NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
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PRINT

MIXED UP CONFUSION:
ART IN TWENTIETH CENTURY SOUND

by
Graham Watson

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies
In Candidacy for
the Degree of BA in Fine Art

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INTRODUCTION

"*To grasp what's going on here we have to pay attention to the music-makers*" (Frith, 1980, p63)

The discussion which follows is an investigation into the close and developing relationship between the spheres of music and visual art. It is a discourse on the various ways in which philosophies, practices and insights originating primarily in the world of visual art have influenced and changed the course of musical practice, from the turn of the century until the present.

A Preface precedes the three chapters and consists of a brief synopsis of the attraction of music, or more precisely, sound and noise for avant-garde artists since the turn of the century, especially the Futurist and Dada sound experimentalists.

Chapter One is a discussion on the work of John Cage, probably the most influential avant-garde musical thinker of this century; his influence on subsequent musics, particularly on the minimalist composers; their influence in turn on popular music, and the phenomenon of the "cross-over" artist, who merges the respective spheres of music and visual art.

Chapter Two is concerned with the influence on music of the ideas and philosophies current in 'fifties and 'sixties art schools in Britain, ideologies of both Romanticism or Bohemianism, and pop; how these philosophies affected the musical choices of these students, both in terms of listening and performance; the adoption of art school ideologies by the music business and music audience through the move to professionalism and stardom by art school musicians; the importance and influence of Pop art for the music business, the influence of Andy Warhol and his experiments with the Velvet Underground on subsequent bands and musicians.

Chapter Three is a discourse on the work of British artist/musician Brian Eno in whom the ideas of Cage, Warhol, John Cale and others culminate, and who has also been crucial

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to the careers of other influential rock and Pop musicians, and therefore the shape of contemporary popular music.

PREFACE

All art constantly aspires toward the condition of music (Walter Pater, 1837)

Music and sound have held a fascination for the visual artist since the advent of Modernism in the late nineteenth century. Aural properties and characteristics were referred to when considering the visual arts of the day, for instance Walter Pater, when referring to the paintings of Whistler, states that one can sense "*Wagnerian music, whose harmony was freed from the restraint of melody... leaving an undefinable impression*" (Walter Pater, 1837). The close relationship between the visual arts and music was also considered in depth by Kandinsky in his investigations and experiments with the idea of synaesthesia, the phenomenon of one sense affecting another, for instance having the impression of hearing Wagnerian music whilst viewing a painting by Whistler, or experiencing the sensations of colour or smell through hearing a powerful piece of music. He also correlates the visual artist with a component in the musical experience either as a composer or performer. Writing on the melodic and symphonic aspects of composition in his *On the Spiritual in Art*, he states that "*one must think of the simile of the piano... the artist is the hand, which through this or that key makes the human soul vibrate appropriately*" (Kandinsky, 1914, p132).

The aural element which has held most fascination for the avant-garde since the turn of the century, however has not been music as such, but rather those sounds which traditionally have been considered as being outside the realm of musical materiality. The progression of artists ideas about sound and noise in this century has been a reaction against the privileging of music as the art of sound in western culture. The main avant-garde strategy from Luigi Russolo through John Cage relies upon notions of noise and worldly sounds as extra-musical. This approach arises from the concept of "noise" as a by-product of the industrial revolution in nineteenth century Europe. "Noise", the din of construction, sirens, electric bells, pounding and shrieking, was the background music of the factory and the city, the new era, the age of the machine. These modern sounds were abstract, divorced from normative meaning and traditional rhythms, unlike the sounds of earlier, rural life, and soon became another inspirational tool of the avant-garde.

The artistic groups to have adopted and explored these ideas most fully were the Italian and Russian futurists. For the futurists, in their propagation and involvement with the Spirit of the New Age, "noise" was adopted as another weapon in their artistic arsenal. The most articulate "noise" practitioners of the group were the leader of the Italian futurists, F.T. Marinetti, with his experiments with "parole-in-liberta", or "words-in-freedom", sound poems wherein the human voice was used to imitate machine sounds, particularly the sounds of battle (Marinetti was a reporter from the trenches of Adrianopolis during the Italo-Turkish war in Libya), and his contemporary Luigi Russolo. An extension of their visual concerns in painting, the futurists felt that the use of noise and sound accurately expressed the time in which they lived, the age of the machine, speed and power. It was Russolo who set their ideas and intentions in print with his 1913 manifesto *The Art of Noises*. Taking the mechanistic music of futurist composer Balilla Pratella as a precedent, Russolo developed the idea of machine sounds being a viable form of music. This experimentation culminated in the formation of his futurist noise orchestra. This consisted of a group of "noisicians", each playing a "noise-intoner". These "intonarumori" were crank-operated noise machines, rectangular boxes around three feet tall with funnel-shaped amplifiers and containing various motors, which were capable of producing the desired sound effect at the turn of a handle. According to Russolo, around thirty thousand diverse sounds were possible. By employing his machines, Russolo was able to reconstruct entire soundscapes, sounds of war, sounds of the dense urban environment. His 1914 symphony *The Awakening of the City* was an attempt to represent the urban landscape from the sounds it generated. A journalist present at one recital of the piece in 1914 wrote

> *At first a quiet, even murmur was heard. The great city was asleep... presently, a faraway noise rapidly grew into a mighty roar. I fancied it must have been the roar of the huge printing machines of the newspapers... I was right, as a few seconds later hundreds of vans and lorries seemed to be hurrying towards the station, summoned by the shrill whistling of the locomotives. Later, the trains were heard, speeding boisterously away, then a flood of water seemed to wash the town, children crying and girls laughing under the refreshing shower. A multitude of doors was next heard to open and shut with a bang, and procession of receding footsteps intimated that the great army of bread-winners was going to work. Finally, all the noises of the street and factory merged into a gigantic roar and the music ceased. I awoke as though from a dream and applauded.* (Russolo, 1913, pp4-5)

The ever-present, overbearing cacophony of the sounds of modern life were what Russolo was trying to recreate and celebrate. In his manifesto he writes "*Ancient life was silent... with the invention of the machine, noise was born... which reigns over the sensibility of man*" (Russolo, 1913, p13).

Sound experimentation was also applied to the human voice and language by the futurist and Dadaist sound poets. Artists and performers such as Dadaist Hugo Ball went beyond Marinetti's imitative speech patterns and propagated what they called a "zaum" language. This was a language akin to glossolalia or schizophrenic utterances, where words were sounds only and were divorced from semantic value. Balls was a "*verse without words*", sound poems in which "*the balancing of the vowels is gauged and distributed only to the value of the initial line*" (Goldbery, 1985, p14). This form of utterance was also explored by other prominent dada figures such as Raoul Hausmann, Richard Huelsenbeck, Kurt Schwitters and Tristan Tzara and was often accompanied in performance by drums, sirens and "found" sounds. With this phonetic poetry, Ball hoped to renounce the language which he regarded as "*devastated and made impossible by journalism*" (Goldberg, 1985, p16).

The opening up of the world of noise and sound, extra-musical material, through the aural experiments of these artists, was crucial to the subsequent development of ideas and approaches to creation within the musical avant-garde. The person in and through whom these ideas were most fully investigated and hold greatest influence is that of composer and visual artist John Cage. Through his activities, Cage has been crucial to the development, not only of philosophy and practice within the "classical" avant-garde, but also in subsequent popular musics. It is his innovations in his approach to music-making and its influence on the musics which have followed which shall be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

JOHN CAGE

Music and Mushrooms

> *The prepared piano, impressions I had from the world of artist friends, studies in Zen Buddhism, rambling in the fields and forests looking form mushrooms, all led me to the enjoyment of things as they come, as they happen, rather than as they are possessed or kept or forced to be* (John Cage, 1973)

No discussion of the work of John Cage is really complete without reference to the ideas and innovations of his "teacher". Arnold Schöenberg. Cage has been labelled the most important musical "permission-giver" second to Schöenberg. Given the importance of Schöenberg towards an understanding of Cage and indeed all subsequent avant-garde music, a brief synopsis of his ideas is in order.

