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# A typology of 'hooks' in popular records\*

GARY BURNS

What is a 'hook'? *Delson's Dictionary* defines it as '[t]hat part of a song, sometimes the title or key lyric line, that keeps recurring' (Hurst and Delson 1980, p. 58). According to songwriters Al Kasha and Joel Hirschhorn, hooks are 'the foundation of commercial songwriting, particularly hit-single writing'. Hooks may involve repetition of 'one note or a series of notes . . . [or of] a lyric phrase, full lines or an entire verse'. The hook is 'what you're selling'. Though a hook can be something as insubstantial as a 'sound' (such as da doo ron ron), '[i]deally [it] should contain one or more of the following: (a) a driving, danceable rhythm; (b) a melody that stays in people's minds; (c) a lyric that furthers the dramatic action, or defines a person or place' (Kasha and Hirschhorn 1979, pp. 28, 29).

The word 'hook' connotes being caught or trapped, as when a fish is hooked, and also addiction, as when one is hooked on a drug. These connotations, together with the idea of repetition, are captured in the *Songwriter's Market* definition of hook: 'A memorable "catch" phrase or melody line which is repeated in a song' (Kuroff 1982, p. 397). Bennett (1983) defines a hook as an 'attention grabber' (pp. 30, 41). The definition in Shaw (1982) is: 'An appealing musical sequence or phrase, a bit of harmony or sound, or a rhythmic figure that grabs or hooks a listener. . . . [V]irtually no hit record is without a bit of music or words so compelling that it worms its way into one's memory and won't go away.' (p. 177) A radio listener, passing by, so to speak, is caught or trapped by 'a "catch" phrase or melody line' and may become hooked in the addictive sense as a result of the hook's memorability and recurrence.

Perhaps the most useful and succinct definition of hook is Monaco and Riordan's (1980): 'a musical or lyrical phrase that stands out and is easily remembered' (p. 178). This is the definition that will guide this article. According to this definition, repetition is not essential in a hook, but is not ruled out either. While hooks in the form of repetition may, to an extent, be 'the foundation of commercial songwriting' and record-making, repetition is meaningless without its opposite, change. The most extreme case of repetition would be a test tone oscillator (which generates a pure tone) turned on and left running indefinitely. So far nothing like this has hit the Top Forty and, as anyone who has heard a test tone knows, the constancy and starkness of it are annoying, not addicting.

At the opposite extreme would be sound that changes constantly, without any repetition. Such sound is hard to imagine because the ear's frequency range, the factor of greatest concern in this case, is finite. In any random sequence of sounds, repetition of frequencies is bound to occur before long. Repetition may take place

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randomly, but the mind is certain to detect or impose a pattern, even if this pattern is only the randomness itself. As Carl Seashore (1938) wrote, 'the grouping into natural periods of the flow of attention is a biological principle of preservative value. . . . [W]hen our movements are not actually divided into objective periodicity, we tend to fall into a subjective rhythm.' (p. 143) Effects such as white noise (an electronic effect that sounds similar to rainfall or ocean waves), which appear to be constantly changing, may also sound monotonous and repetitive. Change is a continuum with a lower limit (perfect repetition, the tone oscillator) but no upper limit.

Thus, repetition and change are opposite possibilities from moment to moment in music. The tension between them can be a source of meaning and emotion. Music-making is, to a large degree, the manipulation of structural elements through the use of repetition and change. Sometimes a repetition will be extreme, but often it will incorporate minor changes, in which case it is a variation. At certain points, major changes will occur. An example is modulation, which in musical language means a major change in tonality. In this article, 'modulation' will be used in a more general way to refer to a major change in any structural element (a complete list of structural elements will be presented shortly).<sup>1</sup> Thus, the continuum of possible change of structural elements between two moments or units in music is as follows:

repetition (little change)	variation (moderate change)	modulation (much change)
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The remainder of this article will be concerned with the definition and classification of the structural elements of music as specifically exemplified in pop records, and with the analysis of how songwriters, performers and record producers manipulate these structural elements through use of repetition, variation and modulation to produce hooks. Songwriting involves mainly the manipulation of textual elements, whereas performing and producing involve mainly the manipulation of other, non-textual elements.<sup>2</sup> These elements will be explained in the context of the following organisational relationship:

Textual elements:

Musical elements:

Rhythm  
Melody  
Harmony

Lyrics

Non-textual elements:

Performance elements:

Instrumentation  
Tempo  
Dynamics  
Improvisation and accident

Production elements:

Sound effects  
Editing  
Mix  
Channel balance  
Signal distortion

## Textual elements

Rhythm is perhaps the most basic structural element of music. It can exist and be pleasing by itself, but other structural elements cannot exist in any meaningful sense without it. Rhythm is change. Something happens one moment and does not happen the next moment. Between those two moments there has been a change. The Kiki Dee Band's 'I've Got the Music in Me' (1974)<sup>3</sup> begins with a bass guitar playing the same notes several times in a steady rhythm. We hear note-pause-note-pause-note-pause.<sup>4</sup> The note and pause are equally important. Without the pause there would be no change and hence no rhythm.<sup>5</sup> Each note-pause combination takes an equal length of time. Rhythm is thus the repetition of a basic pattern of change.

Besides rhythm, the most commonly recognised structural elements in music are melody and harmony. Melody is defined here as the tune of a song. When whistling a favourite hit, it is the melody that one whistles. Melody is the sequence of intervals (differences in pitch) that is represented horizontally in sheet music. Harmony is the pattern of chords that backs the melody. Harmony involves two or more notes played at the same time. The pattern of simultaneous pitches is displayed vertically in sheet music. One person whistling can produce melody but not harmony. Strumming a guitar, on the other hand, produces harmony with little or no melody. The interdependence of melody and harmony is apparent from two facts. First, it is often possible to identify a song merely from hearing the chords played on a guitar. That is, the harmony implies a melody one has previously heard. Second, it is often possible, and sometimes practically unavoidable, to deduce harmony when hearing a melody, even if one has not previously heard the song.

Rhythm, melody and harmony are the musical elements determined by the songwriter (or songwriting team). The songwriter also contributes one other major element, the lyrics. The music and lyrics together provide the basis for the printed text of a song (sheet music). This text is the commonality between different versions of the same song and is the reason they sound similar.

## Non-textual elements

Similar, of course, does not mean alike. Performances differ, and recording technology has given rise to the record producer, who has become an additional collaborator, with the songwriter and performer, in the manipulation of structural elements. Performance and production (recording) elements are non-textual in the sense that they are specific to a particular recording.<sup>6</sup> Usually they are manipulated to give an interpretation of a musical/lyrical text. The exact plan followed by a performer or record producer may be written down, but will probably not be published.<sup>7</sup>

Performance elements include instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, and improvisation and accident. Production elements include sound effects, editing, mix, channel balance and signal distortion. The performance elements and production elements together constitute the range of non-textual elements. The textual and non-textual elements together provide the essential musical information about a record.

