

Lonesome Roads: converging on a study of popular music
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Lecture delivered at the Institute of Popular Music
University of Liverpool
Spring 1991

I feel I stand here under false pretences. I've co-edited three 'popular culture anthologies' but their aim is very much to present the range of approaches to the study of a popular music icon. What they *don't* do is offer a solution - a theoretical or practical core definition of what the 'study' of popular music should be all about. What that can and will achieve is up to people in centres such as Liverpool University's Institute of Popular Music. I'm not an academic, but I can tell you something of my own experiences in the field.

Books about popular music tend to the cruddy - little more than a poster wrapped around a press release. In our *Lennon, Dylan and Bowie Companions*, my co-editor David Gutman and I have tried to come to terms with the purely musical aspect of the iconic production line. At this stage of popular music study, it's difficult even to commission musicological approaches, and when they do materialize they are frequently contentious!

The musicology of pop remains underdeveloped because rock is still seen as lacking the aesthetic import of other musics. Semioticians are happy dealing with the visual and literary signs but the textual study of music is neglected. Critics prefer to deal in the lyrics, the iconography, in the 'manufacture' and 'consumption' of 'the product'.

Perhaps by way of comparison we might look at how the book world copes with 'literary' and 'commercial' fiction - a rough parallel with 'serious' and 'popular' music. A blockbuster by, say Jackie Collins or Danielle Steel, or a thriller by Tom Clancy or Dean Koontz is self-evidently commercial. Contemporary fiction by Martin Amis or Arundhati Roy is so-called literary fiction. Clearly, it's the latter category that takes the lion's share of attention in the quality broadsheets and weeklies such as the *Spectator* and *TLS*. The former is the domain of the tabloids.

But even with fiction, the division can be misleading and artificial. The 'literary' tag can serve to discourage readers who assume that such a book will be 'difficult'. And some literary writers break out of the ghetto: Anita Brookner won the Booker with the sort of novel she'd been writing for years and continues to write: a well-crafted romance, a transcendent Mills & Boon. Yet the prize hype and TV dramatization of *Hotel du Lac* enabled her to find a whole new audience, or rather the audience to find her. Conversely, Stephen King is indeed popular, his thrillers gripping and well-written. Buyers of 'serious' novels might be put off, missing out on some quality escapism. And where do you place Robert Harris?

Academia apart, the language in which popular and literary fiction is discussed varies little, except in the number of syllables used or the position of tongue in cheek: all novels can be discussed in terms of their plot, their characterization (or lack of), their use of such devices as metaphor and irony. Everything can be addressed in a language with which we are all familiar, though the approach of the Mail - a paper for those

who can't read, unlike the *Telegraph*, a paper for people who can't think - will differ from that of the *Independent*.

So too with painting: we can all look at a Turner or a Monet and share opinions about the artist's choice of subject, his use of shape, colour, perspective. Of course, there's scope for more technical discussion and a Kandinsky may not be as visually accessible - may not 'speak' to us as directly as a Rembrandt or a Constable.

However, with music, only the broadest comments and criticisms can be made in a language comprehensible to the man on the Clapham omnibus, or the IT-girl in her fuel-injection BMW. The language of musicology is a *lingua franca* for musicians alone. To the musically *illiterate*, it might as well be Chinese. Consumers and producers of pop music would probably argue that such dry analysis is the classical musicologist's rubber-gloved way of maintaining a safe distance from the matter at hand. For most scholars studying Palestrina there is *only* music. In studying protest or punk, there is *also* music - music as a discourse that both reflects and influences society. Those of us who study music at college and university do so because we are drawn so irresistibly to it that we want to know what makes it tick. Hence our recourse to analysis.

But to those who grapple with the sketchy outlines of a leadsheet underpinned by chord symbols, Wilfrid Mellers' enthusiastic discussion of tumbling strains, pentatonic ululations and yearnings to the flattened submediant can seem meaningless - at worst elitist. Like all 'ologies', to borrow from Maureen Lipman, musicology is *exclusive* not *inclusive*.