Arnold Schöenberg

In the years preceding the Second World War, a mass exodus of the European creative and intellectual community occurred, brought on by the ethnic and ideological "purgation" of National Socialism. One of the most important musical figures to have fled his homeland was the composer Arnold Schöenberg. Branded as Non-Aryan and a creator of degenerate music by the Nazis, he went to America in 1933.

Schöenberg had created a revolutionary approach to musical composition. In opposition to Wagner, whose "leitmotif" was used to signify character, emotion or idea, and was the main unit of construction, where the chromatic scale was dependent on melody and resolution, Schöenberg proposed a system wherein no harmonic rules were needed to connect the notes of the twelve-tone scale. It was not necessary for his compositions to resolve themselves, and therefore any combination of notes, in any order or chord structure, was permitted.

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Thematic development, so prevalent in Wagner, was no longer the focus of attention. Rhythm, instrumental timber and the inter-weaving of voices became the subject of his new atonal music. Analogous to the painting of the thirties and forties, where formal elements dominated over representational subject matter, so musical form had replaced programmatic content. Through his influence as a teacher in both Europe and America, Schoenberg had opened up possibilities in musical experimentation to an unprecedented degree.

John Cage

"Personality is a flimsy thing on which to build an art" (John Cage, 1944)

Schöenberg regarded Cage, his student as "an inventor genius". He is probably the most important and influential avant-garde musical thinker after Schöenberg. He has been called *"either the most responsible or irresponsible philosopher of music of our age... the one who let the kids do whatever they want"* (Spiegel in Kostelaretz, 1985, p23).

Drawn to Schöenberg because of his experimental attitude, Cage began studying with him in 1933, but quickly discovered that he had *"no feeling for harmony"* and wanted to *"find a way of making music that was free of the theory of harmony, of tonality"* (Helms in Kostelaretz, 1972, p26).

In fulfilling this desire, it was necessary for Cage to abandon pitch, the primary principle of western tonality, and to replace it with another means of structuring music. He writes,

> *Sound has four characteristics: pitch, timbre, loudness and duration. The opposite and necessary co-existent of sound is silence... Of the four characteristics of sound, only duration involves both sound and silence. Therefore, a structure based on durations is correct... whereas harmonic structure is incorrect (derived from pitch, which has no being in silence)* (Cage, 1968, p27)

Thematic development, so prevalent in Wagner, was no longer the focus of attention. Rhythm, instrumental timbre and the inter-weaving of voices became the subject of his new aural music. Analogous to the painting of the thirties and forties, where formal elements dominated over representational subject matter, so musical form had replaced programmatic content. Through his influence as a teacher in both Europe and America, Schoenberg had opened up possibilities in musical experimentation to an unprecedented degree.

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Cage's use of silence, then, as a structural device for organising sonic material "to separate one section of a composition from another" allowed him, like the futurists before, to expand his musical domain to the world of noise, that which is beyond the consideration of music as an art-form. He writes, "*wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise, whether the sound of a truck at 50mph, rain or static between radio stations, we find noise fascinating*" (Cage, 1968, p20). His intention was to "*capture and control these sounds, to use them, not as sound effects, but as musical instruments*" (Kostalenetz, 1988, p215).

The problem then that Cage saw for composers like himself, who chose to be faced with the entire field of sound, was the necessity of devising new methods of notation for such music. A solution was found in Cage's deep-felt sympathy for Oriental philosophy and especially Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism was making inroads on the American intellectual scene through the teachings of D.T. Suzuki, whose lectures Cage was attending in New York in 1947. Inherent in Zen are ideas of subduing the ego and the giving up of self through the practice of "non-intentionality", particularly in the use of the *I Ching* or *Chinese Book of Changes*, by which decisions in life are subjected to chance operations and a conclusion is reached. Through subjecting notes, sounds, durations, etc to the *I Ching*, Cage was able to relinquish personal decision-making and create compositions made entirely by chance and indeterminate operations.

The idea of Zen consciousness is to apprehend a thing, event or action as being itself and only itself, free of any association, projection of personal memory or preconception. Cage wished himself and his audience to embrace sound without imposing intention or values onto it. In his endeavour to minimise intention and ego-investment, his works moved further and further away from what might be called vehicles for "personal expression" towards ones that exist simply as "experiential possibilities", works that encourage an opening of the mind to new modes of perception. His desire was that such works would make it clear to the listener that "*the hearing of the piece is his own action - that the music, so to speak, is his rather than the composers*" (Kirby in Kostelanetz, 1965, p62). In this way, he was able to fulfil his maxim to "let sounds be themselves".

Cage also allowed for indeterminacy and chance in the performance of his works, often leaving time gaps in the score which the performers could fill with whatever they wished,

or remain silent. This indeterminacy and opportunity for many things to happen, for Cage, paralleled the multiplicity and fluency found in nature and real life. He wished to diminish the barriers between art and life and to create an art like life, an art which was open to accident and indeterminacy, which would include boredom as well as drama, mediocrity as well as excellence. His approach to performance also allowed him to break down the conventional borders and relationships between composer, conductor and performer which he thought was not a good social situation.

Influenced by Antonin Artaud's ideas on theatre in his *The Theatre and It's Double*, where he argues that theatre can take place free of a text, the separate activities such as music, lighting and dance being free and not tied to or controlling each other, Cage carried the notions of indeterminacy and multiplicity over into the arena of collaborative performance art.

This took the form of an untitled event or "happening", the first of its kind, at the Black Mountain College Summer School in North Carolina in 1952. Before the performance, Cage gave a reading of the Huang Po doctrine of Universal Mind, commenting that "*In Zen Buddhism, nothing is either good or bad... ugly or beautiful... Art should not be different than life but an action within life, with its accidents and chances and variety and disorder and only momentary beauties*" (Kostelanetz, 1988, p104).

Preparation for the piece was minimal, the performers being given a score which indicated only time brackets, which each performer was to fill with moments of action, inaction and silence. In this way there would be no causal relationship between one incident and another. Cage commented later, "*anything that happened after that, happened in the observer himself*" (Kostelanetz, 1988, p110).

A new performance space was created by a re-arrangement of the seats into a square composed of four triangles focused on the centre. This gave the participants a central space and four aisles in which to perform. Cage read his text from a step-ladder, with Robert Rauscherberg's *White Paintings* suspended from the ceiling. The *White Paintings* were a visual equivalent of Cage's "silence", where the apparent emptiness actually revealed an active vitality as light, colour and shadow reflected off the monochrome

surfaces. Rauschenberg also played a hand-wound gramophone and projected slides and film clips onto the walls and ceiling, while David Tudor played one of Cage's "prepared pianos" (with foreign objects such as screws and rubber bands placed on or between the strings). Others played exotic musical instruments and read poetry from within the audience, while "*whistles blew, babies screamed and coffee was served*" (Kostalenetz, 1988, p107). According to Cage, the event was a total success, "*purposeless in that we didn't know what was going to happen next*" (Higgins in Kostelanetz, 1976, p110).

The performance and ideas suggested endless possibilities for future collaborations and was a precursor to the happenings and "total environments" (for instance, Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*) of later years.

It was the "prepared piano", played in the Black Mountain event by David Tudor, the innovation which Cage had originally devised in the late thirties, which had first won him widespread notice. It came about when he was asked to compose an African accompaniment to a dance at the Cornish School in Seattle, where he was employed as the accompanist. After experiencing problems with the piece, he recalls,

> *I couldn't use percussion instruments for Syvilla's dance, though suggesting Africa, they would have been suitable; they would have left too little room for her to perform. I was obliged to write a piano piece. I spend a day or so conscientiously trying to find an African twelve-tone row. I had no luck. I decided that what was wrong was not me but the piano. I decided to change it.* (Cage in Bugner, 1973, p3)

Following the example of composer Henry Cowell with whom Cage had also studied, he changed the piano by placing objects on its strings. He doctored the strings with screws, bolts, nuts and strips of rubber, endowing the familiar instrument with a range of unfamiliar percussive potentialities. In addition to generating unusual sounds, the prepared piano also gave Cage less control over the tones that were finally produced. This was a continuation in his development of various methods for minimising his control over the specific aural results of a musical activity.