Instrumentation refers to the number and type of voices and musical instruments used in a performance. Instrumentation is approximately synonymous

with arrangement. Different types of instruments are distinguished acoustically by such factors as range, timbre and characteristic types of attack and decay. Additional factors determining which instrument is used in a specific case include how fast the instrument can be played, whether it can play chords, and what the instrument may suggest connotatively (e.g., bagpipes suggest Scotland, Tom Jones's voice suggests his previous hits). A performer's technical skill is an additional dimension of the general category of instrumentation. Tempo, dynamics, and improvisation and accident, although described below as separate categories, are obviously closely related to technical skill and contribute along with it to the emotional effect of the performance.

Tempo refers to how fast a song is played. This is to be distinguished from rhythm, which is a pattern of arrangement of durations and accents. The two hit versions of 'Light My Fire' are played in the same rhythm, but José Feliciano's (1968) is played at a slower tempo than the Doors' (1967). Joe Cocker's 'With a Little Help from My Friends' (1968) has six beats to a measure, whereas the Beatles' (1967) has four. Cocker's is also slower, so that both the tempo and rhythm of the two versions are different. However, a triplet pattern is implicit in the Beatles' rhythm, so Cocker's adaptation still has a moderate degree of commonality with the original. A more extreme case, although obscure, is 'Fever'. Peggy Lee's relatively famous version (1958) is in four with implied triplets, similar to the Beatles' 'With a Little Help from My Friends'. The McCoys' 1965 hit version, now rarely heard, has the exact same rhythm as their more familiar 'Hang on Sloopy' (1965). This is also a four rhythm, but with an important difference. There are no implied triplets, but an implied doubling (rather than tripling) of the beat, that is, an 8/8 feel. Indeed, the drummer hits the high hat cymbal eight times per measure. The McCoys' 'Fever' sounds like a completely different song from Peggy Lee's. Probably the most important reasons for this are the changes in rhythm and tempo. A similar case is Neil Sedaka's two hit versions of 'Breaking Up Is Hard to Do' (1962, 1975). The original has a four or eight rhythm and a fast tempo. The remake has a six or twelve rhythm and a slow tempo. By changing both rhythm and tempo, Sedaka almost makes the remake sound like a different song.

In pop records, tempo is determined more by the performer than by the songwriter. The text may indicate a tempo, but often this is a vague adverb such as 'Moderately'. It is up to the performer to determine what 'Moderately' means and whether this instruction should even be followed.

Dynamics refers to loudness. Because pop music is so highly produced, the production mix supersedes performance dynamics to a certain extent. However, it is impossible to scream softly or whisper loudly, and it is often possible to tell whether an instrument is being played loudly or softly on a record. Crescendos, decrescendos, vibratos and similar effects are also recognisable.

Improvised solos, scat lyrics, studio noises left in a recording, and crowd noises in a live recording are just some of the possible departures from or additions to a musical text that may take place during a performance. Closely related to these are the more premeditated changes a performer can make in a text. Verses may be removed, as in Orbit's 'The Beat Goes On' (1982), or a coda may be added, as in Sonny and Cher's recording of 'I Got You Babe' (1965) (the coda appears on the recording after the false ending, but not at all in the sheet music).

Sound effects are for the most part non-musical and are in the domain of the record producer as opposed to that of the musical performer. Musical instruments

can be used to mimic sound effects, as in the synthesiser-as-police-siren opening of REO Speedwagon's 'Ridin' the Storm Out' (1973). True sound effects most often involve a recording of an actual event, such as a clap of thunder. This recording becomes an additional source for the producer to mix with the voices and musical instruments, as in the Doors' 'Riders on the Storm' (1971).

Editing involves the rearrangement of discrete passages of recorded material (which may or may not be from the same original recording). In some cases 'rearrangement' means addition or deletion. In a recording studio, editing is most often done electronically, although in radio stations it is still more common to edit tape by cutting it with a razor blade, then rejoining the pieces in a new order or with sections added or removed. The most common use of editing of this type is to make a long album cut or disco record into a shorter version for release to radio stations or on 45 rpm records. In these cases the edit points are normally in the middle of the song and the aim is to make the edits unnoticeable. The aim is just the opposite at the end of the Beatles' 'I Want You (She's So Heavy)' (1969). In this song, the music cuts to silence. The transition is instantaneous and jarring, in contrast to the gradual fade-out (which is also a production effect) and even the cold close, which is a performance effect involving an all-at-once ending at full volume. In a cold close, the sound is allowed to reverberate and decay normally at the end of a performance.

The mix is the process through which the producer determines the volume of each voice or instrument relative to the others (assuming that each is recorded on a separate track on the tape and can have its volume controlled independently). Mix is a further elaboration of the performance element of instrumentation. It is possible to mix loudly a soft performance element such as the whisper in Donovan's 'Mellow Yellow' (1966). It is also possible through overdubbing to mix a voice with itself, as in Don McLean's 'Babylon' (1971) and Joni Mitchell's 'Free Man in Paris' (1974).

Channel balance refers to the complementarity of the two or more channels in stereophonic sound. In a way, channel balance is an aspect of the mix, since it is a function of the mixing board and is concerned with relative volume levels. If channel balance changes, it may seem as though the source of sound is travelling from speaker to speaker or, if one is using headphones, through one's head.

Signal distortion includes such effects as echo, reverb, phasing, speed alteration, and playing tape backwards. A complete listing is impossible since the 'black boxes' that produce the effects are so numerous and new ones appear regularly. Many similar distortion effects also occur at the performance stage, for example wah-wah and tremolo. Most can occur either in performance or production, but are most likely to be a function of production. (For a partial inventory of signal distortion effects used in both production and performance, see Alten 1981, especially chaps. 11 and 14; Robinson 1971; and Bacon 1981.)

## Examples

This section of the article will demonstrate how it is possible to apply the foregoing concepts in the analysis of specific passages in popular records. Readers will undoubtedly notice that the examples are drawn almost exclusively from the rock era. The reason for this is that most of these records are assumed to be familiar to most readers and readily available to anyone who might wish to listen to the examples as well as read about them.

The discussion will explain the types of hooks commonly used in popular



records. One purpose is to begin to alleviate one of the shortcomings in the literature about popular music, namely the lack of analyses of the musical structure of records. I pay little attention to the history of the various types of hooks in order to be able to devote full attention to the establishment of categories and a conceptual framework. The categories should be fruitful as a point of departure for subsequent historical studies. For example, a history of rhythm in Anglo-American pop since the 1950s would need to take account of such factors as:

- the widespread use of six time in 1950s hits and its infrequent use in hits since then;
- use of unusual rhythms (five, seven, nine etc.) by adventurous rock bands and innovators in fusion and jazz-rock, especially since the late 1960s;
- time signature changes within songs, particularly in art rock, psychedelic music and songs conceived as suites, trilogies, epics, etc.;
- the spread of reggae rhythms since the 1960s;
- the prevalence of disco rhythms in the late 1970s;
- the coalescence of various 1970s rhythmic trends into the rather homogeneous rhythm of MTV-style rock in the 1980s (epitomised by eight-to-the-bar, with a loud snare drum on three and seven).

