighting rigs, and so on, could all enhance the experience, however it was imperative that they were additive to the overall appreciation, and not detrimental to the music. Whilst the transcendent nature of the consumption practice was highlighted by participants, they also made clear their enjoyment of the visceral aspects of the rock. Participants described the physical effect the music had upon their bodies, as well as the (largely) enjoyable intellectual challenges it presented. The music moved participants in their hearts as well as their heads. Participants' largely private consumption of the music was not just due to social patterns, and historical norms, but also due to a desire to engage with the music at volume.

Participants repeatedly returned to familiar texts on the basis of their perceived depth and complexity, enabling previously unheard dimensions and nuances to be realized. Participants frequently referred to the investment required so as to gain an understanding, and appreciation, of Progressive rock texts. This appreciation may take several years, or even longer, to reach a suitable point; however, this was seen as an attraction, in most cases, rather than a barrier. Adaptation theory (after Steck and Machotka 1975) was in evidence, i.e., participants generating over time an increased ability to discern, and appreciate, increasing levels of complexity, as well as levels of detail within the music, with a consequent negative reaction to music perceived as 'simple'. For participants, Progressive rock music is not background music. When it is being listened to, everything else is in the background: it is an immersive experience, and the album, as the typical listening unit, needs to be heard in its entirety for maximal benefits to be achieved. Participants were keen to ensure that the researcher understood the difference between listening, and *listening*: the passive contrasted with the active. This music would leave participants feeling transported, having lost themselves in the work. With the range of possibilities afforded by the music, participants would listen to certain works, in their estimations, hundreds of times. Both the nature of the listening experience, and the degree of repetition, are *contra* extant theories (Chmiel and Schubert 2017, 2019; Orr and Ohlsson 2005; and Martindale and Moore 1989), and demonstrate that Progressive rock consumption is seemingly subject to differing motivations from those enjoying other musical styles. Listening, intently, to a work enables a sense of progression to be distinguished, and therefore, repeated

listening to a series of albums enhances this, leading to an immersion in a corpus resulting in an ultimate multi-dimensional understanding of progression in the music to which they listen.

With maturity, participants found that both ascribed and immanent new meanings could be discerned. Focused longitudinal research could be conducted to understand this aspect in greater depth. Participants did not typically regard Progressive rock musicians, or their music, as pretentious; rather they viewed it through a lens of ambition, and the musicians were regarded as being true to themselves, and hence the antithesis of pretension. In their eyes, it was laudable to aspire to great art, and felt that Progressive rock musicians were most able, even uniquely in the field of popular music, to attain this. Positive comparisons to classical music (in terms of high culture, rather than a musicological grounding), and literature were made in validation of participants' views. Mis-steps along this path of musical ambition were tolerated, and seen as a constituent fundamental, and even inevitable, part of Progressive rock. Whilst attachments were most often linked to a specific band, or bands, rather than pan-meta-genre, participants relationships were not hagiographic. Whilst meta-genre-wide knowledge was very limited, the overall ethos and ideology of Progressive rock, its ambition, was more than adequate to discount shortcomings that were witnessed. Progressive rock fandom, and progressive rock musicians, being generally non-spectacular leads to a distinction from attachments formed in other musical styles to individual musicians or personae.

Participants understood, and or believed, that appreciation of Progressive rock was beyond the desire and or capabilities, of many other listeners. Others' views were seen as naïve, ignorant, and uneducated. Whilst this may be seen as evidence of elitism, and participants were self-aware of this - they did not demonstrate this trait in any other respect: there was a marked absence of attraction to, or exercising of, cultural capital. Subcultural theory, and related theories such as those associated with scenes, communities, and tribes were shown to have minimal correspondence with participants' fandom and socio-cultural practices. Aspects commonly related to those, such as a focus on fashion, the importance of display, a geographical locus, resistance to hegemony, or concerns with hierarchy were almost completely absent. Fashion, either in clothing terms or as related to being considered 'cool' or 'hip' was immaterial in participants' deliberations, reinforcing the importance of the text over the context. An egalitarian attitude was frequently claimed, both in terms of being openminded to most musical styles and in regards to interactions, when these occurred. However, the evidence of some elitism somewhat belied this, and raised another paradoxical element of Progressive rock fandom as witnessed in participants' descriptions.