In 1952 Cage's notion of silence changed radically when he realised that absolute silence was in fact impossible. Placing himself inside an anechoic chamber to experience complete silence, disconnected from any external noise, he was confronted with the sounds of his own body, those of his nervous system operating and the circulation of his blood. The fact that the body itself is permeated with sound and the subsequent impossibility of "hearing" pure silence, led Cage to a surrender of his absolute. Silence was no longer an abstract quantity, not the opposite of sound by virtue of an absence, but was substantial, filled. He writes, "*Silence is now the aspect of sound that can be either expressed by sound or by its absence*" (Cage, 1968, p32).

This realisation led Cage to the piece for which he is mst renowned. *4'33"* is literally four minutes and thirty-three seconds of "silence". In Cage's words, "*a piece in three movements during which no sounds are intentionally produced*" (Goldbery in Kostelanetz, 1974, p65). *4'33"* abandons intervention by the musician. The performers are arranged onstage, the pianist waves his arms silently to indicate the three movements. Within the given time, the spectators were to understand that everything they heard was "music", people coughing, shuffling in their seats, programmes being torn, whispers, etc. The background (ambient noise) takes the place of the foreground (the piano performance). Cage says of it, "*My favourite piece is the one we hear all the time if we are quiet*" (Goldbery in Kostelanetz, 1974, p66).

In Cage's philosophy, extra-musical sounds, despite being left to "be themselves", are brought back into the fold in order to rejuvenate musical practice.

Cage's ideas of chance and indeterminate composition had both influenced and provoked a reaction and retreat in the work of younger composers by the early seventies. The "minimal" music of LaMonte Young, Philip Glass and Steve Reich still retains a lack of overt thematic content, but re-introduces tonal consonance and an order as stringent as that which Cage had tried to destroy. Like Cage, they took succour from the East, but in the form of Indian and ethnic musics, the Balinese Gamelan, African drum music and Indian ragas.

Steve Reich, for instance, retains Cage's preoccupation with time and duration. His works are based on a gradual shifting phase process, for instance a pair of tape recorders or violins, both playing the same thing but slightly out of synch with each other, so that through a long-drawn gradual process the music falls out of phase and completes a cycle by moving eventually back into unison. He writes, "*I am interested in music which works exclusively with gradual changes in time*" (Reich, 1974, p44).

He also shares Cage's Zen beliefs in the surrender of ego and giving up of the expressive self, by surrendering himself to the music. He states:

> *A performance for us is a situation where all the musicians, including myself, attempt to set aside our individual thoughts and feelings of the moment, and try to focus our minds and bodies clearly on the realisation of one continuous musical process.* (Reich, 1974, p44)

This forgetting of self through immersion in a communal musical activity comes from Reich's studies of Balinese and African music. While learning and performing these musics, he realised that the pleasure he gained from playing was "*not the pleasure of expressing myself, but of subjugating myself to the music and experiencing the ecstasy that comes from being a part of it*" (Reich, 1974, p44).

He wished to escape the confines of ego by focusing on a musical process which "*makes possible that shift of attention away from he and she and you and me and outwards towards it*" (Reich, 1974, p34).

Cage's transformation of the piano into a percussion instrument through his "preparation" of it also finds a parallel with Reich in his study of Balinese and African rhythms. Speaking of a new approach to the keyboard, he writes, "*I now look at all keyboard instruments as extraordinary sets of tuned drums*" (Reich, 1974, p11).

Where Reich and the other minimalist composers differ from Cage is in the areas of composition and performance. Reich disagrees with Cage in the idea that performers are necessarily hemmed in by a rigid musical text. Where Cage broke down the relationships between composer and performer, and allowed his players freedom to do as they wished,

Reich considers as extremely misleading the idea that a performer can only gain pleasure through improvisation, or to be in some way free to express his or her own momentary state of mind. He is at variance with Cage in the view that a strict musical score or set of specific "instructions" should necessarily equate with political control. He writes: "*Whether the music is worked out or improvised is really not the main issue. The main issue is what's happening musically; is this beautiful, is this sending chills up and down my spine, or isn't it?*" (Reich, 1974, p47).

The music of the minimalist composers has been influential in its turn on both subsequent avant-garde and popular musics. The long running patterns of interweaving voices and pulsing, inter-twining textures of their compositions became the ubiquitous sound of the eighties, surfacing everywhere from serious art music to art-rock and film scores.

The importance of minimalist music for the avant-garde and popular musics which followed is an indication of the mutually reciprocal relationship between the increasingly blurred areas of performance art, experimental music and popular culture, rock and Pop music.

For many years, rock was anathema to serious composers, beneath contempt, simplistic and crude. But just as jazz had previously piqued the curiosity of composers such as Ravel, Milhaud and Stravinsky, so rock music has been an important and immediate influence on recent American composers such as Paul Dresher and Scott Johnson. Having grown up listening to and often playing it, rock music is a natural part of their language and one that speaks to others of the same experience. This has led to a gradual popularisation of experimental music, in that the followers of avant-garde rock were led to seek out the source material, discovering as a result the work of Cage, Reich, Glass and others.

An example of this popularisation is the work of American performance artist Laurie Anderson. Anderson could be called the first "cross-over" artist, the one to successfully and commercially bridge the gap between Pop music and performance art. Her 1981 *O Superman*, a mixture of chattering saxophones and vocoded angel choirs, caught the ears of the Pop and art worlds alike and reached number two in the British charts. She

has moved beyond the art scene into a sphere which encompasses the audiences of new music, as well as Pop music. Her popularity could be gauged further by the mammoth five-record set Warner Brothers released of her magnum opus, *United States*, a financial venture that few rock musicians could manage.

Just as experimental music takes freely from the world of popular music, so rock and Pop pick and choose from the sphere of experimental music and performance art, retaining close ties with their history and practice.

A strong awareness of early sound experiments and phonetic poetry is present, for instance, in Talking Heads' *Fear of Music*, wherein David Byrne and Brian Eno set Dadaist Hugo Ball's sound poem *Gadgi Bere Bimba* against an African-inspired backdrop of interlocked guitars, tribal drums and synthesizers. Byrne's "found" style lyrics and shrill, apoplectic singing also reveal an acquaintance with the fractured syntax of the futurist and Dada performance poets.

Recent collaborations between rock musicians, artists and composers, point to an increasing communication and fluency of ideas among their respective spheres. An example is French composer Pierre Boulez's commissioning of Frank Zappa to write *The Perfect Stranger* for the Ensemble Intercontemporain. David Byrne has also collaborated with other artists such as Robert Wilson and Philip Glass in *Liquid Days*, which includes lyrics by Byrne, as well as Laurie Anderson, Paul Simon and Suzanne Vega.

It is the importance of visual and musician artists, and ideas and philosophies prevalent particularly in the art world and their subsequent influence on contemporary Popular musics which shall be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
THE ART SCHOOL CONTEXT

The art schools were the first to appreciate and employ the various Pop movements: revivalist jazz, beat, R'n'B, underground rock... (George Melly, 1972, p131)

Every fucking art student who plays out of tune gets a record deal (Willy de Ville in Clark, 1982, p228)

The situation in which artistic ideology and practice probably had the most profound effect on popular music, was in the relationship that British art students of the fifties and sixties had toward the music to which they listened and played, and in the particular peculiarities of the mid-century art school system

The art college system of the fifties and sixties consisted of a course structure in which little emphasis was placed on traditional academic studies. The main emphasis was on manual, creative studio work. In Keith Richards' sentiments, art college was a place you went "*if they couldn't find anywhere else to put you*" (Frith, 1981, p76). For this reason, many artistically and musically gifted but academically limited students gravitated towards art college, sometimes only in preference to the academic universities. This led to the creation of the specific art-school environment in which un-academic, sometimes disruptive and creative students could flourish and be comfortable to explore their creative potentialities.

The art school was therefore not just a place in which the students could further their skills in the visual arts, but was also a breeding ground for musical talent, an arena where people could meet and exchange records, musical ideas and literature, and was therefore fertile ground for bands to form.