Rather than elaborate on this historical skeleton, the present discussion will seek to identify the types of hooks that are possible and to provide examples from familiar records. This will be done for each of the structural elements previously listed, beginning with rhythm.

### *Rhythm hooks*

Rhythm provides a temporal skeleton for all the other structural elements of music, and in some cases the skeleton itself becomes a hook. Rhythm almost always involves repetition – so to look for rhythmic hooks that operate by repetition would be unproductive. If a straight 3/4 rhythm repeats throughout an entire song, is it meaningful to speak of the rhythm as a hook? Once the rhythm is established, hooks arise primarily from the other structural elements. At the moment the rhythm is established, however, there is a modulation, from no rhythm to some rhythm. Every song has at least one modulation in which the rhythm is established. There is more than one modulation if the rhythm changes during the song. Rhythmic hooks are thus a result of change rather than repetition.

Many records begin with the strong establishment of a rhythm. Use of solo drums, solo bass, or drums and bass in duet at the start of a record will attract especially great attention to rhythm because there is little or no melody or harmony to attend to, and no lyrics. Records which begin this way include the Strangeloves' 'I Want Candy' (1965), the McCoys' 'Fever' and 'Hang on Sloopy', Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Fortunate Son' (1969), the Rolling Stones' 'Honky Tonk Women' (1969) and 'Get off of My Cloud' (1965), Los Bravos' 'Black Is Black' (1966), Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' (1982), Donna Summer's 'Hot Stuff' (1979), Roy Orbison's 'Oh, Pretty Woman' (1964), the Kiki Dee Band's 'I've Got the Music in Me', Stevie Wonder's 'Living for the City', and Dolly Parton's '9 to 5' (compare also Ravel's *Bolero*). In other cases, the establishment of a rhythm may be combined with the establishment of a riff, that is, a repetitive melodic hook. Examples include Cream's 'Sunshine of Your Love' (1968) and 'Crossroads' (1968), the Bee Gees'

'Stayin' Alive' (1977), the Standells' 'Dirty Water' (1966), Black Sabbath's 'Iron Man' (1972), the Doors' 'Strange Days' (1967) (the rhythm is established by a very quiet organ riff), the Kinks' 'You Really Got Me' (1964), the Beatles' 'Day Tripper' (1965), and the Knack's 'My Sharona' (1979). In these cases the rhythmic modulation is somewhat less noticeable because the listener must also pay attention to melody (and harmony in the case of 'Crossroads', 'Stayin' Alive', and the parallel fourths of 'You Really Got Me'). Rhythm is even more obscured in songs that begin with lyrics and fully developed instrumentation, such as the Rascals' 'People Got to be Free' (1968) and the Beatles' 'We Can Work It Out' (1965).

In some songs an introductory passage precedes the establishment of the main rhythm. Examples include the Beatles' 'Here, There and Everywhere' (1966), 'Help!' (1965) and 'Mr Moonlight' (1964), Three Dog Night's 'Eli's Coming' (1969), the Four Seasons' 'Let's Hang On!' (45 version) (1965), and Culture Club's 'Do You Really Want to Hurt Me' (1982). Of course, the introductory passages have rhythm as well, but in most cases it is masked by slow tempo and by the prominence of other elements. The moment of the rhythmic hook in these records comes when the introduction finally ends and the main rhythm 'kicks in'.

Rhythmic modulation may occur at other points in a record as well, indicating a rhythmic hook. In the Beatles' 'We Can Work It Out', the rhythm changes from four to three during the lyric 'fussing and fighting, my friend'. Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' (1975) is a *mélange* of different rhythms. Richard Harris's 'MacArthur Park' (1968) mixes rhythms and tempos to create segments which build to a melodramatic climax, after which comes 'falling action' in the form of a return to the original rhythm and a slow tempo. Many records have false endings, after which the rhythm is re-established (e.g. the single version of the Beatles' 'Get Back' (1969), the Kiki Dee Band's 'I've Got the Music in Me', and the Beatles' album *Abbey Road* (1969), which surprises with 'Her Majesty').

Some records have passages that skip a beat or have an extra beat. That is, an isolated bar has a metre with one beat less, or more, than normal. Records with skipped beats include Blondie's 'Heart of Glass' (1979), the Beatles' 'All You Need Is Love' (1967), and Joan Jett and the Blackhearts' 'I Love Rock 'n' Roll' (1981). Extra beats appear in several measures in the Beatles' 'Don't Let Me Down' (1969). After the occasional odd measure in these records, the regular rhythm is re-established.

If a longer passage of changed rhythm intrudes between passages in the dominant rhythm, the moment when the dominant rhythm is re-established may have a powerful hook effect, as at several points when the chorus 'kicks in' in the Beatles' 'The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill' (1968). (In this case the dominant tempo is also re-established.) Re-establishment of a riff or drum beat can also serve as a hook. In the Rolling Stones' 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' (1968), the riff is re-established after a short, riffless instrumental break whose only purpose seems to be to set up the return of the riff. In the Stones' 'Tumbling Dice' (1972), the drum beat returns at the end of the record as the chorus continues to sing 'Got to roll me'. A similar effect occurs in the Bee Gees' 'You Should Be Dancing' (1976). In 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' it is primarily a melody that is re-established; in 'Tumbling Dice' and 'You Should Be Dancing' it is primarily instrumentation. In each case, however, a rhythmic homecoming is also involved, as if once again rhythm is explicit after a period of being implicit.

Almost all popular music, as well as the most familiar jazz and classical music, is built on two, three, four, six, eight or twelve to the bar (on unusual rhythms, see



Ellis 1972). Releasing a record in any other rhythm may be thought of as modulation at the level of genre. Examples are rare, but include:

- five time: Yvonne Elliman, 'Everything's Alright' (from *Jesus Christ Superstar*) (1971)  
 Cream, 'White Room' (opening) (1968)
- ten time: Lalo Schiffrin, 'Mission: Impossible' (1967)  
 Jethro Tull, 'Living in the Past' (1972)  
 Blind Faith, 'Do What You Like' (1969)
- seven time: Pink Floyd, 'Money' (except for instrumental breaks in four) (1973)  
 'The Temple' (from *Jesus Christ Superstar*) ('Roll on up' section) (1971)

Metre is part of the public domain. Anyone can write a song in three time which will bear only a minimal resemblance to previous songs written in three time. It is possible, however, to duplicate something as unique as a drum rhythm. This constitutes rhythmic intertextuality, which depends for its operation as a hook on the audience's familiarity with the work being quoted. One of the most obvious cases is the previously discussed McCoys recording of 'Fever', which quotes the opening of their own 'Hang On Sloopy' using the following drum pattern:



### *Melody hooks*

At one extreme, a melody can include a single note repeated many times. Examples include the Association's 'Along Comes Mary' (1966) and 'Cherish' (1966), Toni Basil's 'Mickey' (1981), Bob Dylan's 'Like a Rolling Stone' (1965), and the Beatles' 'Help!'. Lack of change in melody tends to highlight other structural elements, for instance harmony in 'Help!', rhythm in 'Mickey', lyrics in 'Along Comes Mary'. Long one-note passages are fairly rare, but poorly developed melody is common in rock and is one characteristic which distinguishes it from middle-of-the-road pop.

