

High and Low, Cool and Uncool, Music and Knowledge.

Conceptual falsifications and the study of popular music

Keynote speech, IASPM UK conference, Guildford, July 2000.

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Introduction

It is really an honour to be asked to deliver a keynote speech at this IASPM (UK) meeting. At the same time it feels a bit strange to be some kind of 'top-of-the-bill' senior citizen in this context because the origins of IASPM are humble and because my experiences with popular music studies have, to mix metaphors, had much more the character of pissing into the wind from the bottom of the heap than riding high as top of the bill. But it is important to take stock of this change at a every level, including the personal, because the changing way in which each of us, as popular music scholars, is viewed, and the way in which our field of studies is valued, both constitute part of our meta-identities (what we perceive that others think about us) and because meta-identities so strongly inform notions of subjectivity. For some of us, popular music studies also provide an income, help us pay off mortgages, go on holiday, shop at Tesco rather than Kwik-Save, even have a family. I never expected to get a steady and well-paid job out of popular music studies, but I do have one now and I am even invited as keynote speaker. So, I had better get my head around this situation. As far as popular music studies is concerned I need to know how the subject has changed since the seventies and how both it and we as subjects involved in it interact with the socio-political configuration out of which it grew and in which it exists.

Obviously, there is no way in which I can cover all this thorny ideological ground in a few minutes but I will make no bones about the fact that I am as worried as I am pleased about IASPM's development over the past nineteen years. All I intend to do here is to raise issues that I feel the association might like to address in light of our subject's success in establishing itself in academe. These issues all relate to history, class and social power.

A very brief personal history of the association will, I hope, provide some sort of background to the main part of this talk which discusses the way in which the intellectual and musical canons of popular music studies often seem to function as the mechanistic reverse of values associated with conventional approaches to the European art music tradition.

Brief personal history

It is not only our field of study — music — that needs to be understood as a unique set of means by which our shared subjectivity is socially patterned: the study of popular music needs also to be seen from the perspective of shared personal histories and motivations in relation to the shifting power structures and ideologies of our society. The question here is: how does the

historical configuration of subjectivity, power structure and ideology in place at the start of IASPM differ from conditions today? To answer that we need to know [1] how it was then, [2] how it is now and [3] what has happened in between. So, first, how was it then?

I am not the only musical baby-boomer of middle-class parents in Western Europe whose family had plenty of cultural capital in Bourdieu's sense of the term but no real capital. Richard Middleton, David Horn (head of the institute where I work), Simon Frith (who needs no introduction) and several other IASPM-ites are the same age and share a similar background. My own parents, for example, especially my father, had a passion for learning. To some extent education was a matter of upwards social mobility, but there was also an ethical humanist streak to their concern for us. The only trouble was that the education I received at private schools they could not afford, and afterwards at university, was, in the 1950s and 1960s, really a leftover from bygone days: sometimes it felt more like the training ground for a 'profession' in the British colonial apparatus. The arrogant and sometimes even sadistic ingredients in this education rhymed badly with the egalitarian and humanistic variant of Christianity in which my parents fervently believed. These contradictions became particularly clear to me in the realm of music.

Introduced to classical piano at the age of eight I was exposed, through school friends, to the likes of Presley and Haley, as well as to recordings of visiting blues artists like Big Bill Broonzy. I also found out that my father was a closet big-band fan and that many of the songs my mother sang at home were in fact taken from the music hall repertoire. At fifteen I was playing in the school's trad jazz band, at seventeen in a Scottish country dance band, and at nineteen in an R&B/Soul combo. Due to my family's financial difficulties I had to earn money during university vacations — in the steel works, the post office, collecting garbage, etc. I felt much more at ease with my workmates, with their music and their sense of fun than I did with my economically and culturally high-class fellow students at Cambridge. It was in these ways that various types of popular music became a more integral part of my everyday life than classical music had been. Besides, the university course I took forced me to complete motets in the style of Palestrina and to construct Schenker diagrams, all with no apparent regard to the fact that music can only exist if it communicates something to somebody. Abandoning classical music because of how I was taught and because of its tangible social stigma of elitism and pomposity at that time, I went into language teaching instead.

After a couple of years in Sweden, I was asked to join the staff of a new music teacher training college because I was, according to the school's head, Jan Ling, about the only person they could find, in Sweden in 1971, who had not only some kind of university qualification in music and education but also some first-hand experience of popular music-making. This was the opportunity of a lifetime. I could finally get a decent wage and at the same time bring together in the real world outside myself different aspects of music — the classical *and* the popular — that had always been together inside me. What I did not realise at the time was that I was far from alone in objecting to the separation of integrated and interrelated experiences of music into socially hierarchical categories.

The biggest difficulty facing the new college was having to construct much the teaching programme from scratch: hardly anything of any scholarly sub-

stance had been written about any music traditions except those far removed in time or space from the majority of the people where we worked. There was plenty about the music of other classes at other times, plenty of academic safaris into the music of far-away places, but next to nothing about pop music, TV themes, advertising jingles, disco music, film music, etc. Clutching at straws offered by empirical sociologists like Göran Nylöf, I was able to tell the students that people in our part of the world spend on average one quarter of their working life with music. They retorted, quite legitimately: 'OK, Tagg, but how does all that music affect us'?