The art college experience also provided a ready-made stage in the form of students Union entertainments and an audience of sympathetic, like-minded students for first, faltering

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THE ART SCHOOL CONTEXT

performances. The Students Unions were also in a position to foster fresh musical talent and take risks that commercial clubs might not. College audiences have also always put less value on "professionalism" and have been more open to experiment and surprise than any other group of music fans.

The types of music which these students listened to and played was reflective of the romantic image and bohemian ideas they had of themselves as art students or "artists". Concurrent with the romantic ideology prevalent in fifties and sixties college culture, ideas of the artist as essentially an outsider, a marginalised, misunderstood individual, outside the confines of mainstream society, whose commitment to "truth", "authenticity" and "self expression" was uncompromising, they chose the music which reflected their concerns.

A musical equivalent to or illustration of these romantic, bohemian ideas of the artist and what that specific role entails, was found in Jazz music, specifically with the Traditional Jazz revival in Britain during the fifties.

The acceptance of Jazz, a popular ("low") cultural form, into the arena of a (traditionally "fine" or "high") art establishment, was symptomatic of art school's role in the post-modern "condition", the breakdown of high/low cultural distinctions. Art college was seen as the embodiment of this process.

Concurrent with the art students' enthusiastic acceptance of jazz, was the ICA's controversial series of lectures during the fifties, in which Jazz was actually propagated as the musical equivalent of modern art. It was claimed that Jazz was a musical form which had "*broken with the orthodoxy of the past as emphatically as did the contemporaneous painting and sculpture of the first decade of the century*" (Oliver, 1957, p2).

Jazz held a romantic appeal to students of the day as the authentic music of a minority group. The black, slave-descended musicians and community which had produced the music were equally outside mainstream culture and society.

Jazz was traditionally viewed as licentious, free, and expressive of uninhibited or uncontrolled sexuality and was therefore morally unacceptable to the original New Orleans white European community who had experienced the music first-hand. These stereotypical connotations have remained with Jazz throughout its existence, but were of greater import during its early development.

Paul Oliver, in the 1957 issue of *Jazz Monthly*, writing on the interest of art students in Jazz, speaks of "*the well-known attraction of the art student to the socially unconventional and unacceptable*" (Oliver, 1957, p3). Coupled with the apparent social "unacceptability" of Jazz and its status as a minority music, was its "authenticity" and inherent "truth", as opposed to the meaningless dross of Tin Pan Alley and the commercial charts process. It was a musical choice separating the students from the "masses", socially and in terms of consumerism. Frith and Horne remark

> *Art students in those days distanced themselves from both the respectability of their varied middle-class backgrounds and from the "trivial" commercial pleasures of the masses. Jazz was art school music - as a form of emotional and physical expression subversive of polite concert-hall tradition and as something more complex, truthful and interesting than the Hight Street hit parade.* (Frith & Herne, 1987, p79)

Alongside traditional jazz, modern jazz and skiffle, the Blues were also adopted as expressive of the art students' romantic or bohemian concerns. The Blues were viewed as being one of the most honest and authentic musical forms, springing, like Jazz, from the Afro-American community with its history of slavery and repression. Listening to and especially playing the Blues was, for these students, a sign of their authenticity and truth-to-self. The romantic ideology dominant in the art schools of the importance and primacy of individual expression was coupled with a commitment to musical truth. This gave rise to the belief in the Blues as a means of individual expression, and truth-to-the-Blues therefore became synonymous with truth-to-self, the two becoming inseparable. A strong sense of individualism was imbued in the performers themselves. For art students such as John Mayall, Eric Clapton or Jimmy Page, to be a blues guitarist meant not just to be honouring someone else, a black original, it was also a way of expressing individual needs and displaying individual, artistic control.

The obvious paradox inherent in young white British musicians playing the music of an oppressed Afro-American people and still being regarded as "authentic" seemed to be overlooked by both the performers and their fans. Frith and Horne comment

> *The Blues was the most honest music, and so Blues performers must be the most honest musicians, regardless of their actual circumstances. No one seemed to doubt that the... Blues magic could survive its translation into a new setting - these performers believed they were made authentic by their sounds*. (Frith & Horne, 1987, p88)

With art student musicians like the Yardbirds and John Mayall, the romantic idealogy of the art college cafeteria became part of the atmosphere of the Blues club.

What set these art school-trained musicians apart was the perceived "authenticity" of their music. They were playing (Blues-based) "rock" as opposed to "Pop", a form which was produced merely to satisfy commercial and market considerations. Rock, unlike Pop, was to be serious, progressive, truthful and individual, all terms whose significance lay in the romantic self-image of the sixties art student. This deep-felt personal integrity and belief in truth-to-the-music is illustrated in Eric Clapton's decision in 1965 to leave the Yardbirds because "they are going too commercial".

Nevertheless, due to the popularity of their music, these musicians were faced with the dilemma inherent in being individual, creative people working within a mass commercial medium, the record industry. It was precisely because of their individualism that they found themselves in this situation. Despite their anti-commercialism, they became stars because they were marketable as personalities, and their music could stand for the fantasies and desires of their own generation.

As Howard Becker states, "*The musicians problem lies in the adjustment to commercial status by players who started their careers as self-perceived artists*" (Becker, 1972, p254).

In the early days of Rock'n'Roll the issue at work in the music was "young" taste versus "old" taste, the apparent "rebellion" was a generational thing. But now the tension arose

from within the music industry itself, from the problems and contradictions of the artists' predicament within a commercial medium.

As Simon Frith comments,

> *By the late sixties, musicians on both sides of the Atlantic were distinguishing rock-as-art from rock-as-entertainment: rock was a complex musical form, it could not be constrained by the Pop tradition of singles, package tours, reproduced hits etc... Rock was a means of self-expression; it could not be subordinated to any market. This ideology of rock was explicitly anti-commercial... for the first time, rock musicians began to experience a contradiction between their own artistic impulses and the consumer demand for commodities. Like Jazz musicians before them, they began to separate themselves, ideologically, from the circumstances in which their music was made.* (Frith, 1983, p73)

The resolution of these tensions was what now concerned rock musicians of the mid to late sixties. Art school musicians, having established their "authenticity" as music-makers, now had to deal with the sales process.

Seminal to this process of reconciliation between art and commerce was the band Cream. Hailing from an art college background, their music was originally used as an accompaniment to art-school dada-esque performance poet Pete Brown. Each member of the three-piece being a virtuoso in his own field, they managed to keep their bohemian credentials intact through musical modes of self-expression, becoming famous for their long, indulgent, solo improvisations. Cream was also one of the first bands to use psychedelia on its record covers and posters (*Disraeli Gears*, for instance, becoming a landmark album of the late sixties) and to sell itself as "art" or "progressive" rock. This genre, progressive (or art-) rock, was to become one of the most commercially successful sounds of the late sixties and early seventies, propelling Cream, during its short life-span to the status of one of the first "Supergroups".

Concurrent with the rise of "art-rock" was the development of the long-playing album. The LP, as opposed to the three-minute hit single, was the arena favoured by progressive bands like Cream. It became a medium for more advanced artistic expression and musical

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experimentation in the work of other groups such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Byrds, The Doors, The Beach Boys, The Jimi Hendrix Experience and Led Zeppelin.

The supposed problem of presenting or selling"art" to the "masses", a problem for the record industry in trying to make art-rock commercially viable, did not seem to occur, given the rise of a new market, a youth audience who seemed to share the beliefs of these musicians.

As Frith writes,

> *Soon a second development in rock became relevant - the musicians' artistic pretensions were supported by a new audience that shared their ideology, that wanted to "appreciate" art rather than to consume Pop, that had the same contempt for show-biz values, for rock-as-entertainment, for singles, package tours and the rest. By the end of the sixties, the musicians' ideology of artistic freedom and self-expression - "doing your own thing" - had been integrated into the general youth ideology... The professional rock musician had achieved a unique (and temporary) situation in which art and commerce were complementary not contradictory... from the record companies point of view, rock-as-art was not difficult to sell. Teenage stars had always been expected to come across as sincere, to appear to identify with their material, even when that material had been the product of a song-writing assembly line; and so the (folk) notions of honesty and sincerity were easily adopted by the music business.* (Frith, 1983, p74)

This new audience distinguished itself from those around it by a more selective or "elevated" choice of purchase and realised its difference through superior consumption. In this way, for the musicians, their original artistic integrity had become the very basis of their commercial success, and the romantic ideology of the art schools became the ideology of the record industry itself.