After all, the effects of music - so-called serious or so-called popular - are felt very directly by the listener. No mediation is required. A listener may respond and want more of the same or remain unmoved. Only the tone-deaf are truly passive listeners. Most people are unaware of the intuitive interpretation that is part of their response to the organization of sound we call music. That interpretation is probably emotive rather than cerebral. For music has a particular communicative power which is felt most keenly at the communal concert event but which may be experienced even in the isolation of one's own headphones.

The study of popular music has to take account of such problems. Yet it's not just musicologists who are guilty of obfuscation of what is - or should be - a mass culture. Sociologists, semiologists, psychologists, literary critics - all have had their say, most often in the jargon that allows them to address their specialist colleagues rather than any general audience. Papers such as Paul Hirsch's 'Processing fads and fashions: an organization-set analysis of cultural industry systems' (1) or Dick Hebdidge's 'Style as homology and signifying practice' (2) scarcely sound inviting. And, needless to say, they tell us nothing about the music, merely about the socio-economic climate in which it is produced and consumed.

The truth, surely, is that the study of popular music requires a broad range of approaches if it is to have a future. Sadly, the discussion of it as a musical phenomenon is too often seen as *outré* and irrelevant. Back in the early Eighties, a group of academics including blues specialist Paul Oliver, the aforementioned Wilfrid Mellers and Richard Middleton, formerly of the OU, founded something called the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. So far so promising. But the organization has all too rarely discussed music, pure and simple. Though as a member and some kind of musician I could have tried (harder) to make my voice heard, I was fairly intimidated. Music itself was marginalized in the drive to counter the fuzzy, fan's-eye approach of *Popular Music and Society* and *The Journal of Popular Music* with something tougher. The lesson is surely that we all, unwittingly, erect barriers. It's rather like the European Community: we all claim to want to get rid of the trade barriers, to come together, but we're unwilling to agree on what the currency should be, about who should have control.

If music is marginalized, the blame must rest with those of use who are musically literate and profess a *serious* interest in *popular* music.

Mellers, echoing Leonard Bernstein's idiosyncratic interpretation and analysis of The Beatles' 'And I love her', first turned his attention to popular music in the 1960s, when he was at York. *Caliban Reborn* (3) touched on it, with essays on The Beatles and Bob Dylan. Then, in 1973, came Mellers' book-length study, *Twilight of the Gods: The Beatles in Retrospect* (4).

A preface recognized the limitations of such an undertaking - that the use of music quotations can be off-putting and can't anyway begin to represent improvisation or studio effects. The book, Mellers cautioned, should be read as a companion to the records. That musicians who live and work in an aural tradition have no need to analyse does not mean that we cannot. He writes, 'there is no valid way of talking about the experiential "effects" of music except by starting from an account of what actually happens in musical technique, the terminology for which has been evolved by professional musicians over some centuries... Of course, it is possible to argue that all discussion of and writing about music is a waste of time; I've occasionally come near to saying that myself...' (5).

In *Twilight*, we find the Professor (retired) pursuing a post-Leavisite line, perceiving in Beatles' music fragments of the great tradition of Bach and Beethoven, as well as Buddy Holly and the blues. But in addition to noting and describing 'facts' of musical technique, Mellers ascribes extra-musical associations. Having discussed 'A hard day's night' in terms of the rituals of puberty and adolescence, dominant seventh and blue false relations, he then concludes with a discussion of the song's miniature postlude - a decorated E-flat major chord that 'floats back' to the always ambiguous C major tonality of the opening.

Play: 'A hard day's night'.

'There's nothing comparable with this effect in the textbook harmony of the 18th or 19th century: though such modally derived progressions are common in the music of the 16th century and earlier... Of course,' Mellers continues, 'such processes in Beatle music are entirely empirical, as to a large extent they were in the music of the Renaissance. What matters is the intuitive subtlety of their effects; in this song, the coda crystallizes the ambivalence between Home and World Outside, for that floating B-flat triad is a dream of bliss... a dream won through to by the blue reality of those false relations...' (6).