Participants were aware that few people shared their interest in Progressive rock, and their consumption practices, and attention to detail, was for personal benefit. Participants understood that the distinctions between differing versions of tracks, the accumulation of different versions of the same album, the recognition of a new interpretation of a work either at the gig or via a bootleg, were essentially of interest only to themselves. This thesis found that extant theories associated with collecting, in terms of an aspiration to a form of immortality, or for social status, were ill-founded (see Muensterberger 1994; Dougan 2006; Shuker 2004; Pearce 1999; and van Dijck 2006): participants' collections were amassed on the basis of aesthetic appreciation, which would likely not survive their death.

One of the motivations for collecting was due to the value attached to the artwork. The artwork, and t-shirts, were two artefacts that had some display element: although participants noted that they were aware that essentially no-one would recognize the bands involved. This was therefore seen as a demonstration of kinship with other, unknown, and likely not to be met, members of the 'secret club'. Again, the drivers behind such practices are private and personal. Participants believed that the deliberately chosen artwork revealed insights into the music contained within, and was the first step to be invited in, with the artwork and the music both stretching out. In itself, the artworks possessed aesthetic beauty, and were separately praised. Whilst the artwork could serve as a complement to the musical journey, videos (and other technological possibilities) were not attractive to participants: for them, their interpretations were very personal and it was believed that others' interpretations would fail to do justice to that which they had determined. With the album sleeves, a certain image was associated with Progressive rock, and the recognition of this in a record store, led participants to determine the likely attractiveness of the music based not only on the imagery, but also the information provided in terms of the length of the tracks, and instrumentation. In addition, the album sleeves served as a valuable information source in a pre-internet age, enabling participants to understand the connections between bands and musicians. Various artefacts comprised collections in some way for participants; however, this thesis found that reasons for dispositions of (elements of) collections is under-researched and theorized. Participants' comments with regards to their ticket stubs in particular demonstrated an inconsistency between stated importance and lived experience.

Concept albums were seen as a crystallization of Progressive rock's ideology. They represented the height of a band's ambition, could be intellectually challenging, and their ability to tell a compelling, thematically-unified story over an extended period, was attractive in principle. There was a widespread recognition that concept albums were a fundamental constituent

element of Progressive rock, even though opinions were divided over respective merits. It was acknowledged that some were more successful than others. It was evident that, again, the text assumed primacy: the concept, and the delivery of it, had to support rather than detract from the music's attractiveness. The importance of role of lyrics was a contested and nuanced area. Participants' views varied between bands and lyricists, and their role in storytelling: however, the music and the lyrics were to be seen as part of a whole, and not to be treated separately. The interview process led to some participants realizing that the lyrics were more important to them then they had initially realized. No one subject matter was privileged, and participants enjoyed the broad swathe of subject matter that could be covered. This suggests that the compositional latitude afforded to, and assumed by, Progressive rock musicians leads to a different dynamic between the music and the lyrics not typically seen in other musical styles. This opportunity for lyricists to develop their input in a relatively unconstrained way enabled greater insights to be gained as the lyricists were not constrained by time constraints (for example, conventional airplay time for singles), or subject matter (for example, mundane romantic developments). However, lyrics were not deemed essential: the musicians' ability to convey a story purely through their musical ability was praised. Participants enjoyed developing their own narrative based upon their meaning(s) generated by the music alone.

