Jazz-Rock? Rock-Jazz? Stylistic Crossover in Late-1970s American Progressive Rock

JOHN COVACH

Introduction: Crossing Over

The term “crossover” arises frequently in writing about post-World War II popular music. It is perhaps most familiar from discussions of the early years of rock and roll, in which crossover is an important phenomenon that helps account for the rise of rock and roll in the 1950s out of a combination of R&B, C&W, and mainstream pop elements. In this common usage, crossover refers to the marketing of recordings as reflected by charts published in music-industry trade magazines, especially Billboard. These charts (Billboard’s “Hot 100,” for instance) rank hit records and were originally designed to help businesspeople at record labels, radio stations, record stores, and distribution centers assess current trends with an eye toward anticipating future opportunity and demand. The charts thus attempted to represent which songs were popular while providing a rough sense of the kind of listener to which a record appealed. For this second purpose, listeners were—and to some extent continue to be—divided along economic, geographic, and racial lines for marketing purposes. Pop charts tracked records directed at a generally middle-class white audience, while the R&B charts followed records intended for urban black audiences, and C&W charts followed those made for rural white listeners. Whenever a record appears on more than one of these charts—on both the pop and R&B charts, for example—it “crosses over.” This is, strictly speaking, only a fact in regard to the consumption aspect of the music in question (as much as charts ever reflect facts, that is). A crossover hit may be assumed to appeal to two distinguishable listening audiences. Chart crossover is not necessarily a reliable indicator in matters of musical style, however; a record can certainly cross over on the charts while remaining absolutely true to a single style. The earliest R&B crossovers in the mid 1950s are a good example of this. Little Richard, for one, did not straddle a stylistic border between R&B and pop with tunes like “Tutti Frutti” and “Lucille”; he did, however, cross audience borders when his songs appealed to both black (R&B) and middle-class white (pop) audiences.
Therefore, it makes sense to distinguish between crossover in the domain of marketing ("chart crossover") and crossover in the domain of musical style ("stylistic crossover"). Crossover hits can work to change the style in which they cross over—as did Richard’s hits—but they need not always cross over in a stylistic sense. In fact, here lies an important distinction between a cover version and a crossover: the cover version (a song that is re-recorded by another artist) does tend to be more likely to feature stylistic crossover, since the idea of a cover is often to assimilate a song from one style into another. As much sport as there may be in picking on Pat Boone’s covers of Little Richard and Fats Domino songs, his versions do blend R&B into the mainstream pop style of the 1950s. Boone’s covers clearly straddle the two styles far more than Richard’s or Domino’s originals do, effecting stylistic crossover where no real chart crossover was present (since Boone’s records were always targeted at a pop audience).

This study focuses on the second kind of crossover discussed earlier, stylistic crossover, and explores how pieces can refer simultaneously to at least two styles that are usually thought to be distinct from one another—a situation that often makes stylistic identification a slippery but at the same time fascinating task. The two styles that I’ll be especially concerned with here are 1970s progressive rock ("prog") and 1970s jazz-rock (or "fusion"). After providing a brief summary of these two styles, I will focus on the music of two late-1970s American groups, Happy the Man and the Dixie Dregs. I will argue that the music of each group is a stylistic hybrid. Happy the Man is easier to situate stylistically (their music is progressive rock with pronounced fusion characteristics), while the Dregs’ music is such an eclectic blend that it defies easy categorization ("progressive-fusion-country-chamber rock"). Both groups emerge out of a distinctively American scene in the mid-1970s that celebrates instrumental prowess and virtuosity, and it is this characteristic that allows for a blending of jazz-rock with progressive rock. In this sense, then, I will argue that the music of both groups can be seen as crossing over stylistically.2

**Progressive Rock and Jazz-Rock**

Before examining the music of these two American bands, let’s first briefly consider the history of progressive rock and jazz-fusion. Progressive rock, sometimes called "art rock" or "classical rock," was developed mostly by British groups in the late 1960s and early-to-mid 1970s—groups like Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Jethro Tull, and Gentle Giant. This music is characterized by a pronounced attempt to blend European classical music with rock. (A related stylistic crossover from classical to rock is examined in this book by Jonathan Bernard and Mark Spicer.) Emerging out of the music of the late Beatles, and their *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) especially, progressive rock celebrated virtuosity, musical complexity, and an engagement with big philosophical, spiritual, and religious ideas as topics for ambitious concept albums like Yes’s *Tales from Topographic Oceans* (1973), Jethro Tull’s *Thick as a Brick* (1972), Emerson, Lake & Palmer’s *Brain Salad Surgery* (1973), and Genesis’ *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (1974). In fact, it is this very kind of musical and poetic ambition that both attracted young musicians to the style and caused certain critics to hate it with a passion. Rock critic Lester Bangs, for instance, once called for Emerson, Lake & Palmer to be tried as war criminals (Macan 1997, 167). Prog musicians Steve Howe and Robert Fripp on guitar, Keith Emerson, Rick Wakeman, and Patrick Moraz on keyboards, Chris Squire on bass, and Phil Collins and Bill Bruford on drums enjoyed tremendous respect among a slightly younger generation of budding rock instrumentalists, especially in the United States. This is borne out by readers’ polls in various magazines such as *Guitar Player*, for example, in which Yes’s Steve Howe won in the Best Overall Musician category five years in a row (1977–1981); he was then retired to the magazine’s Gallery of Greats in 1981, where his name currently resides along with those of Andrés Segovia, Chet Atkins, Eric Clapton, and others of such legendary stature.4