Verses, refrains and riffs are common contexts for melodic hooks. In the Young Rascals' 'Groovin'' (1967), the lyric 'Groovin' on a Sunday afternoon' accompanies a melodic phrase that is repeated immediately to the lyric 'Really couldn't get away too soon'. The repeating melodic segment is a hook within a verse. 'How Can I Be Sure', also by the Rascals (1967), begins with a marginally catchy melodic phrase behind the title lyric. This phrase then repeats with a variation, to the lyric 'In a world that's constantly changing'. The song continues with a lengthy verse containing several repeating hook segments.

It is possible for an entire, lengthy verse to be a repeating melodic hook. A prototype for this situation is Ravel's *Bolero*. The melodic hook in this case works partially on repetition because the melody is repeated over and over. Within it, there is also a moment of modulation, when the minor seventh first appears in the melody. This introduces a passage containing minor seconds, thirds, sixths and sevenths which can be viewed as a variation on the preceding passage with its major scale tonality.

A melodic modulation is a radical change in pitch content or level. The introduction of the minor seventh in *Bolero* is radical for two reasons. Not only is it a

departure from a firmly established mode (the major scale) – the new note is also a minor seventh higher than the previous note. An interval this large is unusual in pop song melody; in fact, any interval larger than a perfect fifth seems distinctive. Consider these examples:

Beatles, 'I'll Be Back' (1964): 'You know, if you break my heart I'll go'  
(first two words separated by a melodic interval of a minor sixth)

Dave Clark Five, 'Because' (1964): 'Give me one kiss and I'll be happy'  
(first two words separated by an interval of a major sixth)

Peter, Paul and Mary, 'I Dig Rock and Roll Music' (1967): 'I dig rock and roll music'  
(first two words separated by an octave)

One of the most striking examples is the late Minnie Riperton's extremely high-pitched passages in 'Lovin' You' (1975). The passages are surprising not only in absolute terms (it is surprising that Riperton could sing so high) but also in relation to the rest of the melody, which takes place in a much lower register. The moment the high passage starts is a moment of modulation that surprises us on first hearing and that we wait for on subsequent hearings. It is almost beside the point whether we even find the high passages musically pleasing. If the moment of modulation is distinctive enough, we may listen out of mere academic interest or to have our expectations fulfilled.

Many melodies have a single highest note, usually at or near the end of the record. The highest note usually marks a climax and may occur just as other structural elements are also marking the climax. In Blood, Sweat and Tears' 'Hi-De-Ho' (1970), the highest note is a trumpet blare which is the only sound sustained after a full instrumental crescendo. The climax sets up a short, quiet ending that uses the plagal cadence (IV-I). In David Ruffin's 'Walk Away from Love' (1975), the highest note is a sudden falsetto on the last word of 'breaks my heart'. The high note is set up by a crescendo and pause, and by a previous but lower falsetto on the same phrase. The high note in turn sets up the re-establishment of full instrumentation.

The highest note in Spanky and Our Gang's 'Lazy Day' (1967) is sung by Spanky McFarlane and accompanies a key change that sets up the final fade-out. In the same band's 'Sunday Will Never Be the Same' (1967) the record has already begun to fade out with McFarlane singing a high, one-note melody, when suddenly she sings the first syllable of 'never' one step higher. The variation provides a distinctive moment in an otherwise routine fade-out and is arguably the climax of the record.

In Simon and Garfunkel's 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' (1970) and Richard Harris's 'MacArthur Park', the highest note is the last note of the record. In both cases the high note comes after a crescendo, ritardando and gradual build in pitch involving full instrumentation. These moments, lacking any subtlety, are among the most obvious that a radio listener might be 'hooked' into waiting for.

Lowest notes are only rarely used as hooks. One example is the Doors' 'The Spy' (1970). Jim Morrison provides a surprise by singing a very low last note.

Melodic intertextuality, like rhythmic intertextuality, works as a hook if the audience is familiar with the original source. Little Stevie Wonder's 'Fingertips, Part II' (1963) quotes 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'. The end of Chase's 'Get It On' (1971) quotes the riff in Iron Butterfly's 'In-a-Gadda-da-Vida' (1968). Blood, Sweat and Tears' 'Blues – Part II' (1969) briefly quotes riffs from the band's own 'Somethin' Goin' On' (1968)

and Cream's 'Sunshine of Your Love' and 'Spoonful' (1968). It is common for pop records to quote classical works, one of the most obvious cases being Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, quoted by the Electric Light Orchestra in 'Roll Over Beethoven' (1973) and by Walter Murphy and the Big Apple Band in 'A Fifth of Beethoven' (1976). It is also common for one cut on an album to quote other cuts on the same album, particularly in reprises or overtures such as those in concept albums (the Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) and rock operas (the Who's *Tommy* (1969), *Jesus Christ Superstar*). Wherever melody is quoted it is likely that other elements are being quoted as well, especially harmony and rhythm, and possibly lyrics, instrumentation, tempo, etc. Remakes are the ultimate cases of intertextuality and are likely to quote (copy) many or most of the structural elements of the original. Paradoxically, familiarity with the original and its hooks may make some audience members more likely to dislike the remake, which may be perceived as irreverent or incompetent in its quotations of the original.

### *Harmony hooks*

At the micro level, every chord change is a hook, and many are modulations at that. In most cases these changes recur within a song, and many of the patterns of change have become genre conventions, for example:

- I-IV-V-IV: McCoys, 'Hang On Sloopy'; Isley Brothers, 'Twist and Shout' (I-IV-V) (1962); Kingsmen, 'Louie, Louie' (I-IV-Vm-IV) (1963); Ritchie Valens, 'La Bamba' (I-IV-V) (1959). Charlie Gillett (1983, pp. 311, 370) provides a brief history of this chord pattern (sometimes called the "'La Bamba" changes') and its variations.
- I-IV-I-V-IV-I: many blues songs; Surfari, 'Wipe Out' (has additional V at end of verse) (1963); Canned Heat, 'Going Up the Country' (1968); Beach Boys, 'Barbara Ann' (1965)
- I-VIm-IV-V: J. Frank Wilson and the Cavaliers, 'Last Kiss' (1964); Marvelettes, 'Please Mr Postman' (1961); Led Zeppelin, 'D'yer Mak'er' (1973); Mel Carter, 'Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me' (1965); Gene Chandler, 'Duke of Earl' (1961)
- I-bVII-IV: Them, 'Gloria' (1965); Guess Who, 'Hang on to Your Life' (1971); Five Man Electrical Band, 'Signs' ('Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign') (1971); Beatles, 'Hey Jude' (ending) (1968); Don Henley, 'Dirty Laundry' (1982); Band, 'Chest Fever' (verse) (1968); Donovan, 'Hurdy Gurdy Man' (chorus) (1968); Chambers Brothers, 'Time Has Come Today' (1968); Steve Miller Band, 'Take the Money and Run' (1976); Doors, 'The End' ('Of our elaborate plans, the end') (1967)
- Im-bVII-bVI-V: Del Shannon, 'Runaway' (verse) (1961); Ray Charles, 'Hit the Road Jack' (1961), Simon and Garfunkel, 'A Hazy Shade of Winter' (chorus) (1966)
- Im-bVII-bVI-bVII: America, 'You Can Do Magic' (1982); Rolling Stones, 'Gimme Shelter' (1969); Phil Collins, 'In the Air Tonight' (1981); Blue Oyster Cult, '(Don't Fear) The Reaper' (1976); Kansas, 'Carry On, Wayward Son' (verse) (1976)
- Im-Im<sup>maj7</sup> (or VII aug)-Im7 (or bIII6/4)-Im6 (or VI<sup>0</sup>): Johnny Rivers, 'Summer Rain' (1967); Stevie Wonder, 'Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing' (opening) (1974); Led Zeppelin, 'Stairway to Heaven' (opening) (1971); Elvin Bishop, 'Fooled Around and Fell in Love' (behind the lyric 'ah') (1976)

Almost limitless variation is possible within these patterns, and there are many

other patterns (see Bobbitt 1976; Salzman and Sahl 1977). Among the more interesting harmonic hooks are those that feature a radical change but which preserve the basic chord pattern (i.e. they shift it to a different key) and those that have an extremely simple pattern, an abstruse pattern (or no pattern), or unusual chord changes within the pattern.

Among the records listed by chord pattern above, 'Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me' and 'Dirty Laundry' have key changes. As with most key changes, these occur near the end of the record. Other records with key changes include Terry Jacks's 'Seasons in the Sun' (1974) (the key changes several times near the end of the record, each time going higher), Curtis Mayfield's 'Freddie's Dead' (1972) (the key rises a half step for a brief period, then falls back to the original), Spanky and Our Gang's 'Sunday Will Never Be the Same', Tommy James and the Shondells' 'Crimson and Clover' (1968), and the Supremes' 'I Hear a Symphony' (1965). Once again Ravel's *Bolero* is a prototype. After approximately fifteen minutes of gradual crescendo in C, with an insistent beat and the same melody played over and over, the key changes to E with startling effect. The melody changes, too, but not in as pronounced a way. After only a few bars, the key changes back to C for a brief, discordant finale (both these key changes are evident to the ear; neither one is marked by a new key signature in the score).

Songs with extremely simple harmonic patterns include one-chord songs (Sly and the Family Stone's 'Thank You (Falettin Me Be Mice Elf Agin)' (1969), James Brown and the Famous Flames' 'There was a Time' (1967), Joe Cocker's 'High Time We Went' (1971)) and two-chord songs (the Seeds' 'Pushin' Too Hard' (1966), Them's 'Mystic Eyes' (1965)). At the other extreme are songs with many chord changes and a pattern that is hard to discern (if there is a pattern at all). Grace Slick's chord changes establish only a slight pattern in 'White Rabbit' (1967) and practically none in 'rejoyce' (*sic*) (1967) (both recordings by Jefferson Airplane). That is to say, it is difficult to divide these songs into verses or any type of segments based on chord changes.

Many times a particular, unusual chord change will give a song distinction. Examples include:

I-bII: Jefferson Airplane, 'White Rabbit'; Love, 'My Little Red Book' (1966)

I-bV: Olivia Newton-John, 'Magic' (1980)

Im-VIm: Doors, 'Light My Fire'

I-bVI: John Barry, 'Goldfinger' (1964)

Harmonic intertextuality may contribute an additional hook effect in some records through repetition of, or variations on, harmonic patterns found in other records with which the audience is familiar. The Beach Boys' 'Surfin' USA' (1963) quotes the harmony and much of the melody of Chuck Berry's 'Sweet Little Sixteen' (1958). George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord' (1970) quotes and perhaps plagiarises much of the harmony and some of the melody from the Chiffons' 'He's So Fine' (1963). (Harrison lost a copyright infringement case on this matter.)

### *Lyric hooks*

It is well known that most pop songs have trivial lyrics. (For proof, see any issue of *Song Hits* magazine. For detailed thematic analyses covering the 1950s to the 1970s, see Burns 1981, Tungate 1972/1974, Kessing 1972.) Normally this is merely

incidental, but sometimes it is the point, as in the Trashmen's 'Surfin' Bird' (1963), which consists mostly of 'I said the bird, bird, bird/Bird is the word'. In this case absurdity is a hook along with rhyme, alliteration and the singer's gruff voice. More often words stand out because they mean something unusual or because they say something in an unusual way. A striking example of the former is 'Meet the new boss/Same as the old boss', a line from the Who's 'Won't Get Fooled Again' (1971). Nine simple, monosyllabic words convey a highly charged political message recalling George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and repudiating a decade of Movement politics. The line rhymes with itself in the simplest possible way and uses no other sound-based attention devices. It is not part of any larger rhyme scheme but occurs instead as a coda, isolated and verdict-like. In contrast to this, the Beatles' 'I Am the Walrus' (1967) uses polysyllabic words, long phrases and sentences, and such devices as alliteration ('pornographic priestess') and onomatopoeia ('goo goo goo joob') to create an interesting sound with a cryptic, confusing meaning. (For an excellent analysis of this and other Beatles' records, see Lee 1968. On the influence of Lewis Carroll in 'I Am the Walrus' and other Beatles songs, see Roos 1984.)

Sound-based lyric hook devices include rhyme, which is the most important, and such techniques as alliteration, onomatopoeia and assonance. Meaning-based devices include simile, metaphor and personification. Complete catalogues of these devices are available elsewhere (Bowen, Aggertt and Rickert 1978, pp. 368–82; Arnold 1974, pp. 200–210; Gregg 1982. For analyses of poetic devices in song lyrics, see Pichaske 1981; Christgau 1967; Graves and McBain 1972; Booth 1976; Kasha and Hirschhorn 1979, chaps. 5–7). Let us consider here some particular types of content that have a hook effect largely independent of poetic technique. These include topical issues, foreign language, nonsense words, catchy jargon or colloquialism, obscenity or blasphemy, references to the music industry or musicians, and intertextual quotations of or references to other songs. Love and sex will not be discussed here, although they are overwhelmingly the most common subjects in pop song lyrics. Many lyrical approaches to these topics are possible, but most if not all of them can be viewed as variations on a few recurring themes or formulas. These have been explored in detail elsewhere (Tungate 1972/1974; Burns 1983; Carey 1969a, 1969b; Hayakawa 1955; Horton 1957).