An important influence on the resolution of the art school musicians' problem of what it meant to be an artist in a mass medium came from America, in particular the San Francisco art and music scene of the late sixties with its creation and reading of psychedelia. What the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and other British R'n'B bands had demonstrated to the American art college and youth audience was that artistic ambitions

could be realised in the Pop media, that personal, creative autonomy could be retained and that it was possible to use the mass media without being used by them.

Already in San Francisco there was a thriving art and music community, with interplay between the respective spheres of artistic creation. George Hunter, for example, was a San Francisco artist who had studied electronic music and subsequently formed the rock band, the Charlatans. It was Hunter who had first brought the idea of the "happening" to the rock show. The Charlatans' performance was more important than their sound, their objective being to create a total experience (a kind of Wagnerian "Gesamtkunstwerk") through sound, light, visual displays and the use of drugs.

As the west coast music scene developed, artists became involved not only as musicians, but also as sculptors, poster and stage designers and light-show visual experts, some artists becoming best known for their individual lighting styles.

The archetypal psychedelic light projection was invented by a San Francisco art professor in 1952, whereby light was shone through moving, liquid pigments. Originally used to accompany poetry readings, jazz drummers, experimental theatre and such, it was not used by rock bands as a backdrop or accompaniment to their shows.

The San Francisco art communities' experiments and readings of psychedelia were fed back into the British music scene, most influentially in the work of Pink Floyd. With their interest in sound experimentation and performance, and lack of interest in Blues roots and soulfulness, Pink Floyd differed from most of their fellow art school bands. Syd Barratt (of Camberwell art college) states that they had "*stopped doing twelve-bar, three minutes numbers.. and started doing one chord going on and on and seeing how we could develop that*" (Wale, 1972, p134).

Their interest in mixed-media shows led them to collaborate with Mike Leonard of Hornsey College of Arts' light/sound workshop. They used the slide/oil projection system also developed at Hornsey by "destruction" artist Mark Boyle. John Walker comments "*What the Pink Floyd and the light/sound workshop had in common was a strong commitment to artistic experimentation with new media. Both groups wanted to create a*

360° ambience of sounds and images" (Walker, 1987, p24). They were the ideal band to symbolise the developing London art/Pop scene, the "underground" movement inspired directly by US ideas.

Pink Floyd benefitted greatly from the diffusion of romantic ideology among the rock audience. With their 1970 *Dark Side of the Moon* becoming one of the best-selling albums ever, they had managed to resolve the tension they had originally felt between artistic and commercial logic by asserting complete artistic control and becoming amazingly rich anyway. They had achieved the sixties art school ideal of expressing an individual vision of the world by using every technological resource available to them, remaining uncorrupted by the Pop process and making a good living.

Just as other psychedelically-influenced art school bands had pushed up against the formal frontiers of Blues (like Cream) or folk(Like Fairport Convention), so other groups were soon rejecting the formal constraints of Pop.

The central distinction was in attitudes to rock and Pop. Rock, on the one hand, might reach a mass public vias mass media, but was made according to the artistic choices of its creators. Pop, by contrast, was determined in both form and content by market considerations.

Art-rock, a musical form claimed in the name of romantic tradition, was different from Art-Pop, music made according to an aesthetic of the everyday and disposable.

With the advent of Pop art and its preoccupation with mass "Pop" culture, art college trained musicians and bands began carrying its tenets over into their musical activities. The art school Blues bands had inherited the romantic notion of authenticity, but for the Pop art bands the issue was artifice and what it meant to be an artist in an age dominated, visually, by advertising.

For Pop art bands like The Who, the issue was not music-making as a mode of self-expression (like other R'n'B bands) but music-making as a commercial process. Pop art's concerns were with issues of packaging, selling and publicising, problems of popularity

and stardom. In Dick Hebdige's words, Pop for them was "*a discourse on fashion, consumption and fine art*" (Hebdige, 1983, p56).

Students translated the Pop and art-school rhetoric into the terms of musical creation, mostly through the influence of art college "Pop" lecturers such as Richard Hamilton and Mark Lancaster.

Pete Townshend, for example, drawing on his art school training and exposure to current ideas, was unusually able to articulate what The Who's shows were about. Through his course tutor, Roy Ascott, he had attended lectures from the avant-garde ends of theatre, poetry and film and saw his own musical activities in terms of performance art. Exploring the constraint on the stage performance as the moment of artistic creation, the dynamic relationship between star and audience, the effects of chance and accident, and the shifting borders between music and noise, were the issues which cornered Townshend. The Who's on-stage destruction of their instruments and equipment referred, according to Townshend, to the auto-destructive art of Gustav Metzger, whose real concern was the necessary relationship between creation and destruction, for instance in his painting with acid so the work is simultaneously created and destroyed. He was also influential in their use of feedback, the discovery of new (uncontrollable) noise, which carried the threat of the destruction of the PA system.

Metzger apparently agreed with Townshend that Pop music was as suitable as any other medium for artistic experimentation.

The Who's Pop art concerns are probably most apparent in their 1967 album, *The Who Sell Out*, which frankly acknowledges the close connection between art and commerce. By "selling out", they meant that they had "sold" advertisement space on their record, the album resembling a live pirate radio broadcast, with real and fake jingles and adverts between the tracks.

Not only did bands like The Who benefit from the influence of their art school tutors in terms of Pop ideas and practice, but the relationship was also mutually reciprocal. Through involvement with their students and ex-students bands, especially in the field of

graphics and record sleeve designs, the original Pop artists were able to break into mass culture and disseminate their works through mass production. The musicians gave them their first real opportunities to become best-sellers too.

According to George Melly's distinction between "low" Pop: mass produced cultural goods, and "high" Pop: the work of painters such as Hamilton and Peter Blake who used popular imagery in their work, the Pop theorists, although having challenged the aesthetic boundaries between high and mass art, had also nonetheless preserved the institutional boundaries. Painters like Blake still made individual art-objects and were still very much part of the gallery-centred art world.

Through commissions for record covers and related visuals, Pop artists works were able to become part of Pop culture instead of merely being a comment on it. Richard Hamilton's design for the Beatles' *White Album* came in an individually numbered edition of five million, and Peter Blakes' *Sergeant Pepper* cover has become one of the most famous pieces of rock iconography. In Lawrence Alloway's terms "*as art is reproduced in this way it becomes itself Pop culture*" (Alloway, 1969, p19).

For musicians like Townshend, Pop bands such as The Who were crucial in the breakdown of the high/low distinction. He saw his band as a "high Pop" product with a "low Pop" impact.

The music scene was by now an attractive proposition to young art students, who in terms of age and training were already experts in low Pop/high Pop relations. Music-making was an already established career move for an art graduate (the way paved by the R'n'B groups), and making hit records offered a satisfying solution to the problem of being a Pop artist. As George Melly writes,

> *Whereas a record was sold cheaply and in great quantities, a work of art... was expensive. It was partially for this reason... that so many Pop-minded students dropped out into Pop music or preferred to move into a mass-produced area... the cult of instant success or bust, the belief that if you didn't make it straight from art school to a fashionable gallery you might as well give up... influenced a lot of students... but it was understood that*

> *the creation of objects for the pleasure of the informed few was the antithesis of the Pop belief in art for everybody.* (Melly, 1972, p133)

Pop art sensibilities in Pop music were probably most fully realised in the early seventies in the work of Bryan Ferry, David Bowie and their sometime collaborator, Brian Eno (who shall be discussed in Chapter Three). All hailing from visual art backgrounds, they retained and developed their Pop inclinations in their musical activities.