For many young musicians in the early 1970s, prog rock was viewed as a style that encouraged a player to become as accomplished an instrumentalist as possible. An important characteristic of most prog was at least some focus on singing, and vocal arrangements at times could be very elaborate; this music was, after all, often modeled on post-Beatles-type rock songs. For musicians who were not particularly concerned with the vocal aspect of music, jazz-rock offered a style that was exclusively dedicated to instrumental playing itself; there were no backup vocal harmonies to worry about and no temperamental lead singers writing lyrics about starship hobbits from the south side of the sky. It is, in fact, hardly coincidental that as prog was emerging out of the psychedelic haze of the late 1960s, Miles Davis was developing a fusion of rock and jazz. Miles’s *In a Silent Way* (1969) and *Bitches Brew* (1970) LPs launched the jazz-rock fusion style, as Miles band members like John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul, and Tony Williams went on to form the most influential fusion ensembles of the decade: the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Return to Forever, Weather Report, and Lifetime, respectively. And parallel to the progressive-rock musicians, fusion guitarists John McLaughlin, Larry Coryell, and Al Di Meola; keyboardists Chick Corea and Jan Hammer; bassists Stanley Clarke and Jaco Pastorius; and drummer Billy Cobham were celebrated in the jazz categories of the same magazines that featured the progressive-rock musicians. Like Steve Howe, for instance, Al Di Meola was voted into *Guitar Player*’s Gallery of Greats in 1981 after winning first place in the Best Jazz Guitarist category five years in a row. And like the progressive rockers, the fusion musicians endured attacks from hostile critics who thought that these musicians had sold out a basic tenet of their style. If the progressive rockers were accused of selling out the visceral thrill of good ol’ rock and roll, the
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fusion players were accused of not swinging—after all, what were all those odd meters and straight eighths doing in jazz anyway?

So while progressive rock and fusion are often discussed in isolation from one another, the two styles shared many of the same aspirations as well as endured similar criticism. However, these parallels generally had a greater effect on the younger generation of musicians who modeled themselves on the principal figures of the two styles than it did on the founders themselves. While it is unlikely that John McLaughlin would have wanted to replace Steve Howe in Yes and even more unlikely that Howe would have played in the Mahavishnu Orchestra or Return to Forever, it was fairly common for young players to emulate both Howe and McLaughlin, or say, emulate both Chick Corea and Keith Emerson. There were, of course, many players who did not cross party lines from jazz to rock, but still, there was plenty of common ground among their respective listeners. It is also important to acknowledge that there were in fact significant differences between the two styles, lest anyone get the idea that 1970s prog and jazz-rock were pretty much the same music—one with vocals and one without. In terms of stylistic crossover, it is indeed essential that there be clear distinguishing characteristics between the two styles; for if the styles cannot be distinguished from each other, it is impossible for any single passage or piece to cross between them. Perhaps we might imagine fusion and prog stylistically as two circles that intersect (in the manner of a Venn diagram). It is in the area of intersection that crossover occurs, and in any consideration of stylistic crossover, it is important to determine both the characteristics of each circle as well as those at the point of intersection. It is to those moments of stylistic intersection that we will now turn.

**Return to Forever, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Yes**

The general stylistic similarities between jazz-rock and progressive rock are reinforced when certain specific passages, pieces, or entire albums from the leading groups in both prog rock and fusion seem to cross over. A good example of this is “Medieval Overture,” the opening track on the 1976 Return to Forever LP, *Romantic Warrior,* which finds jazz-rockers Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, Al Di Meola, and Lenny White crossing over into progressive rock in a marked manner. The piece is composed by Corea and built up from a number of strongly contrasting sections that create an episodic formal structure. The first of these sections (0:00–0:49; see Table 4.1) features a brisk ostinato pattern established by Corea on the synthesizer that might be notated metrically as two measures of 10/8 (2 + 2 + 3 + 3) followed by a measure of 16/8 (2 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3). After twice through this pattern, the electric guitar, bass, and drums enter, with the guitar and bass playing a series of riffs that are rhythmically aligned yet melodically contrasting against Corea’s ostinato, all establishing the key of A minor. Corea then initiates a brief transition on synthesizer (0:50–1:01)—four bars in 4/4 time based in part on a stepwise whole-tone descent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>A section</td>
<td>Ostinato in keyboard; riffs in guitar, bass, and drums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:50</td>
<td>transition</td>
<td>White-tone keyboard then drums</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:01</td>
<td>B section</td>
<td>“Church organ” and synthesizer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:12</td>
<td>C section</td>
<td>Chromatic guitar and bass in counterpoint; theme and bass solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:01</td>
<td>D section</td>
<td>Ostinato in keyboard; riffs in guitar, bass, and drums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>E section</td>
<td>Features reprise of first transition</td>
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(10ths) from Bb to D (much more a jazz trait, an ascending return to Bb and played twice. The excerpt also contains a transition to a more melodic riff played by the synthesizer that is answered by drum fills in a call-and-response fashion.)

Already in the first ninety-six seconds of this piece, the listener is introduced to three contrasting sections in rapid-fire succession. Following on from the fourth section (1:36–2:01), one can hear Corea's melodic line on the synthesizer accompanying the melody. The transition to a minor chord is modulated from A minor to E major while emphasizing an eerie effect that makes an unmistakable “church organ” sound. The section features Di Meola's fuzz-box guitar meandering over the accompaniment of a creeping bass that is low and unison. The piece does not continue to present new music; it states the same ideas in two two-and-a-half minutes; there is a Stanley Clarke bass solo that is introduced melodically at 2:30 and this solo is relatively brief; any attempt to separate jazz-rock and progressive rock is somewhat fruitless due to the tight arrangement. The piece is tightly arranged with the chord changes that are not likely to change from performance to performance. The general concept is that the musical concept is a model of the music that is drawn from progressive rock and jazz-rock, but in a very different way.

**Table 4.1** Return to Forever, “Medieval Overture” (Chick Corea’s transcription).

- **Section A**
  - Ostinato in keyboard; riffs in guitar, bass, and drums
- **Section B**
  - White-tone keyboard then drums
- **Section C**
  - “Church organ” and synthesizer
- **Section D**
  - Chromatic guitar and bass in counterpoint; theme and bass solo
- **Section E**
  - Ostinato in keyboard; riffs in guitar, bass, and drums

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<th>Table 4.1 Return to Forever, “Medieval Overture” (Chick Corea), Romantic Warrior (1976): formal design.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00-0:49 A section</td>
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<tr>
<td>0:50-1:12 transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12-1:36 B section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:36-2:01 transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:02-2:30 C section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30-4:16 D section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:17-4:49 A’ section</td>
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<td>4:49-5:10 Codetta</td>
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(in thirds) from B♭ to D (much more a jazz trait than a rock one) followed by an ascending return to B♭ and played twice. This passage contrasts strongly with the material that has preceded it, as well as with the next important section that begins at 1:12: White provides eight bars of 4/4 on the drums to drive toward this arrival point (1:01-1:12.). The new section (1:12-1:36) features a return to A minor with melodic riffs played by the keyboards, guitar, and bass that are answered by drum fills in a call-and-response manner.