Such an approach can be related to those 17th and 18th century treatises on how best to represent emotional qualities such as sadness or joy through choice of key, rhythm, tempo and so forth. We see its 20th century equivalent in manuals for composers of film or TV scores, where a particular instrumental effect anticipates a likely plot development.

But can such musicological discussion hold any meaning for the musically illiterate with no idea as to what E major - Mellers' oft-discussed Eden key - actually sounds like? Indeed, Stravinsky - just one composer who didn't have perfect pitch - would not have recognized it. The tenacious reader wading through Mellers' florid prose or the listener to The Beatles' recorded *oeuvre* would find scant help in the nine-page Glossary of terms which the Professor so thoughtfully appends to *Twilight of the Gods*. A tritone, for example, is defined as 'the interval of the augmented fourth or diminished fifth... In the Middle Ages it was known as the *diabolus in musica*...' (7).

Alongside such approaches, musicologists must find less intimidating ways of ascribing permanent values to popular music. Music relies on the inter-dependency of such elements as melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre and texture. There is, if you like, a *grammar of expectation*. The musician - literate or intuitive - will have his attention seized if, for example, he hears a flattened seventh chord where he might have expected a II or a V7 sonority. The non-musician may experience a slight *frisson* which cannot be analytically processed but which will serve to keep the song in memory.

Play: 'I believe in You'.

Dylan's use of the flat seventh chord here may be seen as particularly expressive of the lyrics, reinforcing the word-painting of the verse: an 'alien' chord as he sings that he's 'a thousand miles from home', a return to the expected harmony as he admits that, none the less, 'I don't feel alone'. But it's no good the musicologist saying simply that

said *frisson* occurred because we were expecting the note to be harmonized by F-sharp minor or B7 and so the D major came as a surprise. On the page, even when illustrated by a written music example, it will mean nothing. In a lecture, the point may be made at the keyboard or on the guitar or by playing the record.

A reviewer, writing a general piece for general consumption, might draw our attention to such word painting. We all know what ‘alien’ means - unnaturalized, foreign to the environment - but how can a *chord* be ‘alien’? Guitarists, used to working from chord symbols, could look at the shorthand representation and recognize that a D chord is an interloper in an E-based sequence. Wilfrid Mellers in his book *A Darker Shade of Pale: A Backdrop to Bob Dylan* (8) prefers to put it this way:

“‘I believe in You’ [is] a love song addressed at once to the woman and to Jesus, who have become Janus-faced. This is the first song from the cycle [*Slow Train Coming*] to be in a diatonic major key - the traditionally Edenic E - and has a tune that begins with a descent down the scale through a fourth, answered by the scale’s inversion, resolving the sharp leading note on to the tonic. If this suggests white hymnody, it is counteracted by a metrical truncation of the phrase, and by a substitution, in what starts as a repeat, of a chord of the flat seventh for the tonic. This momentary shiver reflects society’s distrust of him in relation to God or the God-fearing woman or both, yet at the same time makes his belief seem more real, because more humanly precarious...’ (9).

Musicologists face a perennial problem in rock music criticism: there is no equivalent of ‘classical’ music’s full score. Rock musicians commit their work to tape, not paper. That job is done by a hack who squares off rhythm and melody and oversimplifies harmony, reducing the sheet music version to sterile basics. Clearly, empirically created yet definitive studio effects - *Sgt Pepper’s tutti glissando*, for example - cannot be represented in print. Mellers overcomes this problem by himself transcribing examples - more accurate than those in any Beatles’ songbook yet ultimately, inevitably, inadequate.