The heterogeneity of Progressive rock bands, the multi-faceted nature of (Progressive rock) music fandom, the need, and preference, for personally derived meanings and bases for valorization ('mea cultura'), means that views on the canon are conflicted. In their views on Pink Floyd, and *Dark Side of the Moon* in particular, Participants' views demonstrated that 'aura' can be a strong factor in canonical considerations, outweighing other elements such as virtuosity, and a general challenge as to whether they (and Jethro Tull) merit inclusion as a 'big six' member. I would argue that views on consecration processes that lead to canonization need to reflect more on the possible importance of concept albums: participants nominated concept albums to a degree beyond that recognized in Dowd *et al.*'s work (2019). In contrast to Pink Floyd, and Jethro Tull, the 'aura' attached to King Crimson, on the other hand, was sufficient for the band to be unequivocally seen as a 'Big Six' member, even though the majority of participants expressed a difficulty with their music, regarding it as being too complex, and having less familiarity with their corpus. Nevertheless, the aura of King Crimson (or Robert Fripp), was sufficient to outweigh these limitations. The findings associated with adaptation theory are likely in play here: participants value musical ambition and aspire to an increased appreciation of Progressive rock music – hence King Crimson are possibly seen through a different lens to other bands, whether of the 'big six' or otherwise, with whom they are more familiar.

This was not the only example where paradoxical perspectives were demonstrated by participants. Although they were drawn to the music partly on the basis of its originality, its unpredictability and its variety, approximately one-half of the participants expressly delimited bands from beyond the first period in their elective listening choices, thereby deliberately ignoring 'new' music. The attraction of 'prog-metal' can be seen as a linkage back to heavy metal being an entry point for many participants, and a weak correspondence can be seen between those attracted to the 'new' and this sub-genre. More empirical research could investigate this. Participants delimiting themselves to the 'old' were sufficiently self-reflexive to recognize how "bizarre" that was, and this was rationalized on the basis of the 'old old' music being able to still provide new interpretations, and new meanings. These possibilities were enhanced with remasters, remixes, and new box sets. Also, a number of participants locating themselves within this 'old' setting were finding 'new old' bands from the era that were equally attractive. For them, there was still a rich vein of musical treasure still to be mined without need for recourse to the 'new new'. This mindset was also witnessed in the live environment, with participants' views on 'improvisatory' elements attracting mixed reactions. For some, this is another opportunity for musicians to demonstrate their craft, and provide new, exciting insights into their musical visions. For others, their attraction to the originals leads to a strong desire for this to be reproduced note-perfect. Virtuosity and authenticity are both in play: for the former, they are demonstrated by their musical ability to competently improvise, individually and collectively, to a degree that retains interest; whereas for the latter, virtuosity and authenticity are evidenced by their ability to faultlessly, and without aid, recreate complex pieces of work. Participants were likewise equally split in this regard, with a weak correspondence seen between those preferring the 'old old' and minimal or no improvisation, and those preferring the 'new new' and improvisatory elements.

Regardless of participants' orientation in these regards, their engagement with the text was not rooted to historical times, places, people, or events. Instead, the music, as well as providing a source of comfort, consistently provided opportunities for participants to revisit their interpretations of it, based on its perceived freshness, and in so doing, there was evidence of an ongoing relationship. *Contra* various theories associated with nostalgia (see Bonneville-Roussy *et al.* 2013; van der Hoeven 2018; Wilson 2014; and Bruel 2019), this timeless nature led to participants adopting a forward orientation in their repeated listening to old music, with no retrospective or negative connotations. For them, Progressive rock retains its vitality, its interest, and its attraction as a source of meaning, inspiration, and ongoing progression.

Delimitations and Opportunities

The 'neo-prog' movement was expressly delimited for the reasons stated. Fans of this sub-genre will undoubtedly be able to enrich the findings of this research. The participants, whilst drawn from eight different countries, were Anglo-phonic in their orientation and historical association with Progressive rock, and different geographical regions would also contribute much in this area. Participants were unspectacular in terms of their fandom, and not drawn to websites, chat rooms and the like, where performative aspects are in play. The views arising from these have already been researched to some degree, however the opportunity remains for a more empirical analysis to be undertaken to understand the reasons behind correspondences and differences. Psychologists would also be able to contribute much, through focused interaction with Progressive rock fandom, and add to the body of work that already exists in terms of meaning-making from this perspective. Finally, this thesis was expressly delimited to Progressive rock, however, the approach undertaken was intended to be scalable and transferrable to other musical styles, and cultural forms. One participant, an opera lover, has stated that he believes this to have utility value.