Already in the first ninety-six seconds of this track, then, Return to Forever has presented the listener with three contrasting and carefully arranged sections in rapid-fire succession. Following on the heels of this comes yet a fourth section (1:36-2:01), this one featuring Corea playing a soaring, angular melody on the synthesizer to the accompaniment of a synthetic organ patch, modulating from A minor to E minor while employing a rubato feel and creating an eerie effect that makes an unmistakable reference to classical organ music (though perhaps the reference is more to a Phantom-of-the-Opera-like caricature of “spooky” organ music). The section that follows (2:02-2:30) features Di Meola’s fuzz-box guitar meandering chromatically in a Bartókian manner to the accompaniment of a creeping bass line by Clarke. The rest of the piece does not continue to present new music as quickly as in the first two-and-a-half minutes; there is a Stanley Clarke bass solo over a theme that is first introduced melodically at 2:30 and this section extends to 4:16. At 4:17 the group brings back the first section in a revised form, and this and a brief coda bring the track to an end at 5:10.

While the references to classical music—and especially to a vague sense of orchestral grandeur—might be enough in themselves to make for stylistic crossover, the juxtaposition of complex, “composed” sections is the key ingredient that pushes “Medieval Overture” to the stylistic boundary that might be thought to separate jazz-rock and progressive rock. Except for Clarke's bass solo, the piece is tightly arranged with the musicians playing fixed parts that are not likely to change from performance to performance. This highly arranged aspect of the music is drawn from prog, where almost any passage from Yes, Gentle Giant, King Crimson, and many others could be brought forward as an example. In fact, Stuart Nicholson (1998, 202) views much of
Return to Forever's music from the mid-1970s as influenced by progressive rock, citing features such as "pompous themes, a preoccupation with speed and execution for its own sake, a reliance on the latest electronic equipment, and a shared spiritual and/or cosmic preoccupation." He even suggests that Romantic Warrior as a whole is "a riposte to Rick Wakeman's Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table of 1975" (202). The album does employ the concept-album approach by keeping with the medieval theme (in which the album art—picturing a knight on horseback—also participates). Subsequent tracks are titled "Sorceress," "Romantic Warrior," "Majestic Dance," "The Magician," and "Duel of the Jester and the Tyrant." Despite such obvious similarities between the two records, Nicholson may overstate his case somewhat. Stylistically speaking, there is an abundance of passages on Romantic Warrior that would never be mistaken for prog (including most of the two tracks that immediately follow "Medieval Overture"), making the album a fusion LP that at times crosses over into prog.

The music of the Mahavishnu Orchestra is also central to the 1970s fusion scene. As a guitarist, John McLaughlin was known for his great speed and agility in soloing, often employing pentatonic scales that fit comfortably under the hand within single-position fingerings. As a composer, the McLaughlin of the 1970s worked at integrating materials drawn from Indian music into jazz, as well as building up pieces from synthetic scales. The result is a kind of Ravi Shankar-meets-John Coltrane hybrid, and the 1971 track "Dance of Maya" is a representative example of this approach. The piece is built up from a lengthy arpeggiated chord progression; the sonorities found in this progression are based on a simpler two-chord model that features two tritones a half step apart (see Example 4.1a). These two tritones can be seen as implying V7-type chords with roots in descending fifths, with a G pedal tone that is not a chord member in the first sonority but is a chordal seventh in the second. This two-chord succession is then sequenced in continuing descending-fifth root motions (assuming the functions of E–A–D–G beneath the slurred chords of the sequence in Example 4.1b) to create a kind of creeping chromaticism in the bass and upper voice. This passage is set in a meter of 10/8, and McLaughlin uses distortion and wah-wah pedal on the electric guitar in a way that is more likely to conjure up images of Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton than of Tal Farlow or Barney Kessel. It is interesting to note that in his published full-score version of this piece, McLaughlin describes "Dance of Maya" as being based on super-Lociant and octatonic scales based on E. The use of the octatonic scale is especially noteworthy here, since this symmetrical scale crosses many stylistic boundaries in twentieth-century music.

Unlike the music of Return to Forever discussed earlier, the music of McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra does not really cross over into prog in a marked fashion. It is, rather, a strong influence on certain prog musicians and helps to account for many moments when prog crosses over into fusion.

An example of this can be found in a number of passages from the 1974 Yes album, Relayer, especially the track entitled "Sound Chaser." At 3:01, for instance, guitarist Steve Howe tears into an aggressive and angular electric-guitar cadenza, employing the symmetrical character of the octatonic scale to create a nontonal musical environment that is not very far removed from the one created by John McLaughlin on "Dance of Maya" or on similar tracks such as "Meeting of the Spirits." While Howe's solo is ultimately a kind of psychedelic, post-tonal, Flamenco hybrid stylistically, the general harmonic and melodic language he employs creates a similar musical effect to the one created frequently by McLaughlin through his use of synthetic and exotic scales.

A Patrick Moraz Moog synthesizer solo at 7:46 seems to draw heavily on Jan Hammer's MiniMoog style, and perhaps to a certain extent on that of Chick Corea. Moraz plays a quick succession of fast runs, "bending" and modulating the pitch of certain held notes to emulate an electric guitar's string bend and vibrato. It is noteworthy how stylistically different this Moraz solo is from anything Rick Wakeman ever played with Yes, or even anything that came from Genesis' Tony Banks. This marked departure from the progressive-rock norm further underscores the stylistic crossover present here. In fact, the opening moments of this track prominently feature Moraz playing a series of fast runs and dramatic chords on his Fender Rhodes: the electric piano of choice for almost all fusion keyboardists at the time but an instrument almost completely absent from most progressive rock.