Bryan Ferry was systematic in his application of Pop theory to Pop music, his principal lecturer at art college being Richard Hamilton. He wrote his lyrics for Roxy Music using "*throwaway clichés and amusing phrases that you found in magazines or used in everyday speech - stylistic juxtapositions*" (Buxton, 1985, p198), an approach similar to the way in which Hamilton appropriated his imagery.

The band's first single, *Virginia Plain* (the name of a brand of cigarettes) derived from a painting, a Pop landscape, that Ferry had done in 1964. He says of it, "*it's about driving down the freeway, passing cigarette ads on vast buildings*" (Buxton, 1985, p198).

David Bowie worked for a while in graphics and had been involved with the Beckenham Arts Lab, learning mime and picking up ideas about performance. Like Ferry, he also employed the (Burroughsian) method of cut-up and juxtaposition to find lyrics for his songs. For Bowie, what really mattered as an artist was not what you did but what you were. In his and Ferry's concern with Pop as commercial art, its packaging and sales process, he became a blank canvas on which consumers could write their dreams, a media-made icon to whom art happened, in the form of various "characters" or packages such as The Thin White Duke or Ziggy Stardust whom he presented to his public.

As Frith and Horne comment,

> *Learning to be an artist means learning to play on a sense of difference, becoming a Pop star involves peddling that difference to the masses. What we have here is not art versus commerce but commerce as art, as the canvas for the musician's creativity, individuality and style.* (Frith & Horne, 1987, p116)

Through their commercial success and ingestion of Pop philosophy, Bowie and Ferry, having turned seventies glam-rock into an art-form, probably remain the most significant influences in British Pop.

The philosophy most at work in Bowie, Ferry and subsequent other artists' approach to music-making, came not from Hamilton or any of the other British Pop theorists, who despite their interest in the mass market, remained on the whole its academic admirers only, but from American Pop, particularly the activities and influence of Andy Warhol.

For Warhol, the significant issue wasn't the relative merits of the distinction between high and low art, but the relationship between all art and commerce. His radical effect was to draw attention to the "high" art market, and therefore to accept the commercial status of all art. His argument shows that the "real" or "high" arts claim to be based on aesthetic principles which transcended the marketplace, to be somehow non-commercial, was nonsense.

He writes, "*to be successful as an artist, you have go have your work shown in a good gallery for the same reason that say, Dior, never sold his originals from a counter in Woolworths. It is a matter of marketing*" (Warhol & Hackett, 1980, p3).

In Warhol's terms, the best art is the most Popular, market success being the only authentic form of aesthetic validation. His notion was that "real" art is defined by the wealth and taste of the ruling class of the period, and therefore, commercial art is just as "good" as "real" art, and in democratic terms is also better, representing popular, rather than elite taste.

Following Warhol's thinking, the Swiss artist Dieter Meyer of the group Yello, was attracted to Pop music because

> *It turned the elitist morality of art on its head, as a form where the market is dominated by the consumer... The new aristocracy who tell artists what is good and bad is the people. They have a much better judgement than these pseudo-intellectual rulers of the avant-garde world.* (Shaw, 1995, p26)

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For Warhol, the commercialisation of art made it impossible for the artist to sustain a convincing romantic or avant-garde role. The only means of artistic opposition left was to deny the significance of these roles in the first place. Instead of offering a way of preserving the artistic impulse in the mass media world, Pop art turned out to signal the end of romanticism, to be an art without artists. Warhol put paid to the idea of the avant-garde and also denied the continuing relevance of any conventional concept of the "artist".

Morse Peckham writes that Warhol

> *makes things only to deny the validity of the artist's role and the validity of his culture's demand that he play it. He has deliberately stripped that role of all its glamour... importance... and quasi-religious significance. He has, in short, completely overturned the romantic conception of the artist as the alienated, cursed, tortured redeemer of the world.* (Peckham, 1970, pp236-7)

The necessary effect of the conditions of mass communication, that whatever an artist wants to say will be trivialised by the media it must pass through, led Warhol to the conclusion that the only honest thing left for the artist to do was to trivialise everything. The fact that whatever the original "imaginativeness", "complexity", or "individuality" of a work it will be consumed as just another commodity, left him with only one option, and that was to work on a production line also. This inevitable condition, of the mass market denying a sense of artistic difference, and the nature of capitalist culture to recuperate everything, was not a situation for Warhol to oppose or expose, but to exploit, and to do so in the narrowest sense, by making money.

Warhol investigated his commercial concerns through the activities of his artistic production line, the "Factory", his New York studio loft. The importance of the Factory lay in its role as a meeting place and focal point for artists, musicians, film-makers, poets, art collectors, gallery owners, actors, playwrights, etc. and in its free-and-easy "open-house"atmosphere where anyone could walk in completely un-noticed and just hang out for a while, enjoying the ambience. It was from all the people who hung around the factory, the drag queens, amphetamine addicts, rock stars, etc that Warhol drew his inspiration.

The Factory was a place where Warhol's philosophy of breaking down the barriers between high and low culture, art and commerce, could be realised. It was here that his ideas of "expanding sideways" into all areas of popular culture were investigated.

His expansion into the area of Pop music came after his unsuccessful attempt at becoming a musician himself when he realised that he couldn't sing, subsequently turning his attention to the band, The Velvet Underground.

He writes,

> *The Pop idea, after all, was that anybody could do nothing, so naturally we were all trying to do it all. Nobody wanted to stay in one category; we all wanted to branch out into every creative thing we could - that's why when we met the Velvet Underground at the end of '65 we were all for getting into the music scene, too.* (Warhol & Hackett, 1980, p134)

Rock and Roll was a necessary and obvious extension to Warhol's activities because of its mass appeal, public impact and money-making potential. As Paul Morrissey recalls, "*discovering the Velvets, bringing them up to the Factory and working with them was done for purely commercial reasons*" (Borkins & Malanga, 1983, p35).

Originally used by Warhol as a musical accompaniment to viewings of his films, he incorporated the band into his venture at opening a night club. This took the form of the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* held at the Polish Dom in New York and subsequently developed into a travelling show.

The Exploding Plastic Inevitable was a disco, club, happening and multi-media event, in which films and slides were projected around the walls and ceiling while the Velvet Underground played their disjointed, repetitious music accompanied by the German singer, Nico, performing her dry, monotonic songs. According to Gerard Malanga of the Factory, it was "*still more of an art than a rock event*" (Borkins & Malanga, 1983, p35), reminiscent of John Cage's Black Mountain College event or the Pink Floyd's attempts (Like Wagners "Gesamtkunstwerk") at the creation of a "total environment".

For Warhol, it was a complete success in terms of realising his intentions to expand his activities and connect the spheres of art and popular culture. He writes,

> *So now, with one thing and another, we were reaching people in all parts of town, all different types of people: the ones who saw the movies would get curious about the gallery show, and the kids dancing at the Dom would want to see the movies: the groups were getting all mixed up with each other - dance, music, art, fashion, movies. It was fun to see the Museum of Modern Art people next to the teeny-boppers next to the amphetamine queens next to the fashion editors. We all knew something revolutionary was happening, we just felt it. Things didn't look this strange and new without some barrier being broken. "It's like the Red Seeea, " Nico said, "paaarting"."* (Warhol & Hackett, 1980, p162)

Warhol's activities with the Velvet Underground and Nico developed into the production of an album entitled *Andy Warhol*. Warhol produced the record and designed the sleeve, which consisted of a stick-on banana skin which could be peeled off to reveal the fruit underneath.

With Warhol, though, the Velvet Underground were not commercially successful and his involvement with them was short-lived. Their importance for subsequent musicians was that they became the model for an avant-garde within rock and roll; they were the source of a self-conscious, intellectual trash aesthetic. The cause of disquiet set in motion by their show was the "ugliness", "unprofessional", "dirty" quality of their sound. This originated mainly with Velvet member John Cale. Hailing from a classical avant-garde musical background and a student of minimalist, "fluxus" composer LaMonte Young, Cale used drone, feedback and repetition to push against the audience's expectations of confront and resolution. In his words, the group's aim was to "*express uptightness and make the audience uptight*" (Borkins & Malanga, 1983, p40).