An Acquired Taste and an Enduring Legacy

> Researcher: "what is it about it that bears repeated listening?"
>
> Nathan: "if you've maybe found this out after your research, bottle it and sell it because it's going to be worth a fucking fortune"

The aim of this thesis was to understand what fans of Progressive rock valorize about it, and why, by foregrounding their voices, and to relate their motivations and beliefs to extant theories. This thesis has brought this to light, with unique insights grounded in participants' perspectives, gleaned from over 100 hours of interactions. In summary form, the key findings, demonstrating the value of the amateur aficionado, are that:

- No gender or age biases are evident.
- The text generally assumes primacy over context (for example, as seen through the lenses of virtuosity, spectacle, fashion, and collecting).
- Repeated and immersive listening habits are *contra* various extant theories.
- The roles played by the lyrics, and the artwork, extend beyond our current understandings.
- The socio-cultural settings within which Progressive rock is listened to, engaged with, and enjoyed, signifies individual, rather than wider societal, approaches to

understanding music appreciation and the valorization of music artefacts and history, and gave rise to a notion termed '*mea cultura'.*

- The relative lack of exogenous influences enables multiple meanings to be formed, and views to be held, that are relatively unconstrained by dogma or convention, facilitated by a consciously open interpretation of what Progressive rock is, and is not.

- Paradoxes are evident within the reception of this music (for example, as seen through the (non-)engagement with new Progressive rock, the live setting and the role of improvisation, and the role of 'aura' in conjunction with canonical bands and albums).

- Nostalgia need not be seen as retrogressive and negative, and temporally-located, but may be seen as forward-oriented, with an ideological, aesthetic, and personal locus.

This thesis has demonstrated that Progressive rock valorization is an ever-shifting, multi-dimensional, many-on-many phenomena. For these participants, for manifold reasons that are varied and evolve over time, it has been, and seemingly will for ever be, an essential and enduring part of who they see themselves to be. Their valorization of Progressive rock is deeply rooted in a highly personal and aesthetically focused fandom that allows personal introspection and growth. Through the wide variety of meanings that participants can individually and privately generate through their Progressive rock consumption, they have found countless ways to experience the music, and it has served as a positive wellspring through their lifecourse. Participants' comments throughout this thesis demonstrate the power that they derive from their fandom, and the essential role it plays in their lives. For the participants to this research, Progressive rock has a legacy that has endured for them: once their taste for this music has been acquired, it never leaves them.

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Appendix A: Word Cloud

Participants' Responses to 'How Would You Describe Progressive Rock?'

The following 'word cloud' captures the most frequently used words (less words immaterial to the exercise), when Participants were asked at the end of the interview, "How would you describe Progressive rock to someone that was unaware of what it was?".

Without exception, participants struggled to present a clear, coherent, concise response, even if they had deduced that this question would be asked.

Appendix B: 'Degrees of Separation'

The following diagram demonstrates the relationship between myself and the participants engaged in this research. It shows that there exists a high level of separation between myself and them, and the variety of sources from which they engaged.

These two 'Colins' are the same person

Appendix C: Survey

This survey was sent to all respondents who indicated an intention to be a participant to my research. Completion was not compulsory.

The Enduring Legacy of Prog?

Page 1: PhD Research Project: An Acquired Taste? The Enduring Legacy of Prog

How your answers to this questionnaire will be used and the purpose of the Research is covered in two other documents: Informed Consent Form and Participants' Information Sheet. These should already have been shared with you. If you have not received them then please contact me in either of the following ways:

Mail: paulgoodge@progtastic.org

Phone: 07817 233803

Thank you, and Prog on

Paul Goodge

Page 2: Page 1

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this Research.

You will be making a hugely important contribution to an increased understanding of why fans enjoy Progressive Rock. The first few questions are very short and then there are a few where you are asked to rate certain aspects. It should take no more than 10 minutes or so of your time. That's less than one good Prog anthem! We can then discuss some of these aspects when we meet. How you define Prog is up to you, I'm sure we will have fun discussing it later.