Topical issues are probably the second most common type of lyric content, after love and sex, but there are so many different issues that each topical song is likely to have a distinctive or at least unusual subject. A recent topical song with a subject matter hook is Billy Joel's 'Allentown' (1982). In the past, major topical hits have had as their subject drugs, war, pollution, advertising, religion, poverty and many other subjects (Burns 1983; Pichaske 1979; Rodnitzky 1976; Gottesman 1977; Kizer 1983). The annual re-release of Christmas records occurs, among other reasons, because their lyrics are topical to the season. Examples of the other types of content hooks listed above include:

- foreign language: Beatles, 'Michelle' (1965); Kyu Sakamoto, 'Sukiyaki' (1963); Labelle, 'Lady Marmalade' (1974); Styx, 'Mr Roboto' (1983)
- nonsense words: Little Richard, 'Tutti-Frutti' (1955); Marcells, 'Blue Moon' (1961); Doors, 'Roadhouse Blues' (1970)
- catchy jargon or colloquialisms: C. W. McCall, 'Convoy' (1975); Aaron Neville, 'Tell It Like It Is' (1966); Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels, 'Sock It to Me – Baby!' (1967); Beatles, 'She Loves You' ('yeah, yeah, yeah') (1963); Ohio Players, 'Fire' ('Say what') (1974)



obscenity or blasphemy: Pink Floyd, 'Money'; Beatles, 'The Ballad of John and Yoko' (1969); John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band, 'Working Class Hero' (1970)  
 references to the music industry or musicians: Righteous Brothers, 'Rock 'n' Roll Heaven' (1974); Mamas and the Papas, 'Creeque Alley' (1967); Lynyrd Skynyrd, 'Sweet Home Alabama' (reference to Neil Young) (1974)  
 intertextual quotations of or references to other songs: Reunion, 'Life Is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me)' (1974); Simon and Garfunkel, 'Mrs Robinson' (1968) (quoting the Beatles' 'I Am the Walrus'); Beatles, 'Glass Onion' (1968) (reference to their 'I Am the Walrus', 'The Fool on the Hill' (1967), 'Strawberry Fields Forever' (1967), 'Fixing a Hole' (1967)); Beatles, 'All You Need Is Love' (quoting their 'She Loves You'); George Harrison, 'This Song' (1976) (reference to 'My Sweet Lord' copyright case)

### *Instrumentation as hook*

Whether instrumentation sounds distinctive in a record depends on a number of factors, including the skill of the performers, the conventions of instrumentation at the time of the record's release and/or at the time of listening, and the absolute level of originality of the arrangement. These factors are important in both the vocal and instrumental domains.

The distinctiveness of a vocal depends to a large extent on the quality of the singer's voice (Joan Baez's vibrato, Rod Stewart's hoarse sound). In addition, the vocal may contain unusual hook effects such as:

scream: Castaways, 'Liar, Liar' (1965); Doors, 'When the Music's Over' (1967); Who, 'Won't Get Fooled Again'  
 glissando: Aretha Franklin, 'Angel' (1973); Led Zeppelin, 'Whole Lotta Love' (1969)  
 speaking: Crazy World of Arthur Brown, 'Fire' (1968); Supremes, 'Love Is Here and Now You're Gone' (1967); Doors, 'Horse Latitudes' (1967)  
 fast singing: Reunion, 'Life Is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me)'  
 whisper: Donovan, 'Mellow Yellow'; Jimi Hendrix Experience, 'If 6 Was 9' (1968)  
 orgasm sounds: Donna Summer, 'Love to Love You Baby' (1975); Duran Duran, 'Hungry Like the Wolf' (1981)  
 animal sounds: Beatles, 'Hey Bulldog' (1969); Stray Cats, 'Stray Cat Strut' (1981)

These are all modulational hooks – moments to wait for in a record. Screams and glissandos may test the technical skill and emotional expressiveness of a vocalist beyond the usual limits.

Instrumental hooks most often involve unusual instruments. Examples include:

theremin: Beach Boys, 'Good Vibrations' (1966)  
 harpsichord: Donovan, 'Sunshine Superman' (1966); Doors, 'Love Me Two Times' (1967)  
 cowbell: Strawberry Alarm Clock, 'Incense and Peppermints' (1967); Mountain, 'Mississippi Queen' (1970)  
 vibes: Starbuck, 'Moonlight Feels Right' (1976); Jethro Tull, 'Living in the Past'  
 electric twelve-string guitar: Byrds, 'Mr Tambourine Man' (1965)  
 sitar: Beatles, 'Norwegian Wood' (1965)  
 fuzz box: Beatles, 'Think for Yourself' (1965); Yardbirds, 'Heart Full of Soul' (1965)  
 feedback: Who, 'My Generation' (1965); Jimi Hendrix Experience, 'Purple Haze' (1967)



synthesiser: Who, 'Baba O'Riley' (1971); Donna Summer, 'I Feel Love' (1977); Edgar Winter Group, 'Frankenstein' (1972); Steve Miller Band, 'Fly Like an Eagle' (1976); Kim Carnes, 'Bette Davis Eyes' (1981)

string ensemble: Beatles, 'Eleanor Rigby' (1966)

band or orchestra: Hurricane Smith, 'Oh, Babe, What Would You Say?' (1972); Bette Midler, 'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy' (1973); Beatles, 'A Day in the Life' (1967)

Most of the above are cases of fads. The fuzz box was new in 1965 and quite surprising in the Beatles and Yardbirds songs listed. Over the next several years, numerous hits included the fuzz effect. Today a fuzz sound is not very surprising and possibly should not even be considered a hook in many cases. However, if a style of instrumentation disappears completely from the menu of the pop radio playlist, reviving the style may have a hook effect, as in 'Oh, Babe, What Would You Say?' and 'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy'.

The climax of 'A Day in the Life' works instead on a conceptual level and is relatively timeless. The orchestra glissando has not provided much basis for imitation by other artists or become the emblem of any style. It is the sound of conceptual audacity, or one might say excellence, that hooks the audience, in much the same way that a musician's technical audacity/excellence might. Virtuosity seldom makes a hit, but certainly makes instrumental hooks in the records of Jimi Hendrix, Ten Years After, John McLaughlin and many jazz artists.

#### *Tempo as hook*

Tempo can be a hook if it is unexpected. It is most likely to be unexpected in the case of a remake. We do not expect Ike and Tina Turner's 'Proud Mary' (1971) to be so slow in the beginning or so fast at the end, but this is based on familiarity with Creedence Clearwater Revival's original (1969). Unexpectedly slow regardless of context are Roberta Flack's 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' (1972) and Procol Harum's 'A Salty Dog' (1969). At the other end of the continuum are hyperfast punk records such as the Sex Pistols' 'No Feeling' (1977).

Absolute fastness or slowness may cease to be of interest after repeated hearings. Tempo change provides a hook moment to listen for and is probably one of the main reasons for the success of the Turners' 'Proud Mary'. Tempo changes more often come toward the end of a record, as in the speed-ups of the Yardbirds' 'I'm a Man' (1965) and Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Free Bird' (1974) and the slow-down of Blood, Sweat and Tears' 'Go Down Gamblin'' (1971) and Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven'.