In this discussion, there is perhaps a danger in exaggerating the similarities between fusion and prog. It would certainly be possible, for example, to present another collection of excerpts from Romantic Warrior, The Inner Mounting Flame, and Relayer that would emphasize the clear differences between the two styles. (That such examples could be readily produced explains to some degree why many writers have not thought to link the two styles more than they have to date.) The main purpose in highlighting these particular examples, however, is to suggest how young musicians listening to both kinds of records could have imagined a style that crosses over more thoroughly than these models do—a style that is more securely poised between prog and fusion. In fact, the members of Happy the Man and the
Return to Forever’s music from the mid-1970s as influenced by progressive rock, citing features such as “pompous themes, a preoccupation with speed and execution for its own sake, a reliance on the latest electronic equipment, and a shared spiritual and/or cosmic preoccupation.” He even suggests that *Romantic Warrior* as a whole is “a riposte to Rick Wakeman’s *Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table of 1975*” (202). The album does employ the concept-album approach by keeping with the medieval theme (in which the album art—picture a knight in armor on horseback—also participates). Subsequent tracks are titled “Sorceress,” “Romantic Warrior,” “Majestic Dance,” “The Magician,” and “Duel of the Jester and the Tyrant.” Despite such obvious similarities between the two records, Nicholson may overstate his case somewhat. Stylistically speaking, there is an abundance of passages on *Romantic Warrior* that would never be mistaken for prog (including most of the two tracks that immediately follow “Medieval Overture”), making the album a fusion LP that at times crosses over into prog.

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Unlike the music of Return to Forever discussed earlier, the music of McLaughlin’s Mahavishnu Orchestra does not really cross over into prog in a marked fashion. It is, rather, a strong influence on certain prog musicians and helps to account for many moments when prog crosses over into fusion. An example of this can be found in a number of passages from the 1974 Yes album, *Relayer*, especially the track entitled “Sound Chaser.” At 3:01, for instance, guitarist Steve Howe tears into an aggressive and angular electric-guitar cadenza, employing the symmetrical character of the octatonic scale to create a nontonal musical environment that is not very far removed from the one created by John McLaughlin on “Dance of Maya” or on similar tracks such as “Meeting of the Spirits.” While Howe’s solo is ultimately a kind of psychedelic, post-tonal, Flamenco hybrid stylistically, the general harmonic and melodic language he employs creates a similar musical effect to the one created frequently by McLaughlin through his use of synthetic and exotic scales.

A Patrick Moraz Moog synthesizer solo at 7:46 seems to draw heavily on Jan Hammer’s MiniMoog style, and perhaps to a certain extent on that of Chick Corea. Moraz plays a quick succession of fast runs, “bending” and modulating the pitch of certain held notes to emulate an electric guitar’s string bend and vibrato. It is noteworthy how stylistically different this Moraz solo is from anything Rick Wakeman ever played with Yes, or even anything that came from Genesis’ Tony Banks. This marked departure from the progressive-rock norm further underscores the stylistic crossover present here. In fact, the opening moments of this track prominently feature Moraz playing a series of fast runs and dramatic chords on his Fender Rhodes: the electric piano of choice for almost all fusion keyboardists at the time but an instrument almost completely absent from most progressive rock.

In this discussion, there is perhaps a danger in exaggerating the similarities between fusion and prog. It would certainly be possible, for example, to present another collection of excerpts from *Romantic Warrior*, *The Inner Mounting Flame*, and *Relayer* that would emphasize the clear differences between the two styles. (That such examples could be readily produced explains to some degree why many writers have not thought to link the two styles more than they have to date.) The main purpose in highlighting these particular examples, however, is to suggest how young musicians listening to both kinds of records could have imagined a style that crosses over more thoroughly than these models do—a style that is more securely poised between prog and fusion. In fact, the members of Happy the Man and the
Dixie Dregs were just such musicians. These were a younger group of players who did not see any need to choose between the two styles, and their music reflects this.

**Happy the Man and the Dixie Dregs**

The Washington, D.C.-based Happy the Man released two albums during their time together (see Table 4.2). The first, *Happy the Man*, appeared in 1977 and the second, *Crafty Hands*, was released in 1978. After being dropped by their label (Arista), the group recorded a final demo LP in late 1979, which was released as *Happy the Man 3rd, Better Late...* in 1983 on a label (Azimuth) run by Kit Watkins, the group’s keyboardist. The beginnings of the Happy the Man story go back to the early 1970s. Guitarist Stanley Whitaker and bassist Rick Kennell met on a U.S. Army base in West Germany in 1972. Whitaker, then a high-school student and member of the group Shady Grove, had developed an interest in the European prog groups. There, Whitaker was exposed not only to the music of Genesis, Yes, and ELP, but also to groups that were not very well known in the States at the time, among them Gentle Giant, Van der Graaf Generator, and Gong. Whitaker graduated high school and entered James Madison University in Virginia in the fall of 1972. Soon Kennell relocated to Harrisonburg, Virginia, and he, Whitaker, and keyboardist David Bach joined forces with drummer Mike Beck and singer Cliff Fortney. By January 1973, Bach had decided to leave the newly formed group to focus on his music studies, and keyboardists Kit Watkins and Frank Wyatt joined the group. With this latest personnel adjustment, the first Happy the Man lineup was in place. Fortney would leave the group before the making of the first Arista LP, to be replaced by Dan Owen, who would likewise depart before the group’s first commercial release.

Tapes of the early versions of Happy the Man reveal that the group was very much influenced by the British progressive-rock groups; there are many moments that could even pass for Genesis outtakes. It is interesting in this regard that Happy the Man auditioned as Peter Gabriel’s backup band in the period after Gabriel left Genesis, but, according to guitarist Whitaker, the overall sound was a little too close to that of Genesis for everybody’s comfort. By the time the group recorded their first LP, they had decided against having a singer front the group, concentrating instead on instrumental music. Whitaker was subsequently drafted as the group’s singer during the recording of the first album, but only on a couple of tracks. (The hope was that vocals might get the band a little more radio play.) The group’s music is thus mostly instrumental, and in this regard more like fusion than prog.

Three members of Happy the Man wrote material for the group: guitarist Whitaker, keyboardist Watkins, and keyboardist and sax player Frank Wyatt. “Steamy Pipes,” from the group’s second LP, provides a representative example of Stanley Whitaker’s compositional style. The piece is in 11/8, the beats falling in a 4 + 3 + 4 pattern. The rhythmic feel of the 11/8 in this section is contrasted by a second section in 6/8. Particularly notable on this track is the way Kit Watkins’ characteristic MiniMoog lines play off Whitaker’s angular and Mahavishnu-styled arpeggios on the guitar, doubled by electric harpichord. Example 4.2 shows the chords that form the basis for the 11/8 section. Note that the tritone, noted earlier in “Dance of Maya,” is present in the upper two voices of Whitaker’s chord progression. Whereas in McLaughlin’s two-chord model the tritone moves downward by half step, here the tritone descends by whole step. The bass alternates between the tritone A–D♯ in the first chord, an ascending perfect fourth in the second, and a descending perfect fifth in the third, creating a much less chromatic bass than can be found in “Dance of Maya.” The band’s arrangement of “Steamy Pipes,” like much progressive rock, is highly structured. While both Whitaker and Watkins solo over both the 11/8 and 6/8 sections, the accompanying parts are set and unlikely to change from performance to performance. I will return later to a consideration of how live versions of this and other Happy the Man