Thank you very much,

Paul Goodge

1. What is your age?

2. How would you describe your gender?

3. What was your highest level of education?

4. What is your current job (or if retired your last significant job)?

5.   What is your preferred choice for daily newspaper?

6.   How long have you been listening to Progressive Rock music?

6.a.   Roughly speaking, what percentage of your music collection is related to Progressive Rock music?

7.   How many hours a week would you say you listen to music?

7.a.   What percentage of this would you say is Progressive Rock music?

8.   To what extent do you agree with the following comments about Progressive Rock music?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Not at all	Slightly	Neutral	Mostly	Very Much
It is important to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is interesting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is relevant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is exciting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is meaningful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

It appeals to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is fascinating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is valuable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is necessary for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9.   To what extent do you agree with the following aspects of listening to Progressive Rock music?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Not at all	Slightly	Neutral	Mostly	Very Much
It relaxes me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It puts me in a pleasant mood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It helps me feel that I'm not alone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because there is no-one else around	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I listen for the joy of it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is a habit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learn more about myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It brings back memories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I listen so to forget things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is beautiful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 3: Final page

Thank you for taking the time to help in this research. It is hugely appreciated. I look forward, very much, to our discussion.

You will have other opportunities if you wish to contribute to this research. Certainly, please feel very free to tell others about it. I would be delighted to hear other peoples' views.

As appropriate, key themes arising from this will be shared. You will be amongst the first to hear about these. In the meantime...

Prog On !

Paul

Appendix D1: Informed Consent Form – Interview Phase

The following is the form sent to all participants, with bilateral signatures required prior to further engagement.

SOLENT
UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: An Acquired Taste? The Enduring Legacy of Prog

I confirm that (please tick as appropriate and add your initials alongside):

1.	I have been told about the purpose of the project and I understand this.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	☐
4.	I understand I can leave the project at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be questioned about why I have left the project. Data gathered to this point can still be used by the Researcher.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding anonymity and confidentiality have been clearly explained tome (e.g. not using my real name, so that anything I contributed to this project cannot be recognized unless I give my consent; that only anonymised data will be shared outside the research team).	☐
6.	The procedures regarding data anonymity have been clearly explained to me (e.g. not using my real name, so that anything I contributed to this project cannot be recognised).	☐
7.	I agree to the use of voice recording if telephone, Skype (or equivalent) or in-person interviews are used.	☐
8.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
9.	I understand that other potential researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	☐
10.	I agree to the use of direct quotations in publications provided that my anonymity is preserved.	☐

11.	I understand what I have said or written as part of this project will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs.	☐
12.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed Consent Form.	☐

Participant: Name …………………………………………………………

                                     Date ………………………………………………………….

Researcher: Name …………………………………………………………

                                       Date …………………………………………………………..

Appendix D2: Participant Information Sheet – Interview Phase

This was sent to all participants with the Informed Consent

SOLENT
U N I V E R S I T Y

Participant information Sheet

Study Title: An Acquired Taste? The Enduring Legacy of Prog

I would like to invite you to take part in our research study called 'An Acquired Taste? The Enduring Legacy of Prog'. Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important that you understand what the research is about and what it would involve for you.
Please read the following information, and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like any more information or if anything is unclear, please contact me:
Name: Paul Goodge, Email: paul.goodge@solent.ac.uk
Telephone Number: 07817 233803

What is the study about?
The study is about understanding what fans value about Progressive Rock and why. This could include any aspects whatsoever and is meant to be a very open question. The study will conclude by the end of 2022 at the latest when the views that have been shared will be analysed and turned into a thesis for submission and evaluation. The main goal is to understand in fans' own words what they value and determine an overall theory or theories as to why this is the case.

