Rock Music
The Library of Essays on Popular Music
Series Editor: Allan F. Moore

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Edited by

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Series Preface

From its rather modest beginnings in the 1950s, the study of popular music has now developed to such a degree that many academic institutions worldwide employ specialists in the field. Even those that do not will often still make space on crowded higher education curricula for the investigation of what has become not only one of the most lucrative spheres of human activity, but one of the most influential on the identities of individuals and communities. Popular music matters, and it matters to so many people, people we can only partially understand if we do not understand their music. It is for this reason that this series is timely.

This is not the place to try to offer a definition of popular music; that is one of the purposes of the essays collected in the volumes in this series. Through their Popular and Folk Music series of monographs, Ashgate has gained a strong reputation as a publisher of scholarship in the field. This Library of Essays on Popular Music is partly envisioned as a complement to that series, focusing on writing of shorter length. But the series is also intended to develop the volume of Critical Essays in Popular Musicology published in 2007, in that it provides comprehensive coverage of the world’s popular musics in eight volumes, each of which has a substantial introductory essay by the volume’s editor. It develops the Critical Essays volume in that it makes overt recognition of the fact that the study of popular music is necessarily interdisciplinary. Thus, within the limits set by the genre coverage of each individual volume, and by the excellence of the essays available for inclusion, each editor has been asked to keep an eye on issues as diverse as: the popular music industry and its institutions; aspects of history of their respective genres; issues in the theories and methodologies of study and practice; questions of the ontologies and hermeneutics of their fields; the varying influence of different waves of technological development; the ways markets and audiences are constructed, reproduced and reached and, last but not least; aspects of the repertory without which there would be no popular music to study. As a result, no disciplinary perspective is privileged. As far as possible, no genre is privileged either. Because the study of rock largely led the growth of popular music study, the genre has produced a very large amount of material; it needs a volume to itself. Much writing on jazz tends to circumscribe the genre clearly arguing that it, too, needs a volume to itself. Other forms of music have been distributed across the remaining volumes: one on electronica; one on forms of mainstream pop (still frequently omitted from academic surveys); one on specific North American forms which lead to hip-hop; one on the appearance of popular music within other (particularly visual) media; and two final volumes covering ‘world’ and ‘roots’, musics whose relationship with more obviously industrialized forms is most particularly problematic. While this categorization of the world’s popular musics is not perfect (and is variously addressed in individual volumes), it is no worse than any other, and it does enable the inclusion of all those academic essays we feel are worth reproducing.

The field of study has grown to such an extent that there is now a plethora of material available to read, and the growth of the internet makes it increasingly available. Why, then, produce this series of essays? The issue is principally one of evaluation. Where does one
start? It is no longer possible to suggest to new entrants in the field that they should read everything, for there is much which is of lesser value. So, what you will find collected in these volumes is a selection of the most important and influential journal articles, essays and previously-published shorter material on the genre area concerned. Editors were given the brief of choosing not only those essays which have already garnered a great degree of influence, but essays which have also, for whatever reason, been overlooked, and which offer perspectives worthy of greater account. The volumes’ editors are all experts in their own fields, with strong views about the ways those fields have developed, and might develop in the future. Thus, while the series is necessarily retrospective in its viewpoint, it nonetheless aims to help lay a platform for the broad future study of popular music.

ALLAN F. MOORE
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University of Surrey, UK
Introduction: The Rock (Academic) Circus

More academic writing has been devoted to rock than to any other genre of popular music, so I knew going into this project that selecting the essays for inclusion in this volume would be no easy task. I see my role here more as ringmaster than editor, much like Mick Jagger in the 1968 film The Rolling Stones ’Rock and Roll Circus’, emceeing a diverse line-up of acts – from musicologists and music theorists to sociologists, cultural historians and philosophers – that provide a representative sampling of the wide range of approaches taken by scholars who write about rock music. The field of rock scholarship is impossibly broad and ever growing, and yet, with hundreds of excellent essays to choose from, Ashgate imposed some limits that made my selection process a little easier. First and foremost, I was asked to look for essays written in English and published in academic journals, which ruled out book chapters and essays that had originally appeared in other edited collections, as well any pieces from mainstream rock magazines such as Rolling Stone or Mojo.1 I was also to avoid essays that had been previously anthologized in other key collections, ruling out, to name just two examples, Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie’s seminal 1978 essay ‘Rock and Sexuality’ (which was reprinted in Frith and Andrew Goodwin’s 1990 collection, On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word) and Walter Everett’s comprehensive 2004 essay on rock harmony, ‘Making Sense of Rock’s Tonal Systems’ (reprinted in Allan Moore’s 2007 Ashgate collection, Critical Essays in Popular Musicology).

What we have here then are twenty essays selected from among the best scholarly writing on rock music published in academic journals over the last two decades. I have tried to strike a balance between essays by seasoned scholars already influential in the field and what I consider important newer essays by younger scholars who are beginning to make their mark. While some of these essays originally appeared in academic journals devoted specifically to the study of popular music, such as Journal of Popular Music Studies, Popular Music

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1 Among the several edited collections of scholarly essays on rock music published in the past two decades, most noteworthy are Covach and Boone (1997); Dettmar and Richey (1999); Everett ([2000] 2008); and Spicer and Covach (2010). Interestingly, only the first two of these four collections (Covach and Boone’s Understanding Rock and Dettmar and Richey’s Reading Rock and Roll) specifically refer to ‘rock’ or ‘rock and roll’ in their titles. The titles of the latter two collections (Everett’s Expression in Pop-Rock Music and Spicer and Covach’s Sounding Out Pop) refer to ‘pop-rock’ and ‘pop’ respectively, even though the majority of the music under scrutiny in these books falls pretty squarely within the ‘rock’ camp. I will address further the distinction (or lack thereof) between ‘rock’ and ‘pop’ below.