Of course, it was as impossible then as it is now to answer that question without being simultaneously an expert in sociology, anthropology, psychology, business studies, political science and musicology, to name just a few disciplines. At the same time, my own discipline, musicology, had largely managed to avoid the issue of examining relationships between music as sound and music as social meaning. Conventional Western European music analysis, with its fixation on the notatable parameters of expression, and with its almost hermetic brand of formalism, was not going to be of much use. Clearly, some form of semiotic music analysis was needed to help bridge the gap between, on the one hand, music making or 'the music itself' and, on the other, the sociological, anthropological and ideological discourse *about* music. Admittedly, I could try then, as I have since, to develop methods of semiotic analysis adapted to popular music, but those methods would, I knew, be much less valid if they were not informed by some kind of systematic knowledge of music as a social, economic and political phenomenon. I obviously needed help.

In 1976, I came across Gerard Kempers who faced similar problems in his work at a community arts college in the Netherlands. We agreed to try and organise a conference on popular music in education. A few years later I met Richard Middleton who was planning the first issue of *Popular Music* as Gerard and I were planning our conference. It was his co-editor, David Horn, who joined us in 1980 and who enabled us to invite such figures as Charles Hamm, Paul Oliver and Simon Frith to the First International Conference on Popular Music Studies which Gerard organised, on a shoestring budget, in Amsterdam in June 1981. Given the enthusiastic response to our call for papers, we decided to prepare a document proposing the foundation of an International Association for the Study of Popular Music. The proposals were accepted and the association has existed officially since that time. IASPM's main goals were to act as an international, interdisciplinary and interprofessional association dedicated to the serious study of popular music. That was nineteen years ago.

At that time I had admittedly hoped, but never expected, that the democratic thrust of serious interest in the music of most people would be so powerful as to gather in quite a short time nearly one thousand members into one organisation in forty-odd nations around the world. In its short history IASPM has also helped secure an institutional base for popular music in many nations and has seriously challenged the aesthetic and intellectual monopoly of the Western European bourgeois art music canon. In this sense the situation has improved: it is now possible for young people to study and research an important and influential part of everyday life in recent and contemporary society. However, the establishment of an institutional base for popular music studies has also inevitably led to some serious problems. I will

discuss these under the headings 'high v. low', 'cool v. uncool' and 'music as knowledge v. knowledge about music'. These three dichotomies are of course all interrelated.

High and low

The first problem with 'high v. low' concerns the very term 'popular music'. It is impossible to define accurately. What it meant to us back in 1980 was really all the music, used in contemporary everyday situations, that was excluded from the realms of academe. Most of that music at that time sorted under terms like low-brow, light music, *U-Musik* or even *Trivialmusik* according to the (then) hegemonic view of culture and class. In order for popular music's validity to be established in the institutional world, attention had to be drawn to its unique qualities in contrast to those of 'high-brow' 'masterpieces'. As with the early stages of feminist scholarship, a clear profile of difference in relation to an old and unjust order was important. This strategy of difference has paid off. Popular Music Studies, both practical and theoretical, have managed to project a market image of being something new and exciting. Some of the dichotomies propagated during this process of carving out an institutional niche have been those between classical and popular, high and low, serious and fun, black and white, body and mind (or between body and emotion), between *plaisir* and *jouissance*, between scribal and oral, composition and improvisation, etc. By underlining one polarity in these dualisms and underplaying the other, Popular Music Studies created a clear profile of novelty and difference in relation to what preceded it. The subject now attracts many students to both theoretical and practical programmes. Careers and the financial well-being of colleges and university departments now rely on this type of academic 'credibility'. The only trouble is that some aspects of these dichotomies are, to say the least, questionable.

There is not the time here to deal with all the dualisms just mentioned. Besides, I have previously discussed the problems of inverted racism in the 'black versus white' dichotomy, criticised the intellectually bankrupt notions of 'the Other' in relation to any music at all, and taken a scribal pot shot at some of postmodernist rockology's more notable excesses (Tagg 1989, 1996, 1993). Still, in order to clarify the sort of problems caused by the institutionally strategic but intellectually questionable dichotomies listed above, it is perhaps worth discussing, if only cursorily, two interrelated issues: 'scribal v. oral' and 'mind v. body'. I will then approach the thorny problem of music as knowledge v. knowledge about music.

Notation

One commonly held assumption among popular music fans and scholars is that music notation is associated with a prescriptive set of aesthetic rules and regulations, while oral traditions are linked with notions of freedom, individual creativity, spontaneity, etc. This assumption is problematic. Firstly, it disregards the fact that most non-European art music traditions, for example the raga music of Northern India, the Tunisian *nouba*, Cambodian court music, Japanese Gogaku, etc., have all observed strict rules of performance and adhered to quite prescriptive aesthetic norms without ever resorting to notation. The millennia-old Rig Veda chants, to cite just one case in point, has been passed down in tact orally, not by scribal means.