This absence stymies those graduate students, mostly in the US but increasingly here in Britain, who offer theses on The Beatles *et al* for their masters and doctorates. At the University of Wisconsin in 1975, Tim O’Grady took a long look at ‘The music of The Beatles from 1962 to Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band’. Terms of reference are laid out with some care: O’Grady’s field is ‘style analysis’ - the comparison of different composers’ use of similar musical elements in their work - and he offers an informative run-down on The Beatles’ early influences. All very laudable. But what follows is largely descriptive, with a tendency to lapse into rudimentary harmonic analysis at the slightest hint of fresh insight.

A few years later, at New York University, Steven Clark Porter turned O’Grady’s neat synopsis of pre-Beatle pop into an exhaustive yomp through 70 years of popular

music practice. Which left barely half his dissertation to tell us something about ‘Rhythm and harmony in the music of The Beatles’ (10). And William Dale Cockrell examined ‘Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band and Abbey Road side 2: unification within the rock recording’ for his *Mus* (11). Avoiding O’Grady’s protracted chord progressions, he separates textual from musical analysis and after 200 pages concludes helplessly that ‘the ultimate importance of these two recordings lies in their abilities to synthesize disparate musical philosophies into a whole, and take unity and make its vehicle of expression the recording’ (12). For his pains and ours, Cockrell was rewarded with the opportunity to pen the *New Grove* entry on The Beatles.

Perhaps musicologists are too narrow to have much to offer either their peers or the general public. Only Joshua Rifkin’s closely argued critique ‘On the music of The Beatles’, written in the late 1960s but printed for the first time in *The Lennon Companion*, has anything genuinely illuminating to say. It does so in what the author admits is ‘a heady blend of Schenker, Schoenberg and logical positivism’ (13) - but without appearing either inaccessible or patronizing.

Especially worth seeking out - they too are in our book - are the articles by Ned Rorem and the late Deryck Cooke, both from 1968. Writing in the *New York Review of Books* and the *Listener* respectively, both writers wisely opted for lyric quotation to identify those parts of a song about which they wished to make musical points. When Cooke, for example, discusses the ‘loaning’ of bars and consequent uneven phrase-lengths of ‘Yesterday’, the point is never buried beneath a welter of musical terms, signs and symbols.

Rorem and Cooke are perhaps best-defined as ‘academic music critics’ rather than musicologists. In the aforementioned articles at least, they approach (popular) music in the manner in which T S Eliot or Frank Kermode might approach a poem or a novel. And both look beyond the rigid, albeit self-imposed, constraints of analysis per se. They are at least aware of the dangers of concentrating solely on the internal structure of an individual work or song, taking no account of such matters as history and context, communication, text, programme and much besides.

On the other hand, they eschew the kind of speculative methodology exemplified by John Beatty’s look at ‘Eleanor Rigby: structure in the arts’ (14). Here, the celebrated Lennon-McCartney song is used to present ‘an approach... for developing methodologies for the analysis of the structures through which art forms communicate’. We learn, for example, that ‘the waiting done by Eleanor Rigby by the window is sedentary, not the agitated type of waiting done by someone like Elektra in the Richard Strauss opera of the same name’. Mellers, to his credit, sees the song as simply being about ‘a middle-aged spinster’ and written in ‘a stylish amalgam of rural folk and urban music hall’. Of course, the cynical might ask whether either approach contributes to our appreciation of the song.

Play: 'Eleanor Rigby'

As we've seen, sociology and semiology can be as obscure as musicology, but they can at least be set down more easily on the page: the words and syntax look familiar, though the theory they express may appear meaningless. A music example is immediately threatening.

And I imagine many of us emerged with a more precise understanding of semiotics after reading David Lodge's novel, *Nice Work*. Every few miles, Vic Wilcox and Dr Robyn Penrose drive past a roadside hoarding promoting Silk Cut. Wilcox, MD of an engineering firm, is puzzled by it. Dr Penrose, English lecturer and semiotician who's been appointed his 'industry year shadow', decodes it:

'It was in the first instance a kind of riddle. That is to say, in order to decode it, you had to know that there was a brand of cigarettes called Silk Cut. The poster was the iconic representation of a missing name, like a rebus. But the icon was also a metaphor. The shimmering silk, with its voluptuous curves and sensuous texture, obviously appealed to both sensual and sadistic impulses, the desire to mutilate as well as penetrate the female body...' (15)

Wilcox is outraged, asserting that it's 'a perfectly harmless bit of cloth'. 'Signs are never innocent,' Dr Penrose counters. 'Semiotics teaches us that' (16).