For two recent collections that gather some of the best and most important short pieces of critical writing on rock published in the mainstream press since the 1950s, see Brackett (2008) and Catieforis (2007). For a representative collection of essays on rock that deliberately includes examples of writing by both academics and independent music critics, see DeCurtis (1992).
and *Popular Music and Society*, others appeared in journals that treat both ‘art’ and popular music (with a typical emphasis on the former), such as *American Music, Contemporary Music Review, Gamut, Journal of the American Musicological Society, Music Theory Spectrum, Musical Quarterly* and *twentieth-century music*, and the remainder were culled from an eclectic mix of journals across a range of disciplines outside of music, such as *Cultural Studies, Gender & Society, Genre* and *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* – a testament to the broadly interdisciplinary nature of popular music studies in general. The twenty essays are organized into two groups of ten (not be construed as ‘top ten’ lists, although the analogy is tempting given the subject matter at hand) under the headings ‘Histories, Aesthetics and Ideologies’ and ‘Sounds, Structures and Styles’. The essays in the first group tend to focus more on the historical, sociological, cultural and technological factors that gave rise to this music, while those in the second group tend to focus more on analysis of the music itself. In certain cases – the essays by Holm-Hudson (Chapter 6) and Waksman (Chapter 16), for example – this distinction is not exactly clear-cut.

Before discussing the significance of each of the twenty essays in the context of the larger issues they raise with respect to the study of rock music, making reference along the way to other important scholarly books and essays within the field, I wish to weigh in briefly on the thorny and ongoing debate over just what is it that distinguishes ‘rock’ from ‘pop’, a topic that seems necessary to consider especially given the fact that another volume in this series is devoted to ‘Pop Music and Easy Listening’. As Peter Gammond has explained in his *Oxford Companion to Popular Music*, the very notion of ‘popular’ music reaches back at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century, yet the shortened term ‘pop’ first entered mainstream discourse in the 1950s – the same decade that gave us Bill Haley, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley and the supposed ‘birth’ of rock and roll in the US2 – when it was used as an umbrella name for a special kind of musical product aimed at a teenage market (1991, p. 457). Thus, even in rock’s first decade, the terms ‘pop’ and ‘rock and roll’ (or ‘rock ’n’ roll’) were often used interchangeably. In turn, the term ‘rock’ as a generic shorthand for rock and roll first went into general usage in the mid-to-late 1960s, a period of extraordinary development and sea change in the history of Anglophone popular music. This period witnessed the rise of the album over the single as the dominant product (think *Sgt. Pepper*) and the emergence of rock as something less than the voice of the counterculture, all of which worked in tandem with the rise of rock criticism and the launching of influential US rock-countercultural magazines such as *Creem* and *Rolling Stone*, along with the retooling of established UK trade publications such as *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*. Ever since that crucial formative period in rock criticism, the distinction between ‘pop’ and ‘rock’ has been blurry at best, yet has hinged on

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2 To suggest that rock and roll was ‘born’ sometime around the release of, say, Bill Haley and the Comets’ ‘Shake, Rattle and Roll’ in 1954 – in other words, when white artists began recording their own versions of songs originally recorded by black R&B artists (Big Joe Turner, in the case of ‘Shake, Rattle and Roll’) in order to market them to a mainstream white audience during a time when racial segregation in the US was rampant – is an example of the kind of dangerously sweeping generalization one often finds in published accounts of rock’s history. Conversely, accounts decrying the ‘death’ of rock have been an ongoing part of the journalistic discourse almost since the moment of its ‘birth’ in the early to mid-1950s (whenever exactly that might be); for an entertaining and illuminating book-length study on this very topic, see Dettmar (2006).
the idealistic notion that pop music is wilfully derivative and carefully calculated to have mass commercial appeal, while rock music is grounded in ‘authenticity’ and therefore carries with it a seriousness of artistic intent that pop somehow does not.

That dreaded ‘a’ word, authenticity, is an ideal that has loomed so large both in academic popular music studies and in mainstream rock criticism as to become more than a mere cliché.\(^3\) As the story usually goes, unlike ‘pop’ musicians, rock musicians are ‘authentic’ in that they write and perform their own songs, songs that represent genuine and original statements of unbridled emotion or thought without necessarily any concern for whether or not the record sells or gets played on the radio. So what do we say when a consummate ‘authentic’ rock band like U2 releases in 1997 an album called Pop that reaches #1 on the charts in thirty-five countries? Or when the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, that hallowed institution, which since its founding in 1983 has celebrated rock’s greatest performers and practitioners, inducts Madonna (2008), Run-DMC (2009), Abba (2010) and Neil Diamond (2011), not to mention the late, great King of Pop himself Michael Jackson (2001)? While some popular music scholars might have a hard time calling these performers ‘rock’ artists, the Rock Hall obviously thinks otherwise.\(^4\)

In his well-reasoned essay on what he calls ‘The “Pop-Rockization” of Popular Music’, Motti Regev asserts that ‘to clarify the exact relationship between “pop” and “rock” … is not really possible’ (2002, p. 252), and I agree with him wholeheartedly. Instead, Regev prefers the catchall term ‘pop/rock’ (as opposed to the hyphenated expression ‘pop-rock’ used by some scholars, myself included) to embrace the myriad styles and genres of popular music produced in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. For Regev, the unifying principle behind this overwhelming profusion of styles\(^5\) — from R&B to soul, funk, progressive rock,

\(^3\) It seems almost as if embracing authenticity as a measure of artistic value is necessary in order to be an ‘authentic’ popular music scholar, yet, if it were up to me, we would jettison the myth of authenticity altogether, admit that most rock is pop music and get down to the business of analysing songs. With respect to those who still find the concept useful, however, I refer the reader to Allan Moore’s excellent essay ‘Authenticity as Authentication’ (2002), which, to use Moore’s words, ‘reconfigures [authenticity] as a property attached to individuals rather than to music’ (Moore, 2007, p. xv). Also, judging by his title for one of the volume’s parts (‘Aesthetics and Authenticity’), no doubt Stan Hawkins will have more to say on the subject of authenticity in the introduction to his volume on ‘Pop Music and Easy Listening’ in this series.