The same assumption about notation also breaks down if applied to many

forms of popular music, for not only do taboos apply to divergence from regulated pitch patterns in heterophonic *Sprechgesang* from rural communities in Polynesia: equally strict rules of musical procedure apply to most pop fads within the English-speaking world. In this context you only need think of the recent Macdonaldisation of the British pop industry — of all those Spice Girl and Boyzone clones — to realise that musical spontaneity is much more likely to be stunted by entertainment business shareholders looking for safe profits from sales to the manipulable 8-16 target group than it is threatened by music notation. Similarly, anyone who has had to teach improvisation will witness that you are just as likely to hear ‘the same old thing over and over again’ from the regurgitation of improvisation stereotypes, which *have* to be learnt by rote, as when you hear *Für Elise* for the thousandth time. After all, mass producing Charlie Parker, Jimi Hendrix or Chick Corea clones is no more liberating than manufacturing classical piano broilers.

Another problem with the scribal v. oral dualism in music is one of ahistoricity, more precisely the inability to see notation as a specific form of technology enabling the reperformance of music in specific historical and social contexts. True, it is generally held that our European system of music notation started with a need to recall the pitches of the Holy Church’s melodies in tact from year to year in much the same way as the word of God was thought to be more reliably preserved in written rather than spoken language. But this original, institutional purpose of music notation was often flaunted in the upsurge of subjectivity in the late middle ages and early Renaissance. For example, the entry on notation in the 1956 edition of *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* draws attention to the private musical doodling of an anonymous monk for whom notation was clearly a channel for personal expression, not the means of its repression. Repression came from the abbot who crossed out the poor copyist galley-slave’s own musical ideas. The emancipatory potential of the (then) new medium of notation was in other words seen as a danger by established ecclesiastical authority. Nearly a thousand years later, the democratic potential of different music technologies, such as home recording, MIDI sequencing and web distribution, is sometimes ignored, sometimes trivialised or demonised, by other authorities, elitist or commercial, whose interests, like those of the abbot, lie in preserving the social and musical status quo. In short, it is not the technology itself, nor its age, but the purposes to which it is put that make the difference between prescriptive authoritarianism and innovation or spontaneity.

In addition to the points raised so far, it should also be noted that many African-American jazz, funk and R&B musicians, contrary to stereotypical expectations from mostly white popular music experts, are notationally literate.¹ Moreover, it should also be remembered that notation is still used extensively in popular music production, not only in the field of composing for the moving image, but also in recording studios where you save a lot of time and money if your backing vocalists or your hired studio musicians can lay down their tracks straight from the page.

Now, no refutation of these assumptions about notation implies that every scholar or musician in our field needs to be notationally literate. Nor do the points raised contradict the fact that Western art music notation was developed to enable the reperformance of the same music in a similar way on re-

1. For example, the Neville Brothers, according to Conny Atkinson (New Orleans).

peated occasions and that this system of dots, lines and squiggles was adapted to particular types of music produced at particular times in the history of particular classes in a part of one of the world's five continents. Obviously, our notation system is inadequate when it comes to registering timbre, cross rhythm, additive rhythm, pitches outside the twelve semitones of our equal-tone scale, not to mention all the parameters of expression available through electronic or electro-acoustic means — reverb, echo, delay, panning, distortion, phasing, flanging, chorus, etc., etc. Indeed, just as the Roman alphabet was conceived to scribally represent certain sounds specific to the Latin language, not to English or Vietnamese, our notation system cannot be seen as an accurate scribal representation of musics outside the monometric tonal tradition of Central Europe. On the contrary, I am merely trying to highlight two simple ideas. Firstly: the issue of scribal and oral traditions is not a matter of mutual exclusivity, but of complementarity, even though the need for notational literacy is obviously less today in the age of cheap digital recording than in the heyday of sheet music publishing.² The second issue is that the scribal-versus-oral dichotomy is based on historical inaccuracy and that the validity of our field of studies is jeopardised if we are content to present the negative imprint of a false historical view of music in our own continent.

Improvisation

This last point about notation is as good a place as any to start if we want to avoid the same traps of evaluative categorisation as conventional classical music scholars were once wont to present. This point, which links into the vexed question of 'high' v. 'low', is that European music notation has really always functioned as a blueprint for performance, not as a true written document of 'the music itself'. *Notes inégales* and slow overture dottings in music of the French Baroque, not to mention ornamentation techniques of the rococo period (C P E Bach 1974), testify to the fact that notation in the classical era was never intended to record what was actually performed or heard. Moreover, music scholars in both the classical and popular fields tend to forget that J S Bach, Mozart and Liszt were equally famous as both composers *and* improvisers. They also seem unaware that Purcell wrote not only anthems for the Chapel Royal but also drinking songs for his friends in the pub, or that Mozart's opera tunes were whistled by barrow boys in Prague. Another forgotten fact is that what we call 'classical' music did not acquire this epithet until the 1830s, yet another that no-one played any really old music in European concert halls or opera houses before the mid nineteenth century.³ For example, the proportion of living to dead composers on the concert repertoire in France fell from 3 against 1 in the 1780s to 1 against 3 in the 1870.⁴ Similarly, conservatories started to mushroom across Europe