In a funny-serious passage, Lodge offers the non-semioticians amongst us, the Vic Wilcoxes of the world, a meaningful example from everyday life. Lodge is making a heartfelt point. In a 1980 essay, 'Structural defects', he had written:

'...As an academic critic and university teacher specializing in modern literature and theory, I spend much of my time these days reading books and articles I can barely understand. At the same time, I am uncomfortably aware that literary criticism no longer has the prestige it once enjoyed in our culture at large. These two facts are not unconnected. The most important, trail-blazing criticism now being produced is written in a style impenetrable to the layman. To paraphrase Yeats, the most readable critics lack all conviction and the least are full of passionate intensity. What has brought this state of affairs about is something loosely called structuralism... [which] marches under many different banners (some more accurately described as "post-structuralist") and has invaded more than one discipline. In film studies, the approach is known as "semiotics" or "semiology", in history and sociology as "theory", and its most fashionable manifestation in literary studies at present is "deconstruction"... The exponents of post-structuralism do not even *try* to be lucid and intelligible. There seem to be two motives for this. The respectable reason is that these writers believe there is no single, simple "meaning" to be grasped anywhere, at any time, and the experience of reading their books is designed to teach that

uncomfortable lesson. The less respectable reason is that their command of a prestigious but impenetrable jargon constitutes power - the power to intimidate their professional peers.' (17)

Lodge goes on to argue that intellectual and artistic life needs constantly to be refreshed by new ideas, but these are only of real value if they can permeate, albeit in simplified form, through all sections of educated society. Which Lady Thatcher informed us does not exist, of course.

We are all locked in to our specialist ologies and isms. We have no time to learn about complementary methodologies, often believing our own sphere of study to be the most culturally valid - our own faith to have a monopoly on the truth. The jargon we all use - as musicologists, sociologists, semiologists, psychologists or whoever - perpetuates insularity and exclusivity. In current parlance, we need an *interface*.

Most fundamental, perhaps, is a sense of history. Reading novels by, say, the Brontes, provides an implicit gloss on a section of Victorian society. But we can listen to Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony in a complete historical vacuum, knowing nothing and caring less of the Napoleonic era to which it belongs. It is possible to see a Verdi opera in total ignorance of 19th century Italian history and the composer's own political concerns and ambitions. It's even possible to listen to Kurt Weill without knowing anything of the coming of Nazism and the composer's 1933 flight via Paris and London to New York. Possible, but not helpful for the commentator seeking to communicate fresh insight.

Similarly, those seeking to study popular music cannot properly do so without understanding that the blues tradition grew out of American slavery. Or that The Beatles provided a convenient diversion from the Profumo Affair and a crumbling post-War order and helped, in the words of Jan Morris, to 'shock' Britain into 'self-awareness'. Or that America's folk revival in the hands of such figures as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger (son of ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger) was a humane and honest response to the superficiality of the 1920s and the Depression of the 1930s. Then, traditional songs provided the perfect score for the broad left coalition that moved against European fascism and which Senator McCarthy later attempted to silence. But Guthrie, Seeger *et al* found a new audience in the 1960s: Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs and Tom Paxton adopted and adapted the folk ethic for their own purpose, articulating a generation's response to Vietnam, the world's first prime-time war.