\(^4\) According to the description of the induction process as outlined on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s website (rockhall.com), ‘Artists become eligible for induction 25 years after the release of their first record. Criteria include the influence and significance of the artists’ contributions to the development and perpetuation of rock and roll.’ Accordingly, the inaugural class of 1986 included several obvious candidates from rock’s first decade, such as Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis and Buddy Holly, alongside perhaps less obvious candidates such as ‘The Godfather of Soul’ James Brown and ‘The Father of Country Music’ Jimmie Rodgers (in defence of Rodgers, the Rock Hall’s website notes that ‘his combination of blues and hillbilly styles made him a true forebear of rock and roll’). Quite a stir was created in 2007 when Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five became the first rap or hip-hop artist to be inducted into the Rock Hall, but this all goes to show just how broadly the ethos of ‘rock and roll’ is interpreted, at least in the US.

\(^5\) ‘A profusion of styles’ is how Allan Moore puts it in the title to Chapter 4 of his groundbreaking book Rock: The Primary Text, which on its initial publication in 1993 became the first book-length
heavy metal, punk, reggae, disco, synthpop, grunge, rap and so on – is what he calls the rock aesthetic, ‘a set of constantly changing practices and stylistic imperatives for making popular music based on the use of electric and electronic sound textures, amplification, sophisticated studio craftsmanship, and “untrained” and spontaneous techniques of vocal delivery’ (2002, p. 253). While I like this definition very much, we must for the sake of clarity separate Regev’s notion of a unifying ‘rock aesthetic’ from ‘rock’ as a genre unto itself, or else resign ourselves to the fact that all popular music since the 1950s is somehow rock – which I am sure most popular music scholars would not be content to do, no matter how tricky it may be to define precisely those style characteristics that allow us to distinguish between the various subgenres of rock and other post-1950s genres of popular music. Such is the task of rock scholarship, and, taken together, the essays in this volume go a long way towards achieving that goal.

Part I of the collection opens with Bruce Baugh’s little essay, ‘Prolegomena to Any Aesthetics of Rock Music’ (Chapter 1), since it articulates nicely many of the quandaries scholars of rock face in ascribing value to the music we study. In contrast to Regev’s more pragmatic approach, Baugh grounds his take on rock aesthetics within the discipline of philosophy, suggesting that the ‘basic principles of an aesthetics of rock can be derived from turning Kantian or formalist aesthetics on its head’ (p. 6). While many working within the field of popular music studies, particularly those who are not musicians themselves, would likely agree with Baugh that what we value most in rock music are its immediate effects on the body rather than the beauty of its form, there are also many of us within the field who

musicological study of rock. I noted above that the terms ‘pop’ and ‘rock’ are often used seemingly interchangeably to describe the same music, especially by US academics and critics, yet UK popular musicologists such as Moore apparently see a real stylistic difference between what constitutes ‘pop’ and what constitutes ‘rock’ (although I have never seen this articulated clearly in print). At the risk of belabouring this issue, I should point out that sometimes the distinction remains blurry even for Moore – for example, perhaps out of respect to his book’s title, he prefers the odd descriptor ‘synthesizer rock’ (Moore, 2001, pp. 151–54) rather than the more commonly accepted ‘synthpop’ when referring to the music of late 1970s and early 1980s artists such as Gary Numan and the Human League.

Broadening his definition even further, Regev goes on to say that ‘It should be stressed that these practices include sampling and turntablism’ (2002, p. 253).

For an excellent scholarly introduction to the most important genres of post-1950s popular music, see Borthwick and Moy (2004). Their book includes individual chapters on soul, funk, reggae, synthpop, rap and jungle, along with various subgenres of rock, such as psychedelia, progressive rock, punk rock, heavy metal and indie. To Borthwick and Moy, ‘rock’ is obviously too broad a genre to treat manageably in a single chapter. On the prickly issue of what defines a genre in popular music, see Franco Fabbri’s important early essay ‘A Theory of Musical Genre’ (1982); see also Toynbee (2000, pp. 102–29).

Baugh’s essay appeared about three years before the publication of Theodore Gracyk’s Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock (1996), which remains the most comprehensive study to date of rock aesthetics from the standpoint of a trained philosopher (see also Gracyk, 2007). For another useful essay that addresses notions of musical value in rock, specifically in the service of analysing the 1972 song ‘Roundabout’ by the progressive rock band Yes, see Sheinbaum (2002).

This was the essential position advanced by Susan McClary and Robert Walser over twenty years ago in their oft-cited polemical essay ‘Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles With Rock’,...
are also practising musicians and whose formative years were shaped by both a classical and a rock aesthetic, playing in as many classical ensembles as we did pop and rock bands. When I listen to (or perform) a rock song, I can be turned on equally by the sheer power of a screaming guitar solo or infectious beat as I can by an eclectic harmonic progression or unusual phrase design. Thankfully, the field of popular music studies has matured enough to accept the fact that rock can be just as pleasurable to think about as music as it can be to dance or headbang to.

The next two essays in Part I are concerned with aspects of rock’s history, but approach their topics from different angles. Chapter 2, by Mark Mazullo, is actually a history of a history – specifically, a detailed study of the reception and influence of Greil Marcus’s watershed 1975 book Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock ‘n’ Roll Music, which Rolling Stone hailed at the time of its first publication as ‘probably the best book ever written about rock’ (Flippo, 1975, p. 80). Mazullo demonstrates just how influential Mystery Train was in the 1970s in helping to construct a peculiarly American view of rock’s early history. As Keith Negus (1996, pp. 136–63) has rightly pointed out, however, there is no single history of rock, and opinions as to what have been its most significant moments or who are the most important artists in rock sometimes differ greatly on each side of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that, since the 1970s, a certain corpus of key artists, songs and albums – the so-called ‘classic rock’ canon – has crystallized, with classic albums by classic artists whom rock aficionados and scholars alike have universally recognized as great. In his ‘Synergies and Reciprocities: The Dynamics of Musical and Professional Interaction between the Beatles and Bob Dylan’ (Chapter 3), Ian Inglis focuses on two of classic rock’s most iconic figures, evoking concepts from business studies (‘synergy’) and anthropology (‘reciprocity’) to show how the mutual respect and admiration the Beatles and Bob Dylan had for each other and each other’s music would profoundly shape some of the most significant moments across three decades of rock’s history.