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2. Besides, certain types of musical narrative, more precisely those involving the organic or non-repetitive development of themes and harmonies, are, due to the logistics of the human memory, much easier to construct, learn and perform using notation. Such musical narrative (Chester's 'extensionality') is neither better nor worse than any other: it is simply different. Excluding notation from the practical study of popular music for whatever reason, whether it be to increase student numbers or for some trendy notion of the popologically cool, can be seen as tantamount to denying students access to a particular means of reaching a particular type of musical expression.
 3. In fact, when Mendelssohn put on J S Bach's Matthew Passion a hundred years after its composition it caused quite a stir. Performing something that old then was a strange as it is standard practice in the classical world today.

in the mid nineteenth century with the result that, by 1900, the improvisation which had been such an integral part of what we now call 'classical' music had been virtually eradicated by the very institutions who claimed to be the standard-bearers of that same tradition.

Mind v. body

Perhaps the clearest set of problems with the high-low dualism concerns the dichotomy of mind and body. Most people imagine classical music to be a matter of mind, or at the least the emotions, rather than of body, popular music to be the opposite. For a classical buff like Adorno, music that represents mind over matter is aesthetically preferable to music associated with the animal behaviour of the masses dancing, drinking and mating. In the popular music camp, however, the tables are turned: corporeal is seen as cool and the mind as uncool; new is cooler than old, beat and rhythm cooler than harmonic progressions or thematic narrative, etc., etc. Intricate metatheory has been concocted by cultural studies colleagues as intellectual justification for such a mechanistically negative stance. Of course, this stance can be easily criticised by referring to the simultaneous cerebrality and corporeality of recordings by Frank Zappa, to the vulnerable emotionality and visceral corporeality of Kurt Cobain's singing, etc., etc. Less familiar, however, is the importance of the beat and of rhythm in the European classical tradition. For example, who do you think said the following?⁵

1. 'If you can't provide backing with a reliable beat, you're a useless amateur'.
2. 'Good music teachers make sure that their pupils are well trained in different kinds of dance music so they acquire an automatic sense of the beat'.

And which musician do you think is being described in this third and final quote?

3. 'He was a really reliable band leader. When it came to tempo, which he usually laid down at a very brisk pace, he was as sure as houses'.⁶

The testimony of (1) Leopold Mozart, of (2) J S Bach's pupil Kirnberger, (3) the author of J S Bach's obituary, and a host of others about the central importance of the beat in the European art music tradition seems to be a well-kept secret among classical buffs, perhaps because they fear that the aura of social and physical transcendence they ascribe to the music will be compromised by such testimony. Conversely, awareness of these aspects of European music history among popular music scholars may cause some embarrassment because, to put it bluntly, if the beat is regarded as cool and classical music as uncool, how can the beat be so important to classical music? It looks like we'd all better keep quiet about this!

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4. Ling (1989, op. cit., p. 173) citing W. Weber, 'How concerts went classical in the nineteenth century', *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the Western Society for French History 1977*, vol. 5: 161-168.
 5. I have translated the citations, taken from Klingfors (1991: 347, 355), freely and colloquially. The original versions are as follows. (1) 'De som inte har något begrepp om god smak håller inte tempot när de ackompanjerar (niemals bey der Gleichheit des Tactes bleiben)' (Leopold Mozart: *Grundliche Violinschule, I*, Salzburg, 1756: 266). (2) 'Gute Tonlehrer haben ihre Schüler allezeit hauptsächlich zu Tanzstücken vershiedener Art angehalten, damit sie sich in dem Mechanischen des Takts festsetzen und ordentlich denken lernen ... Dies was zugleich die beste übung im Vortrag' (Johann-Philip Kirnberger: 'Tanzstück' in *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 1771).
 6. 'Im Dirigieren war er sehr accurat; und im Zeitmaaße, welches er gemeinglich sehr lebhaft nahm, überaus sicher' (J S Bach's obituary, 1754. *Bach-Dokumente III*, 1972: 666).

Cool and uncool: the consequences

I have tried to explain so far how the negative interdependence of stances between stereotypical notions of classical and popular music is to an important extent dependent on a series of historical falsehoods. I have been worried for some time about the consequences of such falsification on the future of our field of studies.

For example, I worry about the fact that, in the Anglo-North-American sphere of popular music studies at least, some music is studied a lot, other music less so, or not at all.

[At this point, ten short music extracts were played and conference participants were asked to rate how likely they thought it would be for each type of music exemplified to be the object of academic interest. Details and results of this small experiment can be found in Appendix 1.]