Who will conduct the research?
The research will be conducted solely by Paul Goodge, a PhD research student enrolled at Solent University in the School of Media Arts and Technology

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been asked to take part because you are believed to have a passion for Progressive Rock and have knowledge and insights that will help make the research, and ultimately the PhD, a success.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
If you decide to take part in the research, you would be asked to:

- Take part in an interview discussion. This will be 'semi-structured', meaning that whilst I will have some areas I would like to cover, the discussion will largely be led by you and what's important to you. This would, typically, take between 45 and 90 minutes, which would be at your discretion.
- This interview will probably be conducted virtually, e.g. by Microsoft Team Meetings. If possible and agreeable to yourself, and logistics allow, it might be conducted face-face.
- If you wish then a further discussion might be arranged so that more of your insights could be shared

- Whilst these discussions will be 1-1 there will probably be the opportunity to take part in a group focus session where a particular aspect would be discussed. This, again, would probably be conducted virtually. If you wish then you could participate in one of those for a subject that you feel is meaningful.
- Each interaction will be arranged by myself and you will have all the notice you require. I will contact you by the means and only by the means that you prefer. The timing, e.g. the hour or the day, will be in accordance with your preference.

There will also be a website that you will have access to where you can contribute further, only if and as much as you wish.

What sorts of questions would I be asked?
The nature of the research is that the agenda, i.e. the areas to be discussed, are very much at your discretion. It is important that you are not guided or led by me. In discussing your enjoyment of Progressive Rock I will be interested in all aspects of your appreciation and also what this has meant for you in wider life, some of your life history as relevant to the music, and related interests.

Would the interviews be recorded?
I would like to record the interview using the 'record' function that exists within the tool we use. If we meet face-face I would like to use a recording device. The reason for recording the sessions is so that the information I collect and use in my analysis is as accurate as possible. I will spend considerable time post our meeting re-listening to the recording so that I can be sure I understand the points that you are making.
I can confirm that your permission for this recording will be sought beforehand on the Consent Form that will be shared with you for you to sign.
I can also confirm that if I intend to use direct quotations then your permission would be sought and that the quotations would be anonymised, so that you could not be recognised in any publications.

Do I have to take part?
Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and will not be pursued unless you sign the Consent Form. Should you choose not to then no further contact will be made by me.

Can I change my mind about participating in the research?
You are fully entitled to change your mind and withdraw at any time without the need for giving any reason. You will not be asked to explain your decision and no further contact will be made.
If the withdrawal occurs after any discussions have taken place it will be impossible to extract and destroy data that has already been processed as the analysis process is continuous and I will immediately be using your insights as part of my overall research.

Would my taking part in the research be kept confidential?
All information which is collected about you during the course of the research would be kept strictly confidential, and should any information about you leave Southampton Solent University it would have your name and address removed so that you could not be recognised.
It would also not be possible to identify you from any published material arising from the study.
I would ask for your permission to use direct quotations (which would be anonymised, so that you could not be recognised) in any publications. I would ask for your permission to do this beforehand on the Consent Form

During the research, data will only be accessed by me. After the study is finished, the data collected will almost certainly be destroyed. If it is to be stored for any reason, e.g. post PhD activity as in future research or for use in other published material, then it will be stored on a separate dedicated secure hard-drive with myself being the only person aware of the password which would not be shared with anyone.

What would happen to the data collected?
The data collected will form the basis of my PhD. Some sharing of results prior to final incorporation within the thesis will occur. This will be limited as it is important not to influence those who have yet to participate and anonymity will be preserved.

What would be the benefits of taking part in the research?
Very little has been researched regarding why we enjoy and value Progressive Rock. Very little has been researched regarding why people value the particular style they like at all. This is a wonderful opportunity to participate in and contribute to a body of work that will bring this to life and help others understand the wonder of Progressive Rock. Once completed you will have access to the PhD thesis and you can use it, share it as you wish with whoever. May many others come to enjoy it and appreciate it as we do.

Would I be paid for taking part in the research?
No, this would be entirely voluntary.

Has the study been subject to ethical review?
The study has been drawn up in compliance with Southampton Solent University Ethics Policy and Procedures. It has been approved by my Director of Studies, in the first instance, and also by the University's Ethics Committee.

Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint?
Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please send your complaint to the person below who is a senior University official entirely independent of the study:

UG, PGT or PGR Student projects: Head of Student Achievement, Academic Services, Southampton Solent University, East Park Terrace, Southampton SO14 0YN; 02382 013200
Staff projects: Chair of the Research and Innovation Committee, Southampton Solent University, East Park Terrace, Southampton SO14 0YN;
research.innovation@solent.ac.uk

Thank you, in anticipation, of your support in this unique project. Prog on.