10 For example, Greil Marcus’s more recent book Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads (2005) celebrates Dylan’s epic 1965 single as the greatest and most influential rock song ever written or recorded, thus agreeing with Rolling Stone magazine, whose critics ranked ‘Like a Rolling Stone’ as #1 on their 2004 list of the ‘500 Greatest Songs of All Time’. By contrast, Queen’s equally epic 1975 single ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’, which clocked in only at #163 on Rolling Stone’s list, was ranked #6 on the UK magazine Q’s 2006 list of ‘The 100 Greatest Songs Ever’ (Oasis’s Britpop anthem ‘Live Forever’ was ranked #1 and ‘Like a Rolling Stone’ clocked in at #12).

11 The subject of the ‘rock canon’ has been tackled admirably by Carys Wyn Jones (2008). Rock scholarship continues to promote the idea of a rock canon, with, for example, two ongoing series of scholarly books devoted to individual classic rock albums, published by Schirmer and Continuum Press respectively. Ashgate also has so far published several books on classic rock albums within their Popular and Folk Music Series, including essay collections on the Beatles’ Revolver (Reising, 2002) and Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band (Julien, 2009) and Pink Floyd’s The Dark Side of the Moon (Reising, 2006), and monographs on Genesis’s The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway (Holm-Hudson, 2008) and Kate Bush’s Hounds of Love (Moy, 2007).
Two more historical essays follow, both exploring the symbiotic relationship between rock and the counterculture. As John Covach explains in Chapter 4, the extraordinary psychedelic period of 1966–69 fostered a set of shared principles among rock musicians—musical ambition, the embracing of technology and virtuosity, and lyrically ‘big ideas’—which he calls the ‘hippie aesthetic’, an aesthetic that would continue into the 1970s and reach its fullest expression in UK progressive rock, but which also manifests itself in surprising ways in much of mainstream rock throughout the 1970s and beyond. Nadya Zimmerman’s essay (Chapter 5), on the contrary, focuses on the band that practically served as poster children for the emerging San Francisco hippie counterculture in the mid-to-late 1960s, the Grateful Dead. Zimmerman exposes a certain irony on the part of the Dead in their openly advocating an anti-commercial ‘back to nature’ world-view while at the same time embracing the rapid technological advances in electronic instruments and amplification that allowed them to create and perform for an ever-growing audience of Deadheads their own distinctive brand of rambling drug-fuelled psychedelic rock.

Chapter 6, Kevin Holm-Hudson’s thought-provoking essay on what he calls ‘sonic historiography’ in post-1960s rock, could just as easily have been placed in Part II of this volume, given its close attention to the sound and substance of rock recordings. But his essay is as much about rock’s history as it is musical semiotics, since, as Holm-Hudson defines it, sonic historiography is ‘a packaging of rock’s history in sound, as sound’ (p. 105). His essential point here is that it takes only a certain distinctive riff, the special timbre of an electric instrument or even a particular studio effect on a rock recording for informed listeners

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12 For an engaging book-length musicological study on the relationship between rock and the counterculture, including detailed analyses of what she terms ‘psychedelic coding’ in recorded tracks by Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, Pink Floyd and others, see Whiteley (1992).

13 During its creative zenith in 1969–77, progressive rock—with its penchant for formal complexity, frequent excursions into odd time signatures and crafting large-scale pieces in multiple ‘movements’—was probably the most misunderstood and critically maligned genre in all of popular music. Despite the enormous commercial success of UK progressive bands like Yes, Genesis, Jethro Tull and Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP) on both sides of the Atlantic, the US rock critics were particularly scathing in their reviews of progressive rock: for example, the neo-Marxist critic Lester Bangs, playing his ‘authenticity’ card, accused ELP in Creem magazine of ‘the insidious befoulment of all that was gutter pure in rock’ (1974, p. 44). But a resurgence of interest in classic UK progressive rock over the last fifteen years has led to an impressive body of published scholarship on this music, particularly from musicologists and music theorists who are better equipped to confront the formal complexities of progressive rock in purely musical terms. See, for example, Covach (1997a), Holm-Hudson (2002), Macan (1997), Moore (2001, pp. 64–118), Spicer ([2000] 2008) and Stump (1997). Echoing Allan Moore, Chris Anderton in a recent essay (2010) seeks to broaden the definition of the genre beyond the usual crop of UK ‘symphonic’ progressive bands, arguing that progressive rock is best understood as a meta-genre embracing several substyles of experimental (mostly) European pop and rock from the early 1970s onwards.

For more on the ‘hippie aesthetic’, see John Covach’s excellent rock history textbook What’s That Sound? (2nd edn, 2009). Covach goes on in his book to account for the rise of punk and new wave in the later 1970s in terms of a conscious rejection of these hippie ideals and a deliberate return to musical and visual elements of past (pre-psychedelic) rock styles, not as homage but as a means of offering an ironic critique of the present (2009, pp. 439–43). See also his essay ‘Pangs of History in Late-1970s New-Wave Rock’ (Covach, 2003).
to position that track historically and render the track more meaningful for them. Think, for example, of that unmistakable chiming timbre of the Rickenbacker electric twelve-string guitar (‘Ricky 12’), as first used by George Harrison on a number of key Beatles tracks from early 1964, which so fascinated the young Californian Roger McGuinn upon seeing the movie *A Hard Day’s Night* that he would soon use the instrument himself for the signature opening riff on the Byrds’ iconic breakthrough 1965 single, their ‘electric’ cover of Bob Dylan’s ‘Mr. Tambourine Man’; indeed, the distinctive sound of the Ricky 12 itself would quickly become emblematic of the style of mid-1960s electric folk rock. Furthermore, as I have asked elsewhere, ‘What would the landscape of pop and rock have sounded like during 1984–87 … if the Yamaha DX7 synthesizer had not been introduced in 1983?’ (Spicer, 2005, ¶ 14). Along these same lines, I suspect that a few decades from now pop and rock artists (assuming there are still such creatures) might well be using ‘vintage’ Autotune on their records in order to make a nostalgic sonic reference to the Noughties.  