At the same time, The Beatles, Dylan, The Stones, The Doors and Hendrix could not have emerged were it not for the post-War baby boomers, whose growth and education continued largely unimpeded by war and call-up. Whose leisure time and disposable income surpassed that of any previous generation. Inevitably, some of

them emerged as spokespersons. The rest formed an audience, buying the records and the concert tickets, maintaining the infrastructure that allowed Dylan and Jagger and Lennon to create and perform. And there we are - back to the socio-economics of Chris Cutler and Co.

Within the industry, there's a technological history to consider: Elvis Presley began his career turning out heavy, brittle 78s. Ten years later, *Sgt Pepper* seemed the height of electronic sophistication, its eight tracks the result of producer George Martin's imaginative linking of two four-track machines. Soon we had 24 tracks, then 32. Synthesizers became more user-friendly. By 1977, music had become so 'produced' that punk was the inevitable, if raucous, consequence. Yet Greil Marcus, in a particularly obscure study, *Lipstick Traces* (18), claims the roots of punk lie deeper than that.

Marcus, who studied political theory at Berkeley in the 1960s, has spent a career in pop music journalism, contributing to such counter-cultural barometers as Rolling Stone and penning a seminal study, *Mystery Train*. In *Lipstick Traces*, he seeks the seeds of 'Anarchy in the UK'. A glance at the book's British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data offers a hint to the unwary: it is to be filed under 'Arts, Anarchist Movements, 1900-1987'. For Marcus traces the history of The Sex Pistols back to the Dadaists and Situationists, to the *Lettrist Internationale*, a Paris-based student group of the 1950s, 'a bomb unnoticed in its own time', he writes (19). A bomb detonated in the streets around St Germaine in 1968 and exploding, finally, in late Seventies Britain, destroying the complacency of the music scene and much besides. Others, of course, would say that punk was simply one man's cynical marketing ploy. The truth may lie somewhere in between those poles but, since I was not alone in finding *Lipstick Traces* pretty impenetrable, we may never discover it.

Play: 'Anarchy in the UK'.

What anyway *is* popular music? The labelling of something as either 'popular' or 'serious' implies that something that is popular may not also be taken seriously. The categories are misleading, and not just because 'classical' refers to a specific period of music history.

2001: A Space Odyssey is popular. Also *Sprach Zarathrustra* is in the classical repertory. Waldo de los Rios added a backbeat to Mozart, whose 40th Symphony he took into the charts. 'Nessun dorma' attracted a legion of football fans. Many of them bought not just the single but the complete recording of *Turandot*. Barbra Streisand and P J Proby have both made hits out of *West Side Story*, though its operatic inclinations have subsequently become clearer. Gershwin came from Tin Pan Alley yet his works are now heard in the best of concerts and, after years of neglect, *Porgy and Bess* now enjoys regular revivals.

The problem exercised the minds of their noble Lords at the Palace of Westminster when they were debating radio franchises. After much discussion, they decided that pop is 'rock music and other kinds of modern popular music which are characterized by a strong rhythmic element and a reliance on electronic amplification for their performance'. Lord Chalfont added a rider: pop, he suggested, embraced all singles that have been in the charts - or did he say hit parade? - since 1960 and those which 'seem or seemed suitable for entry into such charts' (20).

In the Introduction to *The Oxford Companion to Popular Music*, Peter Gammond opts for a broad-brush definition. He writes that it embraces 'all music that would not normally be found in a reference book on "classical" or "serious" music... [including] the musical theatre, starting with operetta... music hall, cabaret and revue; folk music... to a degree where it has impinged on commercial popular music; jazz and all its sources and offshoots; the massively growing world of pop music that has emerged from the last two centuries or so of so-called low-brow endeavour; and the miscellaneous world of light music that lies on the frontiers of the subject' (21). In Gammond's book, that means not only Bernstein and Gershwin, but Romberg and Lloyd-Webber, Cilla Black and Stanley Black, Tony Bennett, Richard Rodney Bennett and Robert Russell Bennett.