Paul Goodge

Appendix D3: Informed Consent Form – Focus Groups

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Informed Consent Form – Focus Groups

Project Title: An Acquired Taste? The Enduring Legacy of Prog

I confirm that (please tick as appropriate and add your initials alongside):

1.	I have been told about the purpose of the Focus Groups and I understand this.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the Focus Groups and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the Focus Groups, and will abide by the Focus Group protocols	☐
4.	I understand I can leave the Focus Group session at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be questioned about why I have left. Data gathered to this point can still be used by the Researcher.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding anonymity and confidentiality have been clearly explained to me (e.g. not using my real name, so that anything I contributed to this project cannot be recognized unless I give my consent; that only anonymised data will be shared outside the research team). I understand that my face will be visible to other Focus Group participants, as will theirs to me.	☐
6.	I understand that my face will be visible to other Focus Group participants, as will theirs to me. I will not attempt to identify other Participants unless express, written permission has been given.	☐
7.	I agree to the use of voice and recording during the Focus Groups.	☐
8.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
9.	I understand that other potential researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	☐
10.	I agree to the use of direct quotations in publications provided that my anonymity is preserved.	☐

11.	I understand what I have said or written as part of this project will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs.	☐
12.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed Consent Form.	☐

Participant: Name ………………………………………………………………

                  Date ……………………………………….………………….

Researcher: Name ………………………………………………………………

                  Date ……………………………………………………………..

Appendix D4: Participant Information Sheet – Focus Groups

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U N I V E R S I T Y

Participant information Sheet – Focus Groups

Study Title: An Acquired Taste? The Enduring Legacy of Prog

Further to your very valuable contribution already to the above, for which I am very grateful, I would like to invite you to further take part in the research study, through participation in a Focus Group. Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important that you understand how this will work, and what it would involve for you. Please read the following information, and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like any more information or if anything is unclear, please contact me:
Name: Paul Goodge, Email: paul.goodge@solent.ac.uk
Telephone Number: 07817 233803

The purpose of the Focus Groups
Thanks to your contribution many interesting and relevant themes have emerged from the Research. Our initial discussion was inevitably time constrained and therefore it was not possible to fully explore some aspects. In addition, whilst there has been broad agreement and alignment amongst Participants there are some nuances that would benefit from further exchange of views. Therefore, a Focus Group will provide an opportunity for a breadth and depth of views to be exchanged which will be of significant and valuable benefit to the Research.

I also strongly suspect that it will be very enjoyable, as were all initial discussions.

Who will conduct the Focus Groups?
The Focus Groups will be conducted and moderated solely by Paul Goodge, a PhD research student enrolled at Solent University in the School of Media Arts and Technology

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been asked to take part because you have already demonstrated your passion, knowledge and ability to interact on the aspects relevant to the overall Research. Your further insights will help make the research, and ultimately the PhD, a success.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
If you decide to take part in a Focus Group, you would be asked to:

- Agree to participate in a recorded 2-hour session, with three or four other participants.
- Be comfortable with the sessions being recorded visually as well as with audio. This is different from the Interview that you have already participated in. This is considered necessary so as to aid group interaction.
- Adhere to the Focus Group protocols (see below), as will all others. These are in place to ensure that the session is a safe and secure environment for you and others.
- Be flexible, where possible, with regard to the date and time of the Focus Group as others' constraints will need to be accommodated.

Focus Group Protocols
You will be expected to follow these:
- Be courteous
- Be prepared to interact and share
- Respect others' views whilst retaining the right to suitably explore and challenge them
- Respect the role of the moderator
- Do not seek out personal information that is not offered, thereby potentially compromising others' anonymity

What sorts of themes would I be asked to discuss?
There will be primarily, and perhaps only, one major theme to discuss. This will be made clear to you several days prior to the Focus Group. Any theme(s) will be chosen by the Researcher, taking into account views already expressed by Participants. It is feasible that this discussion will lead to other elements, perhaps that have not been anticipated. The nature of the research is that this exploration is very much at your, and your fellow Participants', discretion.