Rock’s many subgenres are sometimes defined not so much by their distinctive music-stylistic characteristics as by their communities of fans and the clever marketing strategies of the popular music industry. David Hesmondhalgh’s essay (Chapter 7) provides a fascinating account of the complex institutional politics within the UK record industry during the post-punk period of the 1980s that gave rise to so-called ‘indie’ (essentially analogous to ‘alternative rock’ in the US) as a recognized genre.  

Revolving around the rash of new independent record labels (such as Rough Trade) that had sprung up in the UK during the punk explosion of the later 1970s, indie was lauded by its practitioners and fans as a deliberate reaction against the bloated excesses of mainstream ‘corporate rock’. By the mid-1990s, however, as Hesmondhalgh well points out, ‘a version of indie had come to occupy the centre ground of British pop music in the shape of bands such as Blur, Oasis and Pulp’ (p. 128), thus becoming subsumed by the very mainstream rock it had initially sought to challenge.

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14 For another interesting essay that deals specifically with the notion of sonic historiography in rock, particularly with reference to classic progressive rock and the music of King Crimson, see Robison (2002). On a related topic, Deena Weinstein’s neat essay ‘A History of Rock’s Pasts through Rock Covers’ (1998) considers how the timeworn practice in rock of ‘covering’ past songs also has had an uncanny knack for commenting on rock’s history.

15 ‘Indie’, of course, has since entered popular discourse in both the US and the UK as an adjective to describe not only music but also, for example, films that have been produced by smaller independent companies (such as the 2011 Oscar-winning indie film *The King’s Speech*), yet indie as a recognized subgenre of pop and rock remains alive and well in the UK today, loosely embracing those myriad bands and artists that have chosen not to ‘sell out’ by signing to one of the major labels. Just last year (2010), for example, the *Guardian* newspaper started a column and online music blog called ‘Ask the Indie Professor’, helmed by UCLA cultural anthropologist Wendy Fonarow; see also her book *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music* (2006). For another attempt to answer the question ‘What is Indie Rock?’ see Hibbett (2005).

16 A strikingly similar phenomenon occurred within the US record industry in the early 1990s, when quintessential ‘alternative’ band R.E.M. and quintessential ‘grunge’ band Nirvana, each of whom had started out on independent labels (IRS and Sub Pop) but were later signed to major labels (Warner and Geffen), saw their albums *Out of Time* (in May 1991) and *Nevermind* (in January 1992) rise to #1 on the *Billboard* Top 200. (These two albums did not do too badly on the UK charts either, hitting #1 in the case of R.E.M. and #7 in the case of Nirvana, and all this happening three or four years before the
During the early years of rock scholarship in the 1970s, before rock was recognized as ‘serious’ music worthy of serious study by musicologists and music theorists in academic music departments, the majority of academic writing on rock came from a sociological perspective. A host of books and essays started appearing in the second half of the 1970s — not coincidentally, right around the time of the UK punk explosion — from Simon Frith’s pioneering book *The Sociology of Rock* (1978) to those influential and oft-cited early writings on pop and rock subcultures in post-Second World War Britain by scholars associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham (most notably Hebidge, 1979). As representative examples of more recent work done in this field, I have chosen two essays by US women professors of sociology. It is no secret that the overwhelming majority of rock’s performers and practitioners since its first decade have been and continue to be (usually white) males. In Chapter 8, ‘When Women Play the Bass: Instrument Specialization and Gender Interpretation in Alternative Rock Music’, Mary Ann Clawson examines those cultural and sociological factors that account for why several of rock’s female minority have been attracted to the bass guitar, which, as Clawson argues, ‘may provide [women] with new opportunities and help legitimate their presence in a male-dominated site of artistic production’ (p. 151). Clawson collected her data for this study by interviewing both male and female rock musicians active in the local alternative music scene in Boston in the 1990s, and her essay is an example of the valuable contribution that such ethnographic methodology can make to the study of rock and, especially, of the social dynamics within rock bands. In this same vein, Deena Weinstein’s informative and entertaining essay ‘All Singers are Dicks’ (Chapter 9) draws on evidence from her many years of interviewing rock musicians to support the negative sentiment that rock instrumentalists often feel about their front men.

Part I concludes with Fred Maus’s probing and evocative essay, ‘Intimacy and Distance: On Stipe’s Queerness’ (Chapter 10). As we all know, rock and roll took its very name from ‘rocking and rolling’, a common euphemism for sex among African-American popular musicians in the earlier twentieth century, and a large part of rock’s ethos has always involved sex and sexuality. One of the many consequences of the so-called ‘new musicology’ of the later heyday of Britpop in 1995; conversely, while Oasis fared pretty well on the US charts, with *(What’s the Story) Morning Glory?* rising as high as #4 and its single ‘Wonderwall’ hitting #8, Blur and Pulp never had any of their albums or singles crack the US Top 50.)

17 The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies closed abruptly in 2002. Dick Hebidge, one of the several influential early figures in popular music studies to have graduated from the CCCS, is now Professor of Film and Media Studies and Director of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Centre at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Also, though his book appeared some ten years after the crop of late-1970s publications, I should cite here German scholar Peter Wicke’s *Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology* (1987, 1990). For a useful review of four other important books on the sociology of rock from the late 1980s, see Weinstein (1991).

18 On the larger topic of women in popular music, see Leonard (2007) and Whiteley (2000); see also Reddington (2007).

19 Indeed, there is much to be gained from the close study of local music ‘scenes’, which could be viewed as a natural extension of the aforementioned proliferation of work on pop and rock subcultures undertaken in the late 1970s. For an exemplary book-length study in this regard, focusing on the changing dynamics of the local music scene in Liverpool from the 1950s through the early 1990s, see Cohen (1991); for more on alternative rock subcultures and scenes in the US, see Kruse (1993).
1980s and 1990s has been that the subject of a composer’s gender and/or sexual orientation is no longer taboo, and, needless to say, this has had a profound effect on popular musicology as well. In the last decade or so, popular music studies has witnessed the publication of dozens of scholarly books and essays with words like ‘masculinities’ (for example Bannister, 2006; Jarman-Ivens, 2007), ‘feminism’ (Burns and Lafrance, 2002), ‘sexing’ (Whiteley, 1997) and ‘queering’ (Whiteley and Rycenga, 2006) in their titles. Many of us who ‘do’ close music analysis of pop and rock songs see music analysis and transcription as a way of forging a special kind of intimacy with the songs we love, and the same could be said of those popular musicologists who set out to explore the inner workings of a rock musician’s sexuality and how this might help to explain the richness and complexity of their favourite songs. Fred Maus is one of those rare popular musicologists who is able to demonstrate how a careful consideration of what an iconic rock artist like Michael Stipe has publicly revealed (or not revealed) about his or her own sexuality might help us better to interpret the meaning of certain musical and lyrical details in their songs, as Maus does convincingly with his analysis of one of R.E.M.’s signature songs from the band’s early 1990s heyday, ‘Losing My Religion’.