Is this because of implicit value judgements that some kinds of music, not mention the groups of people using them, are cooler than others? My hunch is that you are more likely to find jazz rock fusion or funk than Country and Western or trad jazz skills taught to budding musicians in 'cool' colleges of the performing arts. Similarly, I think you are much more likely to find academics publishing articles about Bowie, Madonna, rap or club culture, than about Tom Jones, Steps, Muzak, TV themes, the Eurovision song contest, advertising jingles, video game sound design, line dancing, football chants, etc., etc. despite the indisputable popularity of these latter phenomena. Similarly, as Bruce Johnson remarks, jazz has, considering its importance, been conspicuous by its relative absence in the historical and theoretical sectors of popular music studies even though it may be part of the performance canon in many contemporary colleges of music. Perhaps one reason for its exclusion from our field of study may have been its institutional acceptance in such colleges, but it is also possible that jazz has been avoided by people of my own background (white, educated, Northern European or North American baby-boomer rock fans) for other reasons. Perhaps jazz seemed to us to be associated with an earlier generation's notions of fun and emancipation, rather than with our own? Perhaps we, as English-speaking members of the Beatles generation, have ethnocentrically tended to equate popular music with Anglo-North-American pop song, and tended to bypass popular instrumental music as well as popular song with lyrics in other languages than our own? Perhaps our subject's apparent preoccupation with Anglo-North-American pop song and its relative lack of interest in jazz and other forms of instrumental music such as film and TV underscore, etc. can also be related to the final dualism on my list, to that between music as knowledge and knowledge about music?

Music as knowledge v. knowledge about music

By 'music as knowledge' I mean knowledge *in* rather than about music, i.e. knowledge that is both intrinsically musical and culturally specific. This type of musical knowledge can be understood in two senses: [1a] the ability to compose, create or perform music — 'music-making knowledge', so to speak, and [1b] the ability to recall, recognise and distinguish between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions — what you might call 'repertoire knowledge'. Neither type of musical knowledge just mentioned relies on any explicit verbal denotation and they are both more usually referred to as skills or competences rather

than as 'knowledge'.

'Knowledge about music', on the other hand, always entails explicit verbal denotation. However, like 'music as knowledge', 'knowledge about music' is both culturally specific and can also be divided into two categories: [2a] the ability to identify and name elements and patterns of musical structure, i.e. what is often referred to as 'music theory', and [2b] the ability to explain how musical practices relate to the culture and society that produces them and which they affect. This fourth aspect of musical knowledge, i.e. [2b], the second aspect of knowledge *about* music, covers everything from music semiotics to acoustics, from business studies to psychology, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, and has until now been predominant inside popular music studies. Indeed, as IASPM founder member Franco Fabbri put it in 1995, referring to the general intellectual direction taken by the association internationally and by the journal *Popular Music*, 'music and musicians seem to have become some kind of troublesome appendage to popular music studies'.⁷ The theme of this conference — 'The Popular Musician' — will hopefully contribute to redressing the balance but the institutional underpinning of division between these four types of musical knowledge is strong. For example, in tertiary education, the first ([1a], 'music-making knowledge'), is generally taught in special colleges (i.e. in pop and jazz conservatories, performing art schools, 'Fame schools' or whatever you want to call them), the third ([2a], 'music theory') in departments of music or musicology and to some extent in pop-jazz conservatories, and the fourth [2b] in practically any humanities or social science department, but less so in conventional musicology and even less in performing arts colleges.

Those of you still awake will have noticed, in this run-down of musical knowledge types and their institutionalisation, that I have omitted knowledge type 2 (or 1b), that is the ability to recognise and distinguish, without recourse to words, between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions. The reason for this omission is that this highly widespread form of musical competence, for example the ability to distinguish instantaneously between a Hollywood and a Spaghetti Western, is also itself usually omitted from institutions of higher education. Such

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7. 'Where is music and where are the musicians? Can researchers learn something from them, or are musicians some kind of unnecessary appendix of popular music studies?'. This rhetorical question in response to my question 'what do you think is currently wrong with IASPM internationally?', came from Franco Fabbri, founder member of IASPM, guitarist (rock and classical), composer, computer network company manager, ex-record company organiser, active in cultural policy-making, chairperson of IASPM Italy and music journalist (e-mail to the author, June 23rd 1995). I received similar comments from Chris Cutler, Reebee Garofalo, Charles Hamm and Gerard Kempers, other intellectually competent musicians who were once actively involved in IASPM internationally but who have become disenchanted with what they see as a hierarchy of politically cool but epistemologically restrictive hierarchy of ideas, discourses and approaches.

Another example of music's marginalisation in the world of institutionalised cultural studies is the fact that the last assistant to be taken on by Birmingham University's legendary CCCS and the first to be discarded was an interdisciplinarily competent musicologist. Dick Bradley joined the CCCS in the late seventies but was forced to leave in the early eighties when the Thatcher government, through its education minister, Sir Keith Joseph, launched an attack on anything resembling sociology and forced institutions studying society to make radical cuts. Of course, propagating the idea that society is a useless term or declaring society as 'classless' is an old Nazi trick, as documented by Kolland (1978: xxi), but that is another matter...

omission is strange, given that this popular ability to make sense out of music is central to any discussion of popular music. In my opinion, it is this institutionally neglected type of knowledge which holds one of the most important keys to the development of our subject.