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**Table 4.2 Happy the Man albums, tapes, and personnel.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Albums:</th>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Happy the Man 3rd, Better Late...</em>, Azimuth AZ 1003 (1983). (Coco Roussel, drums)</td>
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<th>Tapes:</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Death’s Crown</em>, Cuneiform Records 55015 (1999). (Live tape of a multimedia piece featuring <em>Happy the Man</em> lineup with Dan Owen but without Stanley Whitaker)</td>
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**Example 4.2** Happy the Man, “Steamy Pipes” (Stanley Whitaker), *Crafty Hands* (1978): basic chords from the 11/8 section.
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**Tapes:**


**Personnel:**

Group formed in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1972; disbanded in 1979. Rick Kennell (bass); Kit Watkins (keyboards); Stanley Whitaker (guitar); Frank Wyatt (keyboards, sax); drummers indicated above in parentheses.
works help mark an important distinction between the band and their fusion mentors, the Mahavishnu Orchestra. For now it is enough to note a blending of stylistic characteristics often associated with both fusion and prog.

"Morning Sun" (also from the group’s second album) is a beautiful and haunting Kit Watkins number that provides a representative example of his compositional tendencies. Since I have discussed the technical particulars of this piece elsewhere (Covach 1999, 29–31), I will only briefly touch on the aspects of crossover in regard to this track. The most obvious reference to fusion in this case is the prominence of the arpeggios in the Fender Rhodes piano (doubled by the guitar). The sustained synthetic orchestral-string backdrop creates a delicate atmosphere that highlights the music’s reference to Debussy’s music, especially in the use of augmented triads throughout the song and in the free use of diatonic combinations. The arrangement of “Morning Sun” consists mostly of layered keyboards, with Watkins soloing over repeated iterations of the basic song structure, although there is also a section (2:31–3:00) in which Whitaker plays an acoustic steel-string guitar solo against the orchestral keyboard textures. As the guitar solo comes to a close, the drums make a dramatic entrance and the song moves toward its close in a very measured, almost stately manner. Here again, fusion elements are drawn into a prog context to create a marked instance of stylistic crossover.

In regard to the form of the Whitaker and Watkins tracks, these pieces follow a common fusion practice: after the principal sections of the pieces are performed once or twice through, the remainder of the track consists of soloing over these sections, sometimes with a return to the “head” to conclude. In Happy the Man’s music, there may be composed transitions as well as endings that take the place of the standard return to the head at the end of the tune, but it is still often the case that the tunes are vehicles for soloing. The music of the third composer in the group, Frank Wyatt, is less often structured this way; Wyatt tended to write longer and more complicated multi-sectional works. Although there is some soloing in these pieces, the parts are almost entirely worked out to be performed the same way in each performance. Wyatt’s harmonic and melodic practice owes much to fusion, but he is perhaps the group composer most indebted to progressive rock in his “composerly” attitude toward his arrangements.

Let’s now look at the music of the Dixie Dregs, who offer a nice comparison to Happy the Man in a number of ways. Whereas Happy the Man were initially modeled on the British progressive rock groups, the Dregs were from the start modeled on the Mahavishnu Orchestra. The instrumentation betrays this: like McLaughlin’s band, the Dregs employ guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, and electric violin. The group actually began as a rock combo in the University of Miami’s jazz program in 1973. According to drummer Rod Morgenstein, “I was just living and breathing the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and here I found Steve Morse, who was actually writing in that style.” Morse wrote most of the group’s material through the 1970s and into the 1980s. McLaughlin can be heard clearly in a number of albums, but it admits to a deep admiration for the playing of Morse, who actually plays on a Dregs track, “Up in the Air,” making Morse the very kind of crossover listener.

In the context of the present discussion, another Dregs music is that it blends together aspects important to note that there are more than the band’s music; the wide range of styles found on the album If provides a representative example. The influence of progressive rock can be heard in the album’s second piece begins with a Mahavishnu-esque, chromatic chord progression, Esus4, and includes a chord progression that modulates constantly as a more sustained (0:35–1:28). At 1:29–3:54, a section is based on...
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In the context of the present discussion, an important feature of Dixie Dregs music is that it blends together aspects of prog and fusion. It is also important to note that there are more than these two styles present in the band's music; the wide range of styles found on the group's 1978 release, What If, provides a representative example. The influence of both fusion and progressive rock can be heard in the album's second track, Morse's "Odyssey." The piece begins with a Mahavishnu-esque, chromatically weaving melody that employs striking chromatic third-related chord pairs: A major to F major and G major to E§ major (0:00–0:34). This lyrical section gives way to a faster section in 13/8 (accented 7 + 6), driven by a perpetual-motion bass and guitar line that modulates constantly as a more sustained melodic line is layered above (0:35–1:28). At 1:29–3:54, a section is based on acoustic-guitar arpeggios that...
play on a harmonic shift from C♯m7 to Am° (in the context of E major) and provide a repeated pattern over which an extended violin solo occurs. This solo is interrupted (2:56–3:11), however, with a strongly contrasting passage employing “composed” parts for the band, before giving way to a return to the more relaxed and improvisatory continuation of the violin solo. Though the piece lasts almost eight minutes, these opening four minutes already evince a close blending of prog and fusion elements; the “composed” sections contrast with the looser solo (in a way reminiscent of “Medieval Overture”), and the McLaughlin-esque angularity of the opening contrasts with the harder driving power chords found in the section that follows.