#### *Dynamics as hook*

The matter of absolute dynamics (that is, the absolute loudness or softness of a record) may at first glance appear to be meaningless, because control of volume rests with an operator at the radio station. When playing records at home, however, one easily notices that different records are recorded at different volumes. In general, singles are louder than albums. The 1967 album *Forever Changes*, by a band called Love, is recorded at very low volume. Even if this is by mistake, it produces a minor hook effect in that it forces the listener to strain to hear, and possibly to walk to the stereo and turn up the volume. This hook disappears if the record is played on the radio with an operator compensating to make volume between records constant. In

any case, the hook in this case is a function of production rather than performance.

Dynamic range comes into play as a hook device through such techniques as crescendo (gradual build), decrescendo (gradual quieting), and sforzando (sudden loudness). Crescendo occurs in Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit', the murder passage in the Doors' 'The End' (and Ravel's *Bolero*). Decrescendo occurs at the end of Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven' and Jefferson Airplane's 'Martha' (1967). Sforzando occurs in Toto's 'Rosanna' (1982) and Love's 'Alone Again Or' (1967). ('Alone Again Or' is the first song on *Forever Changes*. The soft opening might cause the listener to turn up the volume, then the sforzando occurs with startling loudness.) A sforzando hook can be created by turning up a guitar amplifier while a chord is sounding, as in Jethro Tull's 'Locomotive Breath' (1972).

Dynamic contrasts can also be more cyclical or episodic. In many records, a restrained passage is the foil or set-up for a passage at full volume. The full volume passage invariably contains the most and catchiest melodic hooks. Examples include Lionel Richie's 'You Are' (1982), Eric Carmen's 'All by Myself' (1975) and Peter Frampton's 'Do You Feel Like We Do' (1976).

What might be called the denial of dynamic contrast occurs in extreme form in some of the work of MC5, the Ramones and the Sex Pistols, and in 'heavy metal' music in general. Noise is the point, as both a conceptual and musical hook.

#### *Improvisation and accident as hooks*

A number of devices are used to give the impression of spontaneity, an impression which may or may not be accurate. Improvisation, apparent accident and departure from the 'expected' text can all create moments of distinctiveness in a record. These are sometimes left on albums, less often on singles heard on the Top Forty. Ambience and studio doodling are scattered throughout *The Beatles* (white album) (1968) and *Let It Be* (1970), as when John Lennon says 'I hope we passed the audition' at the end of 'Get Back' (the line was cut from the single version and replaced by a reprise and second ending). Part of the attractiveness of rap songs is probably their improvisatory feel, even if they are not improvised. Instrumental solos are often improvised in jazz and occasionally in rock. Of course, it is impossible to be certain in many cases whether an effect on a record was planned or improvised. One assumes that localised lyrics and performer raps on live records are relatively unplanned, as in Chuck Berry's 'My Ding-a-Ling' (1972). Audience applause and performer-audience interactions are left in the record for a feel of spontaneity (and in some cases because they would be impossible to remove). Even in a studio recording, many performers will simulate live recording ambience (e.g. Elton John's 'Bennie and the Jets' (1974), interject apparently spontaneous asides (e.g. Jerry Reed) or keep singing after the lyrics have run out. For example, Gersten (1971) has asserted that Diana Ross improvised on the last thirty seconds of the record 'Love Child' (1968) (presumably beginning with the line 'I'll always love you'). (On performance aesthetics in rock music, see Poague 1979; Bowden 1982.)

#### *Sound effects as hooks*

Sound effects can contribute greatly to the mood of a record and provide a distinctive moment to listen for. Examples in addition to those already discussed include the cash registers in Pink Floyd's 'Money' and Sweet's 'Action' (1976), the touch-tone effect in Sugarloaf/Jerry Corbetta's 'Don't Call Us, We'll Call You' (1974), and the

explosion in Love's '7 & 7 Is' (1966), which climaxes a crescendo and quadruple-time chord changes and introduces a change in rhythm and tempo.

### *Editing as hook*

As previously mentioned, editing is usually meant to be hidden. In some cases this may facilitate a performance hook. For example, in Reunion's 'Life Is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me)' it is likely that editing was used to create an illusion that the singer's rapid fire delivery is continuous and lacks any pauses for breath. Editing also permitted at least three versions of this record to be played on radio in Chicago. The regular version, with the chorus 'Life is a rock, but the radio rolled me', played until the song became established as a hit. After this, WLS played a version with the words 'WLS rolled me'. WCFL played a version with the words "CFL rolled me". By editing a word or two on the vocal track only, the record company was able to create custom pressings using the original singer. Thus another hook to the commercial benefit of both the record and the radio station was added. A similar case occurred a few years later with the Pointer Sisters' 'Fire' (1978).

Occasionally the edit point itself is the locus of a hook through the juxtaposition of elements in unlikely combinations. Frank Zappa uses such juxtapositions frequently. A chillingly effective example is the Mothers of Invention's 'The Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny' (1967). More familiar, although sophomoric, are Dickie Goodman's pastiches featuring a 'radio interviewer' who is answered by excerpts from hit records (e.g. 'Mr Jaws' (1975)).

Fades are a form of editing in which transitions from one sound source to another are gradual. The fade-out is probably the most common type of record ending (e.g. the Beatles' 'Hey Jude', 'I Am the Walrus', and 'All You Need Is Love', all of which have protracted fades). The fade-in occurs only rarely (Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Suzie Q' (1968), the Beatles' 'Eight Days a Week' (1965), Boston's 'More Than a Feeling' (1976)). The crossfade is common on albums in which tracks run together, especially concept albums. An example which became a hit on US radio, with the crossfade intact, is the Alan Parsons Project's 'Sirius' and 'Eye in the Sky' (1982) ('Sirius' is the instrumental number which crossfades into 'Eye in the Sky').

### *Mix as hook*

The mix of a record rarely draws attention to itself. It is seldom a hook element itself, but rather the orchestration of other hook elements and the means through which they come to light at the appropriate points in a record. Some limited generalisation may be warranted on the forms this orchestration can take. For example, Rolling Stones records tend to have loud drums and a smothered vocal. Middle-of-the-road pop tends to have loud vocals, horns and strings, and soft percussion. It seems that in most cases mix accentuates what is already in the text and especially the performance, albeit within genre conventions and with regard for the most salient hook elements in a specific case.

Mix becomes noticeable when a sound source we want to hear is only barely audible (which I will call undermixing), or when a sound source seems too loud in relation to others (which I will call overmixing). Examples of undermixing include portions of Joe Walsh's vocal on 'Rocky Mountain Way' (1973) and the almost inaudible guitar meanderings at the end of the Who's 'Won't Get Fooled

Again'. Possible examples of overmixing (some readers would no doubt disagree) are the lead guitar in Steely Dan's 'Reeling in the Years' (1973) and the sudden dissonant chord in Traffic's 'The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys' (1971).