Of course, it is neither surprising nor in itself a bad thing that there are specialists in areas 1a, 2a and 2c (I am assuming everyone to be an expert in area 1b). The only problem is that music today is received, heard and used by most people as one integral unit, often in the same experiential package as words, images, patterns of social behaviour, etc., while at the same time popular music studies still labour under institutional divisions that may once, in the early nineteenth century perhaps, have had an understandable purpose but which act today as an obstacle to giving people the democratic right to understand, if they so choose, what is supposed to be happening to them when they hear the music in an advert or a film, or when they hear a pop song, a classical concert, background music in pubs, shops or restaurants, or the underscore to a party political broadcast, or a chat show signature, or the incidental music to *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* (Shave 2000) and so on. If one of our subject's aims is to provide this kind of democratic choice, and if the young musicians we teach are to be given the right to decide for themselves which sounds they want to put to which idea in which contexts, then we will need to constantly cooperate across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. To paraphrase one point from the paper I gave at the IASPM conference in Glasgow in 1995, many musicians and musicologists have started to wise up in terms of semiotics, business, anthropology and so on, but cult studs still show some reluctance in recognising their own musical competence (1b) and in addressing the fact that it is music and its ability to move people rather than some canonic variant of academically cool metatheory that is at the heart of our subject.

The reintegration of 'music as knowledge' with 'knowledge about music' is, however, no easy task because the institutional divide goes hand in hand with a deeper epistemological split that has been with us for at least a couple of centuries. At a general level, this divide is symptomised by the acute and sometimes alienating polarities our culture seems to impose between public and private, between work and leisure, between mind and body or emotions, between rational and intuitive or irrational, between objective and subjective, between serious and fun, etc., as if none of these conceptual twains ever met or influenced each other. Of course, I do not believe for one minute that any of these widely held dualisms are in themselves invalid: I am merely stating that our field of studies cuts right across all of these polarities and that the institutional inertia which reflects them needs to be constantly combatted if we are to make real progress.

To make such progress entails, amongst other things, understanding the historical reasons for music's placement in the private, leisure, body, emotions, intuitive, subjective, fun compartments of the popular conceptual dualisms just mentioned, even though it is clear to all that music is just as much a public, intellectual, rational, objective and serious matter. But there is no room here to explain the history of music's conceptualisation in Western society and I must refer those interested in this topic to other publications. Instead, I will now try to tie up a few of the loose ends in this talk under the heading 'where are we now?'

Where are we now?

I have tried to sketch a brief background to the foundation of IASPM. I have also mentioned some of the advantages and discussed a few of the problems arising from the establishment of popular music studies in the academy. One way of answering the question 'where are we now?' is to make a brief historical comparison between the institutionalisation of classical music and popular music studies (see table 1 - NB many aspects, eg. business missing).

Table 1. Historical comparison between the status of classical and popular music as fields of study

characteristic	classical music	popular music
historical period (circa)	1830 - 1960s	1960s -
institutions created	conservatories, departments of music and musicology	performing arts colleges, pmus courses mainly in social sciences
musical 'heritage'	mainly instrumental 'classical'	pop/rock (general), jazz (colleges)
conservation tendencies	1780 33.3% dead composers on concert repertoire; 1870 66.7%	1960s little or no old tunes on sale or on charts; c. 2000 60% of sales is back catalogue ⁱ
musical lingua franca	Central European, mainly Germanic	Anglo-American
global hegemony	European colonialism	US imperialism
'liberties' propagated, attitude to pleasure	liberation of the ego, emotionality, postponed gratification	liberation of the id, corporeality, consumerism, immediate gratification
hegemonic class movement	rising capitalist merchant class against feudal aristocracy and abandoned third estate	nouveau riche against old 'cultured' capitalism and new lumpenproletariat
buzzwords of excellence	high, superior, great, art	cool, fun, enjoyable, striking, entertaining
UK honours bestowed	Sir Charles V Stanford, Sir C H Hubert Parry, Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams, Sir Arthur Bliss, Sir William Walton	Sir Cliff Richard, Sir George Martin, Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Bob Geldoff, Sir Elton John, Van Morrison OBE, Richard Starkey OBE, George Harrison OBE
legitimation of greed	high cultural status required	everyone expected to be greedy swine; altruism regarded as suspect

i. According to Karen Collins, who from 1997 to 1999 ran the music section of Future Shop (Canada's second largest record retailers) in Kitchener (Ontario), it was company policy to aim for 60% sales of back catalogue. Head office stated: 'that's where all the margin is'. This general tendency towards relying increasingly on old music to make a profit definitely seems to echo developments in nineteenth-century French concert hall repertoire.

The table shows striking similarities and differences between the two institutionalisation processes. The similarities concern the establishment of musical heritage, with tendencies towards conservation and canonisation, both of musical styles and of intellectual discourse about them. Both processes clearly relate to a contemporary global hegemony, and both justify their establishment by association with notions of subjective liberties in relation to an old and unjust order. Moreover, both the rising capitalist merchant class and the yuppies of the Thatcher and Reagan years, with renegade ex-lefites as their intellectual allies, both abandon those who fare less well in the change from old to new. Finally, prominent figures in musical production are honoured during the hegemonic period of each type of music — I am, for example, unaware of knighthoods bestowed on a UK art music composer

since Walton or on a UK popular music artist before the 1980s. Of course, both institutionalisation processes took place under capitalism (not shown in table), but the mediation technologies and class structure of capitalism today differ markedly from those of the mid nineteenth century, and hints of such change do appear in the table. I am referring to the differences between liberation of the ego and of the id, between emotionality and corporeality, between postponed and immediate gratification, and between the buzzwords of excellence etc.