Would the Focus Groups be recorded?
They will be, both by audio and by video.
I will spend considerable time post the Focus Group re-listening to the recording so that I can be sure I understand the points that are made.
I can confirm that your permission for this recording will be sought beforehand on the Consent Form that will be shared with you for you to sign.
I can also confirm that if I intend to use direct quotations then your permission would be sought and that the quotations would be anonymised, so that you could not be recognised in any publications.

Do I have to take part?
Participation is entirely voluntary and will not be pursued unless you sign the Consent Form. Should you choose not to then no further contact will be made by me.

Can I change my mind about participating in the Focus Group?
You are fully entitled to change your mind and withdraw at any time without the need for giving any reason. You will not be asked to explain your decision and no further contact will be made.
If the withdrawal occurs after any discussions have taken place it will be impossible to extract and destroy data that has already been processed as the analysis process is continuous and I will immediately be using your insights as part of my overall research.

Confidentiality and Data Collection
These aspects will be entirely consistent with that which you have already been informed of, and signed up to, as part of the initial interview process

What would be the benefits of taking part in the Focus Group?
It is clear that Focus Groups can be very rich sources of information. You have already demonstrated your knowledge and passion and I believe your participation will not only enrich this very interesting research but also provide you with an enjoyable experience. You will be sharing and learning with others who are very much of the same mind as yourself.

Would I be paid for taking part in the research?
No, this would be entirely voluntary.

Has the study been subject to ethical review?
The study has been drawn up in compliance with Southampton Solent University Ethics Policy and Procedures. It has been approved by my Director of Studies, in the first instance, and also by the University's Ethics Committee.

Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint?
Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please send your complaint to the person below who is a senior University official entirely independent of the study:

UG, PGT or PGR Student projects: Head of Student Achievement, Academic Services, Southampton Solent University, East Park Terrace, Southampton SO14 0YN; 02382 013200
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Thank you, in anticipation, of your support in this unique project. Prog on.

Paul Goodge

Appendix E: The Canon

The albums that received most mentions were as follows:

Album	Number of Mentions
Dark Side of the Moon	11
Close to the Edge	10
Foxtrot	9
In The Court of the Crimson King	6
Tales From Topographic Oceans	4
Scenes From a Memory	3
Wish You Were Here	3
The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway	3

2 mentions: *A Farewell To Kings, Liquid Tension Experiment, A Passion Play, Moving Pictures, Tarkus, Fragile, Selling England by the Pound, Script for a Jester's Tear, The Wall*

1 mention: *FEAR, The Yes Album, Fugazi, Starless, Larks' Tongues in Aspic, Strange Engine, Playing the Fool, Wake of Poseidon, Brain Salad Surgery, Todd, Pawn Hearts, Snow Goose, Brave, Mirage, ELP's* début*, Flower Power, 2nd life syndrome, Seconds Out, The Underfall Yard, Two for the Show, The Gathering Light, Road of Bones, Milliontown, Hemispheres, Discipline, Nursery Cryme, Planets, In the Land of Grey and Pink, The Myths and Legends of King Arthur, Focus 3, On the Threshold of a Dream, UK's* début*, Time and Word, T-ubular Bells, 2112, Voyage 34, Argus, Even in the Quietest Moments, Pulse, Yessongs, Sola Scriptura, The White Album, Hand.Cannot.Erase, SMTPe, Thick as a Brick*

The bands that received the most mentions were:

Band	Number of Mentions
Yes	18
Pink Floyd	16
Genesis	15
King Crimson	10
Rush	6
Marillion	6
ELP	4
Jethro Tull	3
Dream Theater	3
Camel	2

1 mention: Rick Wakeman, Focus, The Moody Blues, UK, Mike Oldfield, Porcupine Tree, Wishbone Ash, Supertramp, Neal Morse, The Beatles, Steve Wilson, Liquid Tension Experiment, Transatlantic, Big Big Train, Riverside, Gentle Giant, Kansas, Todd Rundgren, Van der Graaf Generator, The Flower Kings, Karnataka, IQ, Tool, Eloy, Caravan.