Popular music as youth culture was most clearly defined in the 1960s as regards both style and performers: Dylan, The Beatles, The Stones and one or two others set the pace and the standard. Throughout the Seventies and Eighties, it became progressively less defined. David Bowie might perhaps stand as a Seventies icon but who represents the Eighties - Bruce Springsteen? Michael Jackson? Prince? Madonna? And who will emerge in the Nineties with an ageing population weaned on recycled product?

The market is now more fragmented than ever: The Stones roll on, making more albums, playing more concerts. So too does Dylan, though one sometimes wonders why he bothers. The Beatles are constantly repackaged. CDs, singles, pop videos. Black, rap, new age. Each perceived segment of the market is now carefully targeted, the past reinvented.

In such a context, is there any room left for a 'natural', intuitive response - let alone a valid excuse for study?

Just as a good novel can be read on different levels, so our interpretation of music may be multi-layered and personal. Indeed, our response to a musical voice is often intensely personal, perhaps launching us on a lifetime's quest.

For example, Jacqueline du Pre spoke of her first encounter with the cello. 'I remember being in the kitchen at home, looking up at an old-fashioned wireless,' she said, recalling an occasion just after her fifth birthday. 'I climbed up on the ironing

board, switched it on and heard an introduction to the instruments of the orchestra. It must have been a BBC *Children's Hour*. It didn't make an impression on me until they got to the cello, and then... I fell in love with the instrument straightaway. Something within the instrument spoke to me, and it's been my friend ever since' (22).

That friendship was cut tragically short and most of us could not hope to match its intensity. But we can all look back on similar experiences. I remember when, aged 13 and the proud owner of my first guitar, I was casting around for some records from which I could teach myself to play. Something of my sister's caught my attention. The chord figurations of the British and American folksongs it contained were fairly easy to imitate. The voice of the singer, however, was inimitable. It was Joan Baez, and I was immediately hooked - moved to seek out *everything* she'd recorded. From there I went on to explore the work of other players on the American folk scene and to learn of the socio-political activity that went hand-in-hand with it. Baez had 'spoken' to me like no voice before or since. My response, like du Pre's to the cello, can be ascribed to what sociologist Roland Barthes has called 'the grain of the voice' (23).

Those of us who study music to undergraduate level and beyond are subconsciously engaged in a quest to explain such responses. The music critic reaches too easily for adjectives, the musicologist for terminology. Deryck Cooke warned again being too clinical and it's a warning that applies particularly when dealing with popular music. We must use our analytical skills to explain how rock's most memorable moments are constructed. But we must not reduce it to abstractions incomprehensible to the average listener. We must consider also the words; the performance style with its visuals, rituals and gestures; the politics and social function; the commercial backdrop.

And we should remember always the excitement of the moment when, years ago, the sound of music sent a shiver down our spines rather than a signal to our brains. As Aristotle once wrote, 'all good things are born of wonder'.

Notes

- 1 See: *On Record* by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodman, eds (London, Routledge, 1990)

- 2 *ibid*
- 3 London, Gollancz, 1968
- 4 London, Faber, 1973
- 5 *ibid*, pp15-16
- 6 *ibid*, p44
- 7 *ibid*, p206
- 8 London, Faber, 1984
- 9 *ibid*, p209
- 10 diss, City U of New York, 1979
- 11 diss, U of Illinois, 1975
- 12 *ibid*, p169
- 13 Quoted in The Lennon Companion by Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman, eds (London, Macmillan Press, 1987) pp113-26
- 14 Centrepoint iv/2 (1980) pp14-35
- 15 Nice Work (London, Penguin, 1989) p220
- 16 *ibid*, p220-1
- 17 Write On (London, Penguin, 1988) pp113-14
- 18 London, Secker & Warburg, 1989
- 19 *ibid*, p22
- 20 Quoted in the Daily Telegraph, 22 March 1991, p3
- 21 Oxford, OUP, 1991, ppv-vi
- 22 Jacqueline du Pre: A Biography by Carol Easton (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), p26
- 23 In Image-Music-Text, trans Stephen Heath (New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978)