From the table you can also see how the growth of conservatories and music departments in the nineteenth century accompanied the definitive establishment of industrial capitalism and the abandonment of the working classes after the bourgeois revolution, the original notions of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* becoming little more than empty slogans. That relationship of institutionalised music studies to that process of increasing class difference and exploitation is of course ambiguous: while propagating humanist ideals in music and while promoting notions of sonic beauty, the same values also provided a cultural veneer of respectability for the new ruling class. The embarrassingly obvious question to ask today is: what have we, the institutionalisers of popular music studies, done? Which class are we in league with? Whose interests do we serve? Are we the unwitting providers of intellectual alibis for the consumerist mayhem and corporate brutality that has, like it or not, risen simultaneously with the establishment of our own field of studies?

Thanks to phenomena like IASPM, centres for popular music studies are sprouting up like mushrooms in colleges and universities across the world. Current trends in the UK, where higher education is run as a money-making enterprise, suggest that our field of studies is a profitable line for overpaid senior managers. They are very keen to see our subject streamlined. Corporate bureaucrats that they are, they want our aims, standards and outcomes to be clear and consistent. On the other hand, although they worship the holy cow of 'cutting-edge' business, they are unlikely to want to see us reflect the ever-changing social, technological, political and musical realities of contemporary life. In their corporate vision of the world we are no more than service providers, our students no more than consumers, and the greater the turnover of the same product, the greater the corporate university's revenue. Canons and other expressions of solid aesthetic values are vital ingredients of successful institutionalisation under such circumstances. If our subject substantiates its legitimacy in terms of the negative imprint of historical falsehoods, then we run the risk of playing straight into the hands of those who are looking for new immutable values which can replace the once immutable values of the classical canon. This would be an insidious process in which we would contribute to the illusion of permanence which any unjust and conservative power system needs to create.

An important part of the solution to this problem lies, as I have suggested, in defalsifying the past. It also lies in looking to the future and in discussing where we think our subject should go. This, in turn, entails asking 'where are we now?' from the viewpoint of those that many of us currently teach, of those who have much more future left than we do. I think it is vital here to realise that music students today have to contend not only with the remnants of the old classical canon but also with any musical and intellectual canons we have set up. As I wrote back in 1993:

... Vast quantities of the cultural-theoretical verbiage I'm expected to take seriously about rock music's 'rough', 'raw', 'anarchic', 'oppositional', 'body-emancipating' qualities may have had some value in the late sixties or early seventies but, please, it is now 1993. Since *Jumping Jack Flash* we've had to suffer two decades of cynical capitalism and serious unemployment, all to the marketing tune of yuppies jogging in designer track suits, of aerobic women waggling about in pastel-shaded leg-warmers, of misunderstood steroid-inflated men on dubious vendettas and of AIDS scares. Meanwhile, Madonna exposed her body umpteen times [...] and unemployment went up again. We've also seen [...] the gaudy sado-masochistic acrobats of all-star wrestling, anorexic fashion models, Aryan males with Hitler haircuts in synth pop videos or Calvin Klein adverts, and we've been exposed to all those martial-arts-practising career goddesses who wash-and-go with their shiny hair and phoney body confidence. All this amounts to a sort of health-and-action fascism or ideological body terror. Since the Sex Pistols we've had to witness television's Nintendo-style presentation of missiles cornering streets to enter Iraqi bomb silos, killing countless civilians, the demise of the world socialist system and more unemployment.

It would be strange indeed if young people ready to take their place in this brave new world needed the same sort of socialisation expressed through the same sort of music and attitude to both body and emotions that our generation seems to have canonised. Moreover, anti-capitalist spirits are running higher and are much more widespread than ever they were in 1968. To mix metaphors again, the mainstream music business has turned into a dead end street and shot itself in the foot. Huge amounts of music are now made and distributed outside the conventional channels.

My conclusions are, therefore, as follows.

1. If IASPM does not wish to become the victim of its own success, it will constantly need to monitor and revise both its policies and motives for existence.
2. Historical awareness of the institutionalisation of music studies, combined with the defalsification of music history can help increase our vigilance in monitoring our subject's viability and progress.
3. Since thinking of the future is by definition an ethical issue, we will constantly need to ask ethical questions about 'the greater good', about what we can do to make the world a better place.