Speaking of music analysis, we now move on to the ten essays in Part II of the collection, all of which focus on various aspects of the sounds, structures and styles of rock through detailed analysis of the music itself. Since all but one of the ten authors of these pieces rely to some degree on music notation in the service of their analysis, a brief commentary is needed on the rather uncomfortable relationship that rock scholarship has had with printed notes. There is no denying that pop and rock ‘composers’ (if it is appropriate to use that term) rarely attempt to write down their music, preferring instead to use the recording studio as their canvas. As Theodore Gracyk (1996, pp. 37–67) and several others have argued, ‘rock’ (in its broadest sense) differs most markedly from earlier forms of popular music in that it is distributed to the masses primarily through recordings. Recording technology has advanced rapidly since the early days of rock and roll in the 1950s, of course, and in today’s digital age we are presented with more and more opportunities to listen to pop and rock songs in multiple formats on an ever-increasing array of sophisticated devices. We now can carry thousands of songs around with us in our back pockets to listen to anywhere or anytime, and yet – whether we prefer the portability of mp3s on an iPod or the richer sound quality of ‘old school’ vinyl records played on a high-fidelity home analogue system – when we listen to a recording of a pop or rock song we are experiencing an illusion of a live performance, painstakingly pieced together through multiple edits and overdubs and other feats of studio wizardry. Recordings capture the rock composer’s intentions in a fixed form for mass distribution, and in this sense they constitute the true ‘texts’ of the songs we grow to know and love. Indeed, when pop and rock musicians go out on tour to perform their songs live, most of the time (although there are some notable exceptions – the Grateful Dead and other ‘jam bands’, for example) they seem intent on reproducing the sound of the original studio recordings as closely as possible because this is what their audiences expect to hear.

It should come as no surprise then that, like the musicians themselves, many scholars of pop and rock music have been and continue to be content to dispense with ‘scored objects’ (to

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20 For another convincing essay that shows how a consideration of a rock artist’s gender and sexuality can help explain certain aspects of their music, specifically in relation to Morrissey and details of melodic contour in his vocal lines, see Hubbs (1996).
use Richard Middleton’s words)\textsuperscript{21} and avoid music notation altogether, whether because of a lack of music-technical competence or perhaps out of fear that any rock scholarship that relies on printed notes cannot possibly be ‘authentic’ (not to mention the time-consuming and often costly task of securing permission rights to reproduce notated excerpts from music and lyrics under copyright). To be sure, a transcription that uses conventional music notation can be woefully inadequate as a representation of some of the most important parameters of a pop or rock recording, particularly its timbres, yet it remains difficult to examine details of melody, harmony and rhythm in a rock song with any degree of precision without any kind of graphic representation, despite how awkward it may be to notate precisely those pitches that fall ‘between the cracks’ of equal-tempered tuning or rhythms that fall slightly behind or ahead of the beat.\textsuperscript{22} The debate over the value of music notation in rock scholarship notwithstanding, there is clearly an increasing demand among budding pop and rock musicians both within and outside of the academy for full-score, note-for-note transcriptions such as those published in The Beatles: Complete Scores (1989, 1993), no doubt as an aid in learning to perform these songs accurately.\textsuperscript{23} Judging by the hundreds if not thousands of tribute bands that continue to spring up all over the globe, each dedicated to performing the songs of a particular classic rock artist as faithfully as possible to the sound of the original studio recordings, it seems that classic rock is becoming a new kind of chamber music.\textsuperscript{24}

The first three essays in Part II focus on the harmonic language of rock. There has been more theorizing to date about harmony than any of rock’s other musical parameters, which is

\textsuperscript{21} This description by one of the leading UK popular musicologists was part of what is probably the most scathing published attack launched to date against the so-called ‘North American music theorists’ who write about pop and rock music. Middleton goes on to suggest that ‘characterized by a taken-for-granted formalism, [the work of the North American music theorists] rarely broaches the issue of pertinence, or demonstrates awareness of the danger of reification’ (2000, p. 6). For a representative survey of work in popular music analysis within American music theory, see Neal (2005).

\textsuperscript{22} For an illuminating essay on the poetics and politics of transcription in popular music analysis, see Winkler (1997).

\textsuperscript{23} The Beatles: Complete Scores, which claims on its front cover to provide ‘full transcriptions from the original recordings’ of every song written and recorded by the Beatles’, was the first such example, yet over the last two decades Hal Leonard Corporation (the book’s US publisher) has produced dozens of other books in its ‘Transcribed Score’ series, featuring full-score transcriptions of recordings from a wide range of pop and rock artists such as Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Wonder, Billy Joel, the Police, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana and Audioslave, to name but a few. The attention to detail in these Hal Leonard books is in stark contrast, of course, to the simplified and abridged ‘sheet music’ versions of pop and rock songs that one can still purchase both in hard copy or online at websites like sheetmusicplus.com.