The influence of fusion is especially evident in the LP’s title track, “What If.” This piece directly adopts the Mahavishnu Orchestra sound, as it also approaches the lyrical, slow ballad according to a familiar jazz practice. After a brief introduction, the sixteen-bar melody is stated by the violin and guitar in unison, with the Rhodes, drums, and fretless electric bass accompanying (0:16–1:15). A four-bar transition leads to the return of the harmonic framework of the sixteen-bar tune, over which Morse solos (1:31–2:32). The third time through (2:48–3:49) features a synthesizer solo over the first eight bars, with the “head” returning for the last eight bars as the synth solo continues. After the four-bar transition, the head continues as the track fades out. By contrast, the album’s first track, “Take It Off the Top,” is an up-tempo rock number that would not likely have appeared on a John McLaughlin or Chick Corea record. With a complicated arrangement and sophisticated harmonic and rhythmic features, the track has more in common with Kansas—the American progressive-rock group with whom Morse played in the 1980s—than with most fusion of the 1970s. The band’s connection to progressive rock is further reinforced by “Little Kids,” which features Morse on two tracks of classical guitar together with Allen Sloan’s electric violin. This short piece makes a clear reference to classical music—so much so that it seems more suited to a classical-guitar recital than to the rock stage. It is clearly indebted to the many classical-guitar passages found on Yes and Genesis albums from earlier in the 1970s (played by Steve Howe and Steve Hackett, respectively).

The music of the Dixie Dregs, like that of Happy the Man, often resides in that area of intersection between progressive rock and jazz-rock referred to earlier. Rather than being centered in one style and only venturing over to the other occasionally (as in the music of Return to Forever and Yes discussed previously), the music of both bands is more centered in this in-between ground. The situation in regard to the Dixie Dregs is more complicated than for Happy the Man, since the Dregs also cross over into country and funk at times (consider “Gina Lola Breakdown” and “Ice Cakes” from What If for examples of each).

The question of stylistic crossover is further complicated by the role of improvisation in the music of each group. Live tapes of the Mahavishnu Orchestra from the 1972–1974 period, for instance, reveal that album tracks
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Stylistic Crossover

I have argued that crossover occurs in the music of Happy the Man and the Dixie Dregs because the members of these bands developed in a musical culture that privileged instrumental prowess and virtuosity. In the mid-1970s, a rock player had two stylistic options in following aspirations to the highest level of technical proficiency: progressive rock and jazz-rock fusion. There were, of course, other options as well; one could turn to classical music or to traditional jazz, for example. But for those who wanted to continue playing some form of rock music, the two choices were prog and fusion. In the mid-1970s, the British prog bands were at the peak of their popularity. Fusion artists were also enjoying commercial success. The Mahavishnu Orchestra's Birds of Fire, for example, rose as high as number 15 on Billboard’s “Top LP’s & Tapes” chart in 1973. Considering the American reception of British progressive rock and American fusion, it is perhaps not so surprising that two American groups each developed a distinctive sound that straddled the stylistic boundary between jazz fusion and progressive rock.

But there were problems with the distinctiveness of the stylistic crossover in each case. Neither Happy the Man nor the Dixie Dregs experienced much commercial success, and this is certainly due in large part to the fact that each group was difficult to market. As instrumental bands, each was incompatible with late-1970s rock radio formats. As rock bands, each was also incompatible with most jazz formats, since even the fusion groups tended to be viewed with a certain disdain by the jazz purists. But the kind of aspiring musicians who
had supported the original prog and fusion musicians in the 1970s came to embrace at least a few of this new generation. While the musicians in Happy the Man remained generally unknown, Guitar Player readers voted Steve Morse Best Overall five years in a row (beginning in 1982), and voted the Dregs’ Industry Standard LP the Best Guitar Album of 1982. Had more readers in these guitar, bass, percussion, and keyboard communities been aware of the Happy the Man LPs, it seems likely that these musicians would have been celebrated as well.

To conclude this study, let’s return to the distinction that was made at the outset between chart crossover and stylistic crossover. It is clear that, in the case of most of the bands we have examined here, chart crossover has no real application. One could point to the Mahavishnu Orchestra crossing over into Billboard’s album chart as indicated earlier, but that’s about all that the charts can tell us. Stylistic crossover is more helpful but at the same time a far more interpretive operation. Consider that we begin with two distinct styles that are themselves hybrids: progressive rock blends rock with classical music and fusion blends jazz with rock. Next we insert into this context music that might also be seen to be a stylistic hybrid, but in this case a hybrid of two hybrids. How is this second hybrid different from the first two? Can such distinctions ultimately be helpful?

The first step in understanding this situation is in seeing an important difference between prog and fusion on one hand and the music of Happy the Man and the Dixie Dregs on the other. We can think of both fusion and prog as distinguishable styles because there are many works that can be classified—if sometimes only roughly—under each stylistic label. There is, in short, a prog repertoire and a fusion repertoire. But aside from the albums under discussion, it would be difficult to produce a similar repertoire for American prog-fusion crossover music. So if we return to the Venn diagram suggested earlier, each of the intersecting circles is a collection of features derived from across some repertoire, while in the area of intersection are features shared by some pieces, but these pieces do not in themselves constitute a repertoire of comparable size and variety. When there are enough pieces that reside in this intersecting space, one can no longer speak profitably about crossover; instead, one may need to consider the possibility of a distinct hybrid style. Therefore, crossover always involves holding two repertoires simultaneously in view with the idea that the piece (or pieces) under scrutiny would not fit cleanly into a single repertoire. Such an operation is markedly interpretive in the sense that it is the music scholar who invokes the styles in force in any given case. And such an interpretive operation is relative in the sense that one could also construct a pair of Venn diagrams in which one circle represents jazz and the other rock, with fusion at the intersection, or a pair in which one circle represents rock and the other classical with prog in the middle. In this case, “crossover” might be applied in a much more general sense than the one used for the present analysis. Although this study has focused on the notion of stylistic crossover in 1970s progressive rock specifically, it seems clear that distinguishing the stylistic from the marketing aspects of crossover, as well as exploring the complex and sometimes intimate relationships between these two, is a potentially rich and worthwhile approach to a broad range of musical styles that might blend elements of popular and classical, western and nonwestern, and even current and past repertoires. The fascination of most crossover music is how it balances between two styles, refusing to be forced into a single stylistic category. Perhaps rather than attempting to resolve such conflicts, the analyst’s job is to celebrate the tension.

Notes

1. Musicologist Charles Hamm (1983, 391–424) provides a clear explanation of the role played by crossover hits in the early years of rock and roll, as well as the role played by cover versions during this period. The classic study of the American popular-music business is Russell Sanjek’s three-volume history, the third volume of which deals with the twentieth century and is reprinted and expanded as Sanjek 1996. For consideration of some of the political dimensions of crossover, see Perry 1988.