It is really encouraging to learn that most people here are so critical with how the music industry is run today and fed up to the teeth with the cynical socio-economic system of which it is part. There even seems to be a unity of purpose against a common enemy. We will definitely need to analyse the situation in greater detail and to work out ways of pooling resources in the most effective way. It will be a long haul and a hard battle but starting IASPM was hard work too. The association may have gone astray for longer or shorter periods, but I hope this talk has shown that it is possible to criticise our own errors and to learn from them. If nothing else, we are having much more fun than all those guys of my age, with their mobile phones and pin-stripe suits in their Lexus leather-upholstered cars, whose polluting tail-back I passed on foot as I walked up here from the station. Symbols of power and success in symbols of power and success? Hardly. I think the people at this conference are giving real proof of real power and success. That is why it is truly an honour to be invited as keynote speaker.

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Music examples

- 1 Johann Strauss (Jr.) (1825-1899). 'An der schönen blauen Donau' (1867). *Strauss Waltzes*. CBS Odyssey MBK 44892 (1979). Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy.
2. The Beatles. 'A Day in the Life' (*Sergeant Pepper*, 1967). *The Beatles / 1967-1970*. Apple 0777 7 97039 2 0 CDPCSP 718/1-2 (1988) (1993).
3. Les Baxter. 'Jungalero' (1957). Source unknown.
4. Zara: 'Plenitsa'. *Chalga 2 - Pokolenie*. Milena Records MR 200005-2 (2000).
5. Madonna: 'Justify My Love' (12 inch). Warner Brothers 21820 (1991).
6. George Crumb: 'Night of Electric Insects' - music from 'The Exorcist' (1972). *Filmmusik (Musik Aktuell-Klangbeispiele)*. Bärenreiter Musicaphon BM 30 SL 5104/05 (1982).
7. Brecker Brothers: 'Some Skunk Funk'. *Brecker Bros*. Arista AL 4037 (1975).
8. Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen: 'March of the Siamese Children' from 'The King and I' (Rodgers). *Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen*. Pye 7N 2051 (c. 1962).
9. The Sex Pistols: God Save the Queen. *Never Mind the Bollocks*. Virgin CDVX 0777 7 87877 2 3 (1977).
10. Snog: 'Corporate Slave'. *Lies Inc*. Machinery Records MA 11-2 (1992).

Appendix 1

A small experiment about canons in popular music studies

During this presentation, I played 10 short music examples, each between 9 and 22 seconds in duration (see list of music examples, above). In order to get some idea as to whether popular music scholars, in their own experience, think there is a musical canon in our field of studies, I asked participants to rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, how likely they thought the music represented by each short example would be the object of scholarly discussion, or included in teaching programmes. The rating 5 means the participants thought the music in question was very likely to be the object of study, the rating 1 that it would be very unlikely. A rating of 0 (zero) was also added to allow for the opinion that the piece in question would be excluded from our

field of studies. I asked respondents specifically not to rate their own view of the music's importance in popular music. I did not identify the music examples until after they had been played.

47 participants handed in their answers which are tabulated below. Most of the respondents were UK citizens aged between 20 and 45 but there were a few participants from EU countries, Australia and North America. About two thirds were male. All worked in some field of popular music studies (teaching, research, etc.). Table 2, below, identifies the order and identity of each example (numbered 1 through 10). The columns '0s', '1s', etc. show the number of zeros, ones, twos, etc. given to each piece in absolute terms. The column 'Ave.' shows the average mark out of 5, and '%' converts that mark into percentage. 'Pos.' shows the position of each piece in the order respondents ranked them, 1 being the most likely object of study and 10 the least likely.

Table 1. Likelihood of music being object of popular music studies (47 respondents at IASPM UK Guildford conference, 8 July 2000)

	Music example	0s	1s	2s	3s	4s	5s	Ave.	%	Pos
1	J Strauss: <i>Blue Danube</i> Waltz (1867)	6	26	10	3	1	1	1.4	27	10
2	Beatles: <i>A Day in the Life</i> (1967)				5	10	32	4.6	91	2
3	Les Baxter: <i>Jungalero</i> (1957)	5	12	15	10	3	2	2.0	40	7
4	Zara: <i>Plenitsa</i> [Bulgarian Chalga] (2000)	2	5	8	17	13	2	2.9	57	6
5	Madonna: <i>Justify My Love</i> [12"] (1991)			2	7	12	26	4.3	86	3
6	George Crumb: Music from <i>The Exorcist</i> (1972)	8	19	9	7	2	1	1.5	30	9
7	Brecker Brothers: <i>Some Skunk Funk</i> (1975)		6	13	9	11	8	3.0	61	5
8	Kenny Ball: March o/t Siamese Children [trad jazz]	4	16	17	7	2	1	1.8	36	8
9	Sex Pistols: <i>God Save The Queen</i> (1977)			1	4	8	34	4.6	92	1
10	Snog: <i>Corporate Slave</i> (1992)	1	1	2	16	21	6	3.6	71	4

The results fall into three clear groups:

- Very likely** (>85%): [1] Sex Pistols , [2] Beatles, [3] Madonna.
- Possibly** (57-71%) [4] Snog (Australian anti-corporate alternative), [5] Brecker Brothers (jazz fusion), [6] Bulgarian *Chalga* music.
- Highly unlikely** (<41%): [7] Les Baxter (bar music), [8] Kenny Ball (trad. jazz), [9] *The Exorcist* (atonal music for a popular film), [10] The *Blue Danube* waltz.