\textsuperscript{24} This trend is perhaps most clearly exemplified by the work of the Toronto-based outfit ‘Classic Albums Live\textsuperscript{\textregistered}', a stable of musicians dedicated to reproducing for each of their performances a classic rock album – such as the Beatles’ Revolver, Led Zeppelin’s Houses of the Holy, Pink Floyd’s The Dark Side of the Moon, Bruce Springsteen’s Born to Run, Guns N’ Roses’ Appetite for Destruction, Nirvana’s Nevermind and Radiohead’s OK Computer, among the close to a hundred other albums in their repertoire – note-by-note and track-by-track from the original LPs (see their website at classicalalbumslive.com). I have seen the group perform several times and can confirm that their concerts have the feel of a recital, much like what you might expect of, say, a chamber music group that specializes in mostly Mozart.
understandable, given the grand tradition within musicology at large of developing harmonic theories of proto-tonal, tonal and post-tonal music that reaches back over at least a couple of centuries. The harmonic language of rock has much in common with tonal music in general, yet rock has fostered its own set of harmonic practices and conventions that often run contrary to those of classical major-minor tonality. Among the numerous essays and book-length studies published over the last three decades that have addressed this monolithic subject of rock harmony, I should cite here the early essays by Alf Björnberg on ‘Aeolian harmony’ (1989) and Allan Moore on ‘patterns of harmony’ (1992) and ‘the so-called “flattened seventh” in rock’ (1995), Naphtali Wagner’s important essay on what he calls ‘the “domestication” of blue notes in the Beatles’ songs’ (2003), the aforementioned essay by Walter Everett on ‘rock’s tonal systems’ (2004b) and several books, including Moore’s *Rock: The Primary Text* ([1993] 2001), Ken Stephenson’s *What to Listen For in Rock* (2002) and, more recently, Everett’s *The Foundations of Rock* (2009) and Philip Tagg’s *Everyday Tonality* (2009).\(^{25}\) The three excellent essays on rock harmony that I have selected for this volume are very recent (published in the last four years) and in many ways build upon or synthesize the ideas and theories of these earlier authors.\(^{26}\)

David Temperley’s essay (Chapter 11) explores the concept that Allan Moore has aptly described as the ‘melodic-harmonic divorce’ in rock (see Moore, 1995). In many rock songs – unlike art songs from the tonal tradition (and, indeed, most popular songs from the first half of the twentieth century), where pitches in the vocal melody can usually be gauged as consonant or dissonant with respect to the harmonic background provided by the accompaniment – the melody seems to exist independently of the underlying harmony, allowing, for example, dissonant ‘non-chord-tones’ in a pentatonic-based melody to resolve freely by leap rather than by step. As Temperley demonstrates through his analyses of a wide range of rock songs, this phenomenon often results in a stratified pitch organization in which the verses typically exhibit a greater degree of ‘divorce’ between melody and harmony than the choruses.

Taking Walter Everett’s magisterial 2004 survey of rock’s tonal systems as her point of departure, Nicole Biamonte compiled the data for her exhaustive study (Chapter 12) by analysing harmonic passages from hundreds of songs in the classic-rock canon in an attempt to explain those harmonic progressions in rock that ‘do not fit comfortably into the conventional paradigm of major-minor tonality: double-plagal and Aeolian progressions, and triad-doubled pentatonic and hexatonic modal systems’ (p. 227).\(^{27}\) Christopher Doll takes a different tack in Chapter 13, suggesting that many if not most harmonic passages in rock songs can be interpreted as ‘transformations’ of other musical passages, whether these are stock chord

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\(^{25}\) Similar to Motti Regev’s notion of a unifying ‘rock aesthetic’, ‘rock harmony’ is generally understood more broadly to embrace those harmonic practices that have developed across all styles of popular music since the 1950s.

\(^{26}\) I should also cite here two important recent essays by Guy Capuzzo (2004, 2009), one of which applies neo-Riemannian theory to the study of rock harmony and another on what he calls ‘sectional tonality and sectional centricity’ in rock.

\(^{27}\) For another very recent and exhaustive study of rock harmony, based on a statistical survey of harmonic progressions in songs from *Rolling Stone*’s 2004 list of the ‘500 Greatest Songs of All Time’, see de Clerq and Temperley (2011).
formulas (such as the twelve-bar blues), progressions from specific pre-existing songs or even harmonic precedents established earlier on in the same song.

The next two essays are primarily concerned with issues of musical form and textural stratification in pop and rock recordings. Like David Temperley’s essay, Chapter 14 by Allan Moore focuses on the relationship between the melody and accompaniment – what Moore calls the ‘persona-environment relation’ – in recorded songs, necessitating a close attention to details of harmony, rhythm and groove, but Moore’s main goal is to develop a typology of ways in which the accompaniment (the song’s ‘environment’) interacts with the vocal melody (the song’s ‘persona’) in projecting a song’s overall message. Through his analyses of a dizzying array of tracks in a wide variety of pop and rock styles, Moore argues that the accompanimental texture not only serves as a song’s primary marker of style and genre but can also set the attitudinal tone of a song’ (p. 278), supporting, amplifying or even contradicting the meaning of the lyrics. My own essay on what I call ‘accumulative form’ in pop and rock (Chapter 15) explores the ways in which rock recordings often showcase for the listener a process of textural growth, both across local spans – for example tracks with ‘accumulative beginnings’ in which the song’s groove gradually assembles itself as its constituent riffs are layered into the texture one by one – and, in special cases, over the course of an entire track, in which the gradual accumulation leads towards a climactic payoff or ‘cumulative moment’ in the song’s final chorus or coda.29 The proliferation of accumulative forms in pop and rock since the 1960s is directly linked to the rapid advances in multitrack recording technology, and also underscores David Brackett’s point that ‘recordings tend to foreground the temporality of the music text’ ([1995] 2000, p. 24) where the listener is drawn into a musical process as it unfolds in real time.

The five remaining essays deal in their different ways with the thorny issue of style analysis – that is, each attempts to unravel those musical characteristics that define a particular subgenre of rock or, more specifically, the idiolect of a particular band or artist.29 I do not feel guilty about my decision to include two essays on Led Zeppelin in this volume, since I suspect if readers were asked to pinpoint a single iconic band or artist who most clearly (and stereotypically) exemplifies ‘rock’, Led Zeppelin for many would be their obvious first choice (see also Fast, 2001). Chapter 16, Steve Waksman’s essay on what he describes as the ‘problem of cock rock’ in Led Zeppelin, is something of an anomaly among the ten

28 The subject of form in rock is a topic that so far has not received its fair share of attention in the published scholarly literature (certainly when compared to rock harmony), perhaps owing to the lingering (and largely mistaken) Adornian assumption that form in popular music is necessarily trite, simplistic and – dare I say it – formulaic. For a useful analytical survey of the most important formal templates employed in pop and rock songs since the 1950s, including the twelve-bar blues, AABA form, ‘simple’ and ‘contrasting’ verse-chorus forms, and compound forms, see Covach (2005); see also Middleton (1999). Judging, however, by the number of recent conference papers (such as those presented at the special session on ‘(Per)Form in(g) Rock’ at the 2010 Society for Music Theory conference in Indianapolis, soon to be published in a special issue of Music Theory Online), and several recently completed or in-progress Ph.D. dissertations that tackle issues of form in pop and rock songs (for example Osborn, 2010; Stephan-Robinson, 2009), I expect we will see a flurry of publications on this subject in the not too distant future.