In the Beatles' slow fades mentioned earlier ('Hey Jude', 'I Am the Walrus', 'All You Need Is Love'), the mix becomes the major source of change and interest. As the melody, harmony and lyrics of the main part of the song disappear, all manner of conversations, screams and tape loops are paraded through on top of a receding rhythm. As the music withers, the focus of attention shifts to the mixture of sounds. (On the importance of mix in rock aesthetics, see Kealy 1974/75, 1982; on the Beatles' fades, see Lee 1968).

### *Channel balance as hook*

Channel balance effects include isolation of an instrument in one channel, as in the Doors' 'Love Her Madly' (1971), which has guitar on one channel and keyboards on the other; pan effects, as in the drum solo of Iron Butterfly's 'In-a-Gadda-da-Vida', which is one of those effects that, when heard through headphones, seems to travel through the listener's head; and call and response, as in the guitar riff which alternates channels in West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band's 'A Child of a Few Hours Is Burning to Death' (1968). Channel balance effects are of limited usefulness since stereo is so prone to aberration if the listener sits too close to one speaker. Furthermore, if one listens in monaural the effect disappears entirely.

### *Signal distortion as hook*

Practically every pop record released today contains audible reverb, distinctive equalisation, and/or more exotic effects. Cases in which the distortion effects are especially pronounced include:

Gene Vincent, 'Be-Bop-a-Lula', echo on vocal (1956)  
 C. W. McCall, 'Convoy', equalisation on vocal to simulate CB radio  
 Styx, 'Mr Roboto', ring effect on voice at beginning  
 Iron Butterfly, 'In-a-Gadda-da-Vida', phase shifting on drum solo  
 Starland Vocal Band, 'Afternoon Delight', phase shifting on instruments (1976)  
 Supremes, 'Nathan Jones', phase shifting on instruments (1971)

Distortion hooks can be particularly effective if they modulate by popping in or out. In the Buckingham's 'Have You Noticed You're Alive' (1968), echo is used on the singer on the first word of the chorus and elsewhere. In Earth, Wind and Fire's 'Shining Star' (1975), a reverb effect that has been present (and probably unnoticed) through the entire record disappears startlingly during an unaccompanied group vocal a few seconds before the end.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article has been to provide a framework of categories to facilitate what might be called hook analysis of pop records. Hook analysis is probably as close as we can come to the 'close analysis' film critics use. Film and television, unlike records, can be analysed frame by frame if necessary. The frame is a molecule, the smallest unit that has meaning in itself and is recognisable as belonging to a specific whole. Audio tape and vinyl discs, on the other hand, are not flashed or scanned in

discrete frame units. The best frozen moment representation of most records would probably be a vertical section of sheet music, which does not reveal anything about performance or production elements and which may not even be recognisable as part of the whole unless one is intimately familiar with the music and happens to pick the right moment to look at. To recognise a record requires information on how the sound changes or does not change over time. To analyse the record requires categories through which to classify the characteristics that can change. The results of such analysis include the indication of which characteristics (structural elements) do change and which do not, when change occurs, how much change occurs, and how patterns of repetition, variation and modulation function to attract attention and communicate meaning.

Hook analysis as proposed above needs testing and fine tuning in the criticism of specific records and radio programming. In addition, the framework that has been presented provides a potentially useful point of departure for research into the history of pop music and into the relationship between the music we hear and the technology and industrial process that lie behind it. As technicians become more and more sophisticated in the application of behavioural research in the 'hooking' of the audience (see Gross 1975; Wein 1979; Goldberg 1983), a critical and humanistic approach to the understanding of pop music is necessary to preserve the rights and integrity of both the artists who create records and the listeners who let this music into their lives.

## Endnotes

- 1 The term 'modulation' was chosen over such alternatives as 'surprise', 'climax', 'signature change', and 'major change' because it implies a change of great magnitude, yet does not necessarily indicate a specific effect (such as surprise) or function (such as climax). While 'modulation' has a certain meaning in music, it is also used in broadcasting and recording to refer to change in volume, change in the groove on a record, and change in the carrier wave being broadcast by a radio transmitter. It does not seem unreasonable to speak of a modulation of rhythm (change of time signature), tempo (*accelerando* or *ritardando*), dynamics (*sforzando* and rests), etc.
- 2 'Textual' and non-textual' are used here as convenient but imperfect terms to separate the song-as-idea from the eventual product made from the idea. The somewhat artificial 'division of labour' signified by distinguishing the contributions of the songwriter, performer and producer corresponds to the equally problematic theatrical triumvirate of playwright, actor and director. Just as actors often direct, musical performers often produce records (and write songs as well). It is in the use of the word 'text' that the analogy is most strained. The musical portion of a song is in many cases '*written*' (i.e. planned) without being *written down*, whereas a play and a song's lyrics are normally developed and finalised as a script (i.e. a written-down text). Songs that find their way on to a record will in most cases exist in sheet music form by that time, although in many cases this written-down text will be a *transcription* of the finalised music, undertaken long after the actual writing of the song. In many cases a written-down text plays no part at all in the development of the music of a song (whereas writing down is standard procedure in writing lyrics or a play). Despite these problems, 'text' will refer here to the song as 'written' (and as written down). It is acknowledged that writing down often takes place after the fact and is often a transcription of a performance or recording, a sort of verification of the songwriter's efforts. The purpose of separating 'textual' from 'non-textual' elements is not to glorify or denigrate either, but to suggest a conceptual difference between the two as potential loci for hooks.
- 3 Dates given for records will refer to the date of initial release in the US. Dates have been determined as accurately as possible from available information. Sources consulted were Pareles and Romanowski 1983; Logan and Woffinden 1982; Hounscome 1981; Roxon 1969; Umphred 1985; Osborne 1981; Stannard 1982; Osborne and Hamilton 1983; Whitburn 1983; Shore 1984; and album covers and 45 labels.
- 4 'Pause' does not necessarily mean silence. In the Kiki Dee example, 'pause' refers to the guitar string's vibration and the slight attenuation of



- loudness before the next note is plucked. Other records with a similar opening include Stevie Wonder's 'Living for the City' (1974) and Dolly Parton's '9 to 5' (1980).
- 5 As Davies (1978) points out, pulses are not distinguished as separate if they occur at intervals of less than an approximate threshold time of two-thousandths of a second. Pitch cannot exist if the duration of a tone is less than the time it takes to complete one cycle of vibration, for example in a 1,000 hertz tone lasting less than one thousandth of a second (p. 49). On threshold time, see also one of Davies's sources, Green (1971).
  - 6 Non-textual elements also determine the uniqueness of any live concert rendition of a song. Since recordings are the primary area of concern in this article, concerts *per se* will receive no attention but should be kept in mind as one type of content used in many records.
  - 7 Obviously 'text' is used here in the restrictive way explained earlier. Horn charts, for example, would be non-textual because their creation involves arrangement more than composition. When Blood, Sweat and Tears (1969) made a 'cover' version of Traffic's (1967) 'Smiling Phases', they added horn parts (and many other devices) not found in the original. The horns provide embellishment and instrumentation that identify a record, not, *ipso facto*, melody and harmony that identify a song.

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