What the Velvet Underground took from Warhol and passed on to other musicians was a self-consciousness of what they were about.

The most significant art/Pop community of the seventies came together in New York's Mercer Arts Centre. The Mercer encouraged the kinds of collaboration between high and low art staged at the Factory in the sixties. As Jerry Harrison of Talking Heads states, "*It*

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started with the Velvet Underground and all of the things that were identified with Andy Warhol" (Frith & Horne, 1987, p113). The musicians who drifted into the Mercer in the early seventies (like Laurie Anderson, Iggy Pop, the New York Dolls, The Ramones) picked up on and developed this self-consciousness. A case in point, for instance, is Iggy Pop's personality becoming an art-object in itself (like Warhol before with his shades and silver hair, or Joseph Beuys with his trademark grey fedora hat and fishing jacket), and each of his performances an individual art-work (hence his influence on musicians such as David Bowie, etc.).

It was the Velvet Underground's philosophy and approach to music-making, John Cale's avant-garde experiments, Andy Warhol's ideas of artistic practice and John Cage's indeterminacy which have most influenced the work and activities of visual artist, composer and musician Brian Eno, who has been a crucial figure in the careers of other musicians and bands such as David Bowie and Talking Heads. It is Eno's approach to his art and influence on others which shall be discussed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

BRIAN ENO

"Meet my relations, all of them grinning like face-packs" (Eno, 1973)

Like other rock musicians of the sixties and seventies, such as Pete Townshend, Bryan Ferry and John Lennon, Brian Eno also enjoyed the benefits of an art school eduction. He was a student at both Ipswich and Winchester art colleges, having been under the tutorship and influence at Ipswich of Roy Ascott, who had previously taught Pete Townshend at Ealing.

Educators such as Ascott brought a steely intellectual rigour to the teaching of art. A visionary teacher employing unorthodox methods, he was more concerned in exploring the nature of creative behaviour than in teaching his students how to paint. He wished his students to learn to discover art in unfamiliar places. Through his inderdisciplinary approach, his mixture of ideas on "cybernitics", the science of organisation and control, with conventional art theory, he encouraged his students to react to new situations with a broader and less predictable range of responses.

Eno recalls his first term at Ipswich, wherein the students' previously held romantic ideas of the "artist" were summarily destroyed. The idea which had united these students was

> *that the art school was the place where you would be able to express yourself, where the passionate and intuitive nature that... raged inside you would be set free and turned into art. As it happened, we couldn't have been more wrong. The first term.. was devoted entirely to getting rid of these silly ideas about the nobility of the artist by a process of complete and relentless disorientation. We were set projects that we could not understand, criticized on bases that we did not even recognise as relevant.* (Eno & Mills, 1986, p40)

In this context, Eno began turning his attention away from painting towards musical composition, which he regarded as a much more interesting area of creativity. Encouraged by his tutor, Tom Phillips, he began experimenting with the musical potential of tape

CHAPTER THREE

BRIAN ENO

recorders. Eno was not alone in his decision as other students at Ipswich were also making the transition from painting to music.

Their attitude was that painting was incapable as a medium of responding to the new feeling that was moving through the arts, of the primacy and importance of "process" over "finished product". As Eno writes, "*the movement represented a sense many people felt that the orientation towards producing objects was no longer exciting... instead, processes were becoming the interesting point of focus*" (Eno, 1974, p16).

These students were more interested in the procedure in which they were involved, and regarded the finished product as merely a side-effect of that procedure. Eno explains,

> *Most of the country's art teachers found this orientation very difficult to stomach, because they had been educated in a climate that talked in terms of "balance", "harmony", "spatial relationships" and "colour values" - all... formal qualities of the object. And they were faced with a group of students who were effectively saying "I don't care what the painting looks like, it's simply a residue of this procedure that I am interested in."* (Eno, 1974, p18)

For Eno and others, musical composition avoided the dilemma of product/process, precisely because music was process, and was not defined by any single performance. He comments

> *Any attempt to define a single performance of a piece as its "raison d'être" seemed automatically doomed. A music score is by definition a map of a set of behaviour patterns which will produce a result - but on another day that result might be entirely different.*" (Eno, 1974, p20)

Eno's first sound experiments at Ipswich dealt with the musical potential of tape recorders. At the time he owned around thirty machines in various states of disrepair, of which only a couple actually worked properly. Each made its own distinctive sound, for instance an unstable motor which might cause the sound to oscillate, and were combined together by Eno in various musical ways.

Eno's musical experiments were influenced by ideas in the classical avant-garde, particularly by John Cage and composers such as LaMonte Young and Steve Reich. During his time at Ipswich, he read Cage's book *Silence* which greatly influence him through its heady blend of zen philosophy and musical iconoclasm and which seemed to vindicate the apparently "goal-less" activity that characterised his own musical experiments. Cage had also concentrated on behaviour rather than results, process rather than product, in his "scores" and sets of instructions for his performances.

Similar to Cage's zen pursuit of the subjugation of the ego, of the expressive self, and his activities involving indeterminacy, Eno was concerned with the development of a rock version of "systems" music (like Steve Reich's phase-shift experiments before), where what happens musically is no longer an artistic decision, but rather reflects either chance or mechanical necessity. The possibilities of "chance" or "necessary" music were widened by the development of electronic recording and programmable synthesizer technology which Eno investigated, primarily in his involvement with the early seventies glam-rock band, Roxy Music.

When Eno joined Roxy Music in 1971 he could neither read music nor play a musical instrument, but became involved as a "technical expert", having in his possession a Revox tape recorder and a synthesizer. His role was to "treat" the band's music electronically without anyone knowing, least of all himself, how it would sound as a result of these treatment.s

The idea of "scores" or sets of electronic instructions that generated different sonic "mutations" originates with American composer LaMonte Young. Young was influential on other composers such as minimalists Steve Reich and Philip Glass, but more importantly for Eno was his influence on the Velvet Underground, particularly through his pupil, Velvet member John Cale. "*LaMonte was perhaps the best part of my education and my introduction to musical discipline*," Cale was later to recall (Eno & Mills, 1986, p42). As a member of Young's Theatre of Eternal Music, Cale learned to produce sustained drones with his viola that were to be used to devastating effect in his work with the Velvet Underground. Influenced by the way in which Cale had shaped the Velvet's sound, Eno also made use of harsh and gentle drones in his own work.

The Velvet Underground's use of drone, not only in Cale's viola playing but also in their overall approach to music-making had a great impression on Eno's own approach to his art. For Eno, the Velvet Underground and other bands, such as The Who, had overturned the traditional rock hierarchy, the rank and file of the various instruments and their relation to one another. At the bottom of the ladder, traditionally, were the bass instruments and drums, followed by the rhythm instruments such as guitar and piano, and finally the lead instruments and vocals which dominated the rock track. The music which Eno preferred and wanted to create overturned this rigid ranking. For Eno it was the Velvet Underground that provided the example. He states,

> *The Velvet Underground... used all of their instruments in the rhythm role almost and the singing is in a deliberate monotone, which is a deliberate non-surprise, so when you listen to the music your focus is shifting all the time because there's no ranking... I want the thing to have a certain amount of "perceptual drift" where the ranking is being shuffled all the time, so at times you're not sure what you're meant to be listening to.* (Synthetic, 1977, p41)

This dissolution of traditional ranking, and the concept of perceptual drift led Eno to his "discovery" and development of what has come to be known as "ambient" music. His "discovery" took place as he was recovering in hospital from an accident. Unable to move, he asked a friend before leaving to put on some music. As he lay listening to the record at very low volume, the music merged with the surrounding ambient noise, the rain and wind at the window, the passing traffic, etc., the two sound sources merging at the same audible levels to create a new and interesting sonic juxtaposition. Eno wished then to pursue this "discovery" and create a music which was as "ignorable as it is interesting" which could hold the same fascination for him as that original experience.

Out of this experience developed Eno's subsequent studio-based ambient records such as *After the Heat* and *The Plateaux of Mirror*, wherein electronic and "traditional" sounds are layered, mixed and manipulated to create long-running, inter-weaving pulsing patterns of ambient music.