29 For further discussion on the hierarchical relationship between style and idiolect in popular music analysis, see, for example, Moore and Ibrahim (2005) and Spicer (2010).
essays in Part II given its lack of any notated examples or transcriptions, yet Waksman’s main concern here is to explain those musical and extra-musical features that mark ‘cock rock’ as a style, and, especially, the importance of that quintessential rock instrument the electric guitar as the phallic signifier of a ‘male-oriented regime of power and pleasure’ (p. 332).  

Taking a very different approach to style analysis, John Brackett’s detailed examination of rhythmic and metric practices in Led Zeppelin’s music (Chapter 17) is as much a study in musical intertextuality as it is an analysis of Zeppelin’s idiolect, showing how the band’s flexible conception of rhythm and meter can best be understood as a unique assimilation and transformation of rhythmic and metric features characteristic of specific precursor genres and subgenres (such as Chicago blues and James-Brown-style funk) and, in certain cases, specific precursor tracks.  

Musical intertextuality is also the central concern of Albin Zak’s huge essay (Chapter 18), which offers a close analysis of Jimi Hendrix’s iconic 1968 cover version of Bob Dylan’s 1967 song ‘All along the Watchtower’. Zak’s *The Poetics of Rock* (2001) is probably the most important book published to date on the multifaceted history and practice of rock recording (see also Zak, 2010). In this essay, he draws on his extensive knowledge of rock recording and studio practice as well as Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s concept of ‘signifying’ in order to shed light on the complicated process through which Hendrix transforms Dylan’s urban folk song into one of the most enduring classics of psychedelic blues-rock. Chapter 19, ‘The Learned vs. the Vernacular in the Songs of Billy Joel’, by Walter Everett, deals with issues of musical intertextuality more broadly (what might be called ‘stylistic intertextuality’), suggesting that Joel’s eclectic piano-based rock can be thought of in terms of a stylistic continuum, with ‘classical’ (‘learned’) music on one side and ‘popular’ (‘vernacular’) music on the other. Everett uses Schenkerian analytical graphs to demonstrate how the harmonic language and voice leading of individual songs in Joel’s oeuvre lies somewhere between these two stylistic poles. The final essay in this volume, Jonathan Pieslak’s ‘Sound, Text and Identity in Korn’s  

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30 This 1996 essay was a prequel to Waksman’s exemplary book-length study on the history and significance of the electric guitar in rock, appropriately titled *Instruments of Desire* (1999).  
31 Along with Cream and the several other so-called ‘electric blues’ bands that rose to prominence on the London scene in the mid-to-late 1960s, Led Zeppelin’s music has often been criticized as lacking in originality, given its overt reliance on covers and ‘reworkings’ of classic American blues songs (for example Zeppelin’s 1969 hit ‘Whole Lotta Love’, which was a reworking of Muddy Waters’ 1962 recording of the Willie Dixon song ‘You Need Love’); for two excellent essays on this topic, see Headlam (1995, 1997).  
32 For another exhaustive study on the poetics of rock recording, specifically focusing on the music of the Beatles, see Ryan and Keiew (2006).  
33 For three additional representative studies of intertextuality in pop and rock music, see Covach (1995), Lacasse (2000) and Spicer (2009).  
34 Everett’s application of Heinrich Schenker’s venerable method of graphic analysis to pop and rock music has garnered considerable criticism, particularly from UK popular musicologists (see, for example, Griffiths, 1999), and space does not permit me to treat this topic adequately here. In Everett’s defence, however, I should emphasize that Schenker’s theory was first and foremost a theory of tonality, and Schenkerian graphs, when used appropriately, can go a long way towards demonstrating how the harmonic language and voice leading of pop and rock songs *differs* from that of classical tonal pieces. For further examples of applying Schenkerian theory to the analysis of pop and rock, see Everett’s
“Hey Daddy” (Chapter 20), is another standout example of ‘close reading’ of a single track. Pieslak examines carefully not only the lyrics and the sound and structure of the recorded music itself, but also the iconography of the album’s artwork and packaging in the service of his situating Korn’s idiolect within the 1990s subgenre of heavy metal known as ‘nü metal’.35

So, there you have it: my Great Rock Academic Circus. To echo what the Beatles once said, I hope you have enjoyed the show, but also, more importantly, that these twenty diverse essays have provided a well-rounded picture of the field of rock scholarship, one that might encourage a new generation of scholars to join the circus themselves. As I mentioned at the outset of this introduction, the sheer vastness of the field made the process of narrowing my selection to only twenty essays difficult and, inevitably, certain topics had to be left out. Some readers may be bothered, for example, by the fact that these essays all focus on the central corpus of rock music from the US and the UK and do not include at least one representative study of how rock has since disseminated across the globe – a phenomenon that might be called the ‘rock diaspora’ – and established national identities beyond its Anglophone roots (a collection edited by Tony Langlois on ‘Non-Western Popular Music’ is forthcoming in this series).36 In the hands of another ringmaster, then, the line-up of acts could well have looked quite different, yet the rock academic circus at large shows no signs of slowing down. Ladies and gentlemen, step right up!

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35 Like punk and progressive rock, heavy metal has received a great deal of attention in the scholarly literature; see, for example, Bayer (2009), Pieslak (2007), Waksman (2009), Walser (1993) and Weinstein (2000).

36 For two such studies that treat the subject of rock outside of the UK and US, see Manabe (2009) and Szemere (2001).


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