2. It should be admitted that, strictly speaking, the question of chart crossover never really arises in regard to the groups under consideration, since neither the Dixie Dregs nor Happy the Man ever had a Top Forty album or single on any chart. As far as the eclectic blending of styles into 1970s rock is concerned, Frank Zappa’s music is also fertile ground for the kinds of analytical discussions that follow. (Jonathan Bernard and James Borders explore the crossover nature of Zappa’s music in Chapters 1 and 2, respectively.)

3. I offer condensed historical overviews of progressive rock in Covach 1997 and 1999. More detailed accounts of early progressive rock can be found in Macan 1997 and Stump 1997. Martin 1997 also offers much detailed information on this music, but, owing to its informal and often idiosyncratic character, it must be consulted with caution.

4. Poll results for the 1977–1981 period can be found in the following issues of Guitar Player: 11/12 (December 1977), 30–31; 12/12 (December 1978), 40–41; 13/12 (December 1979), 72–73; 14/12 (December 1980), 24–25; and 15/12 (December 1981), 56–57. During these years in which Steve Howe won the Best Overall category, his bandmate Chris Squire took first place in the Bass category in 1980, and second place in the other four years. Guitar Player introduced a sister publication, Contemporary Keyboard, in September 1975. In the new magazine’s first readers poll (3/1 [January 1977], 24–25), Keith Emerson took first place in five categories: Best Overall, Rock Piano, Synthesizer, Rock Organ, and Multi-Keyboard. In 1978 he repeated this feat, adding Best Keyboard Album as his sixth honor (3/12 [December 1977], 20–21). In 1977, then Yes keyboardist Patrick Moraz won Best New Talent and Best Keyboard Album as well. In the first readers’ poll conducted by Modern Drummer (3/3 [May/June 1979], 26–28), Carl Palmer and Bill Bruford placed second and third, respectively, behind Carmen Appice (ex-Vanilla Fudge and Cactus) in the Rock category.
had supported the original prog and fusion musicians in the 1970s came to embrace at least a few of this new generation. While the musicians in Happy the Man remained generally unknown, Guitar Player readers voted Steve Morse Best Overall five years in a row (beginning in 1982), and voted the Dregs’ Industry Standard LP the Best Guitar Album of 1982.² Had more readers in these guitar, bass, percussion, and keyboard communities been aware of the Happy the Man LPs, it seems likely that these musicians would have been celebrated as well.

To conclude this study, let’s return to the distinction that was made at the outset between chart crossover and stylistic crossover. It is clear that, in the case of most of the bands we have examined here, chart crossover has no real application. One could point to the Mahavishnu Orchestra crossing over into Billboard’s album chart as indicated earlier, but that’s about all that the charts can tell us. Stylistic crossover is more helpful but at the same time a far more interpretive operation. Consider that we begin with two distinct styles that are themselves hybrids: progressive rock blends rock with classical music and fusion blends jazz with rock. Next we insert into this context music that might also be seen to be a stylistic hybrid, but in this case a hybrid of two hybrids. How is this second hybrid different from the first two? Can such distinctions ultimately be helpful?

The first step in understanding this situation is in seeing an important difference between prog and fusion on one hand and the music of Happy the Man and the Dregs on the other. We can think of both fusion and prog as distinguishable styles because there are many works that can be classified—if sometimes only roughly—under each stylistic label. There is, in short, a prog repertoire and a fusion repertoire. But aside from the albums under discussion, it would be difficult to produce a similar repertoire for American prog-fusion crossover music. So if we return to the Venn diagram suggested earlier, each of the intersecting circles is a collection of features derived from across some repertoire, while in the area of intersection are features shared by some pieces, but these pieces do not in themselves constitute a repertoire of comparable size and variety. When there are enough pieces that reside in this intersecting space, one can no longer speak profitably about crossover; instead, one may need to consider the possibility of a distinct hybrid style. Therefore, crossover always involves holding two repertoires simultaneously in view with the idea that the piece (or pieces) under scrutiny would not fit cleanly into a single repertoire. Such an operation is markedly interpretive in the sense that it is the music scholar who invokes the styles in force in any given case. And such an interpretive operation is relative in the sense that one could also construct a pair of Venn diagrams in which one circle represents jazz and the other rock, with fusion at the intersection, or a pair in which one circle represents rock and the other classical with prog in the middle. In this case, “crossover” might be applied in a much more general sense than the one used for the present analysis. Although this study has focused on the notion of stylistic crossover in 1970s progressive rock specifically, it seems clear that distinguishing the stylistic from the marketing aspects of crossover, as well as exploring the complex and sometimes intimate relationships between these two, is a potentially rich and worthwhile approach to a broad range of musical styles that might blend elements of popular and classical, western and nonwestern, and even current and past repertoires. The fascination of most crossover music is how it balances between two styles, refusing to be forced into a single stylistic category. Perhaps rather than attempting to resolve such conflicts, the analyst’s job is to celebrate the tension.

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5. Nicholson 1998 offers a detailed history of jazz-rock, with extended discussion of each of the groups mentioned here. Gridley 1997 (324–354) provides a briefer but more music-technical discussion, while Glaia 1997 (364–381) places jazz-rock within the context of other stylistic fusions in regard to jazz.

6. Before Di Meola’s streak, John McLaughlin had placed first in the jazz category of the Guitar Player readers’ poll in three consecutive years (7/4 [May/June 1973], 42; 8/12 [December 1974], 22–23; and 9/12 [December 1975], 22–23). In the 1977–79 polls, Stanley Clarke placed first in the bass category, being retired to the gallery of greats in 1979. In the first Contemporary Keyboard poll (for 1976) in which Keith Emerson took first in five categories, Chick Corea placed first in Electric Piano, which he repeated along with Jazz Piano the next year. In the first Modern Drummer poll, Billy Cobham placed second in the Best Overall category behind Steve Gadd, while Tony Williams won in the jazz category.

7. For an account of the attacks to which progressive rock has been subjected along these lines, see Macan 1997, 167–178. For an account of the parallel phenomenon in jazz-rock, see Nicholson 1998, xiii–xviii.

8. The separation of these styles continues even in some of the best recent scholarship. Nicholson 1998 only occasionally mentions progressive rock, and then mostly offers negative assessments. Macan 1997 devotes some attention to jazz-rock, but mostly in the context of the British Canterbury scene.