Eno's approach to creating his ambient sounds also reflects his visual interests, as he treats the music almost like the creation of a painting, his tracks becoming "aural landscapes".

He states "*what I am interested in is making pictures of some kind and using music as a way of doing this*" (Korner, 1986, p78). His technical approach in the studio during the creation of his music is also akin to painting, in the building up and honing down of multiple layers of sonic "surfaces".

For his installations, Eno also combines ambient music with video "sculptures", everchanging tones of colour and light which accompany the drifting sounds of his recordings, creating slowly changing environments of colour and sound.

Eno's experiments with ambient music find a historical precursor in Luigi Russolo's attempts at creating a virtual environment, reproducing the ambient sounds of the modern city through his noise orchestra. It is an attempt to merge interior thought with the environment enveloping it. As Paul Miller suggests, "*the sounds of ambient bring forth an intangible liminal series of unconnected thoughts, an emotional sculpture*" (Miller, 1995, p101).

References to ambient "background" sounds as musically important were also made by John Cage in his *4'33"*, where the background sounds made by the audience is the performance itself, and also by Erik Saties' development of his "Musique d'Ambeulement" or "Furniture Music" (a forerunner of both Muzak and Ambient), which was performed to be ignored during the intermission of a play.

Writing on muzak, Eno states, "*I predict that the concept of "muzak", once it sheds its connotations of aural garbage, might enjoy a new lease of life. Muzak... has one great asset: you don't have to pay attention to it. This strikes me as a generous humility with which to imbue a piece of music*" (Eno, 1975, p17).

Eno sees in his ambient recordings the same attributes of Muzak, that it is equally ignorable and interesting, useful yet useless, and is in some ways because of its "usefulness", a product. Through his ambient musical activity, Eno offers his own interpretation of Warhol's suggestion that real art is commercial art. The "anonymous" music which results takes the Pop sensibility to its logical conclusion, of art as product, of an art without artists. For Eno, the only remaining point of the avant-garde is to find

out "*what people need and how patterns of need change*" (Eno & Mills, 1986, p40). He regards the only way in which to appreciate art (and his music) now is for its everyday usefulness.

John Cage's merging of the respective roles in the musical experience is also involved in ambient music, as Paul Miller writes "*Most western music, even in improvisatory forms like jazz, has focused on the interplay of a performer with a previously created text, the final product being consumed by an appreciative audience. Ambient merges the roles of performer, composer and listener*" (Miller, 1995, p101).

For Eno, the move to creating ambient music was a logical development in his (Cage-inspired) objective to eliminate himself from his work , to minimise his degree of participation and cleanse his art of the idea of the individual artist, the Romantic idea of the "artist" that Warhol had suggested was no longer valid.

During his time with Roxy Music, Eno had been involved not only as "technical expert" but also in lyric-writing. His songs were inspired by sound poetry, surrealist automatic writing and the Dada sound experiments of artists such as Kurt Schwitters and Raoul Haussman, but by 1978 he had stopped using words completely and started concentrating on creating sonic textures within the studio. This he saw as a means to cut down on his "personal" input, to disregard the potential "meaning" and concentrate purely on the sonic characteristics of his compositions.

Although Eno has learned to play a variety of musical instruments since his time with Roxy Music, the recording studio is the instrument with which he is most at home, having always been more concerned with sound than meaning in his works. It is within the recording studio that Eno has been most influential on the careers and ideas of other musicians and groups, particularly through the collaborations with others which have characterised his career.

Eno regards his collaborations as the setting up of social processes for the production of music, as an interesting and vital "antidote" to musical staleness.

He writes,

> *When you work with someone else, you expose yourself to an interesting risk: the risk of being sidetracked, of being taken where you hadn't intended to go. This is the central issue of collaboration for me. I work with people who I believe are likely to engender a set of conditions that will create this tangent effect, that will take me into new territory.* (Eno, 1977, p23)

Within his studio practice, Eno had also devised a means to overcome stale patches and creative blockages in the interplay between musicians. This took the form of a set of "oblique strategies" cards, a box full of cards each with a different instruction painted on it, such as "Make a sudden, destructive, unpredictable action: incorporate", or "Don't be afraid of things because they're too easy". One of these cards would be drawn at random when a problem in the studio occurred, and the instruction or direction subsequently was followed. Reminiscent of Cage's use of the *I Ching* and indeterminate chance activities to determine compositions, Eno's indeterminate card "game" was crucial to the development of many of the albums on which he worked.

Eno's development of ambient music, his view of music-making as a social, democratic process, his interest in setting up patterns or systems for creating music, and his involvement with indeterminate approaches to creativity, have recently taken him into the world of computer software, with his own version of a programme named *Koan*. *Koan* involves the basic tenets of Eno's approach to music-making, consisting of the players own sets of rules which the computer will follow to create pieces of open, unstructured, ever-changing ambient music. With its availability and accessibility to anyone, not just musicians, Eno sees *Koan* as possibly the future of the direction music is to take, a music without riffs or repetitious motifs, endlessly "generative", different with each hearing, a purchasable, "everyman" package allowing the public and future musicians to create their own music using Eno's innovations as a starting point.

Eno, in his varied role as studio intellectual, art/Pop mediator, Pop philosopher, collaborator, "ideas man" and producer has been pivotal to the careers of musicians and bands such as Roxy Music, Ultravox, David Bowie, Talking Heads, Daniel Lanois, U2

and many others, his influence therefore being crucial to the shape and form of contemporary popular music.

The music which he has created, and still is creating, as a continuation of his experimental development and investigations, is a fitting tribute to the artists and experimental musicians who inspired him as a student.

CONCLUSION

"*People come and go and forget to close the door*" (Eno, 1973)

From the musical activities of the Futurists at the beginning of the twentieth century, through to the innovations of Brian Eno, attitudes, approaches and ideologies originating and developing primarily in the world of the visual arts have greatly influenced the course of both avant-garde and popular music.

The opening up of the world of noise and sound by the Futurists as an aural extension of their desire to represent the modern industrial world led to an acceptance and inclusion in to the musician's arsenal of worldly, extra-musical material, which had previously been outside musical consideration.

The development of this precept, and the notions of "sound" and "silence" by John Cage thorough his zen approach to musical composition and performance, changed the face of modern music. Through his influence on others, such as the Minimalist composers of the 'sixties and 'seventies, and their influence in turn on both avant-garde and popular musics, Cage remains the great musical "permission-giver" of our age.

The course of popular musics, in particular the rather generic terms "Rock" and "Pop", was also greatly influenced by innovations and approaches originating in the world of the visual arts.

The greatest influence on poplar music and the popular music industry came from the twin ideological strands of Romanticism or Bohemianism, and Pop, in British art colleges of the 'fifties and 'sixties, and in how music had become an acceptable medium for students of the time to express and reflect their Bohemian concerns and desires (in the case of the Blues and Rock bands) and to explore the issues of Pop Art (in the case of the pop music bands).

CONCLUSION

As art-college trained musicians became professionals, "stars", their ideologies filtered into the music business and became part of the collective consciousness of the youth audience to whom they played, therefore strongly influencing future musicians.

One of the most important "role-models" for modern popular music was in the activities of Pop philosopher Andy Warhol, especially in his involvement with the Velvet Underground. Through Warhol's desire to "expand sideways" into all areas of Pop culture, including pop music, the musical avant-garde world and the world of Pop came together.

The Velvet Underground, through their approach to music-making and their self-conscious, trash aesthetic, were seminal in their influence on the course of subsequent popular music.

The person in whom the Velvet Underground's approach to music-making, the innovations of the Futurists, the attitudes of John Cage and the Pop sensibility of Warhol culminate is composer Brian Eno.

Through his development of Ambient music, his musical experimentation and numerous collaborations with other artists, Eno stands as a crucial figure in the sound of popular music of the last two decades.

In his recent foray into computer software and the development of his musical *Koan* programme, he may also hold a key to how the music of the next two decades will sound and be created.

What key do we change to from here? As Luigi Russolo wrote in *The Art of Noises, "Let us go!"*.

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