9. There was some crossing over of personnel among the big-name players in the two styles in the late 1970s. Genesis drummer Phil Collins played in the English fusion band Brand X in the late 1970s. As mentioned by Mark Spencer in Chapter 12, when Collins took over as lead vocalist from Peter Gabriel, American jazz-rockers Chester Thompson (drums) joined the band for all live performances, as did Daryl Stuermer (guitar/bass) after guitarist Steve Hackett’s departure from the group. The late-1970s prog supergroup UK featured guitarist Allan Holdsworth, who subsequently became one of the most admired guitarists in jazz-rock. Some of this crossover is explained by the presence of a jazz-rock fusion in England within the Canterbury scene, of which 1970s Soft Machine is perhaps the best example. While most Canterbury music is not very well known in North America, its roots are in the same mid- to late-1960s scene that spawned the British prog bands. Pink Floyd, Soft Machine, and Tomorrow (featuring Steve Howe), for instance, were the most influential bands in the London psychedelic underground of the 1966–1969 period. Nicholson (1998, 14–28) provides a useful account of the late-1960s British scene with an eye toward the development of jazz-rock.

10. While this seems obvious from even a cursory perusal of periodicals from the 1970s directed at musicians (and these periodicals are cited throughout this study), I can attest that this was certainly consistent with my experience during this period as a young developing guitarist playing and teaching in the Detroit area.

11. The music-analytical descriptions that follow rely on CD timings to locate points of reference. The CD reference used in each is listed in the chapter’s references.

12. While this track’s title refers to the overture in a classical-music sense, the ideas it presents do not prefigure those that follow on the album in any obviously thematic way.

13. For Nicholson, the influence of progressive rock on Chick Corea’s music during the mid-1970s was unfortunate, and Nicholson’s position on this point is indicative of aesthetic attitudes that continue to separate fans (and critics) of the two styles, even if these attitudes are not shared by the musicians themselves. Progressive rock bands are dismissed for their “empty virtuosity,” with Corea as well “guilty of exploiting his technique at the expense of meaning,” producing music that is ultimately “cute and pretentious” (1998, 202).

14. Howe’s opening solo to the group’s “Close to the Edge” (Yes 1972) seems also inspired in part by McLaughlin. Other Howe solos betray the influence of jazz on his playing as well, especially on The Yes Album (1971). Howe was something of an exception in the late 1960s and early 1970s in his use of a large-body Gibson ES-175 guitar—an instrument more often used by traditional jazzers.

15. I discuss Happy the Man in Covach 1999, where my principal concern is situating the band within the context of American progressive rock in the 1970s. They are considered there along with Kansas, Starcastle, and dozens of other groups. In that study I focused on demonstrating the ways in which the group’s music integrates features drawn from classical music into a rock context (a basic feature of almost all progressive rock).

16. The following account of the band’s history is drawn from the liner notes to the band’s compilation CD, Retrospective (East Side Digital 80292 [1989]), many of the details of which were confirmed in a telephone conversation with Stanley Whitaker on November 8, 1995.


18. Morgenstein’s remarks are drawn from the liner notes to the live CD, Dixie Dregs, which also contains a band history. For additional accounts of the Dregs’ history and influences, see Obrecht 1978 and 1982.

19. In 1982 Steve Morse was featured in Guitar Player’s “Essential Listening” column, in which well-known guitarists share the albums they consider most influential in the development of their playing. Of the nine guitarists Morse discusses, both McLaughlin and Howe rank very high. The feeling seems to be mutual, at least as far as Howe is concerned; in an interview with the author on June 25, 1998, the Yes guitarist mentioned that he and Morse are hoping to tour together in the near future.

20. This issue is not made any easier by considering the way the albums considered in this study were recorded. Tracks on Yes’s Relayer, for instance, were composed by splicing together short stretches of recorded material: the group sometimes had to learn the tracks after they were recorded in order to perform them live. Mahavishnu Orchestra tracks seem to project a sense that they were done in real time as complete takes, although I don’t know if this is the case or not. An important figure in all this might be engineer and producer Ken Scott, who worked on a number of records for a wide variety of artists, including the Beatles. He worked with the Mahavishnu Orchestra (as did Beatles producer George Martin) and produced albums for Happy the Man and the Dixie Dregs. The role of the recording process in this music is an area yet to be examined in any scholarly depth.

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Whereas timbre, rhythm, and form are of undeniable interest, this essay argues
that pitch relationships are of central importance, forming the core of the struc-
ture, the identity, and even many of the expressive capabilities of pop-rock
music.1 Rhythm and form, while of great value in music, have similarly impor-
tant roles in all temporal arts such as poetry, drama, prose, dance, and film.
But whereas pitch may play a small part in most of these sister art forms, it is
this quality alone that separates music from all other means of artistic expres-
sion.2 It might be said that tone color as well is far more important in music
than in these other forms, but this essay will argue that, as with the other musi-
cal parameters mentioned here, timbre must take a back seat to pitch in terms
of core structure in all or nearly all of the music of the pop-rock literature.

Even though the technical ways that tones relate to one another along the
pitch continuum are seldom appreciated by most rock performers and audience
members alike, I believe that purely musical effects—nearly always connected
in some way to matters of pitch relationships—contribute to any composer’s
or listener’s appreciation, regardless of training or superficial awareness. If
most listeners believe they are attracted only to rhythm or loud volume and
“can’t hear” the pitch or have no conscious understanding of functional tonal
relations, I say they are merely unaware of why, for instance, they become
more excited by expanded dominant-seventh retransitions enhanced by
added uncontrolled dissonance than they do in the face of less tonally valent
alternations of weak III and VI chords. (Where, musically, did the Beatles
and their 1964 listeners shake their mop-tops and shriek most fervently? Follow
the retransitional dominants?)

Not only are pitch relationships at the core of pop-rock music, but they
share many of the procedures of harmony and counterpoint by which tonal
goals are identified, pursued, and frustrated in tonal musics of other styles. For
this reason, many of the analytical systems devised over the past few centuries
for the study of common-practice classical music are also applicable to our
subject. Of course there are vast differences between the tonal processes and
outcomes of centuries-old classical and modern rock musics, but differences
can be just as vast between various rock styles, even those practiced by a single
artist. The tonal-world distance is far greater between John Lennon’s “If I Fell”
and the Beach Boys’ “Good Vibes” than that between Bach’s “Invention No. 27”
and Haydn’s “Orchestrion.”