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ROCK BECOMES JAZZ: INTERPRETATIONS OF POPULAR MUSIC BY IMPROVISING  
ARTISTS IN THE 1960s

BY

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THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The advent of rock and roll changed the jazz world's relationship to itself and its musical public. The popularity of jazz, in decline since the rise of bebop in the mid-1940s, was further eroded by rock and roll's rise to prominence in the mid-1950s. By the mid-1960s, the jazz world seemed to be faced with a choice: adapt to accommodate the burgeoning new genre or risk fading further into popular irrelevance. Many jazz artists chose to ignore rock, oftentimes viewing it as a simple-minded pursuit dominated by white artists stealing from black musicians. Other artists, though, chose to engage with the new music and bring it into the jazz world by interpreting rock repertoire. In a way, this trend was no different than the time-honored jazz tradition of interpreting contemporary popular songs. Interpreting rock songs and incorporating them into their repertoire was different, though, because of the many prejudices that jazz musicians held toward rock music and the relative simplicity of rock's musical attributes.

This paper is dedicated to the in-depth study of jazz versions of rock music in the 1960s. By examining biographies and interviews, I highlight the various musical, commercial and racial considerations that were present for jazz artists during this era and seek answers to the following questions: How do jazz musicians deal with changing times, and how do their musical choices reflect that? What do these choices and processes say about their musical/artistic worldview and what non-musical considerations influence the decision making process? How do commercial considerations fuel the choices made by jazz musicians? How do these early interpretations of rock music in a jazz context pave the way for future crossover between the two genres? With these queries as a backdrop, I delve deeply into the the musical attributes of each selection, including form, key, tempo, meter, melody and harmony. Through these musical specifics and in

conjunction with relevant testimony from the artists and observers, I arrive at conclusions regarding the interpretive methods and their relative commercial and/or artistic success.

Overall, there has been relatively little academic analysis devoted to the covering of rock music by jazz musicians, and this paper is intended to fill that void. The influence of rock music on the jazz world has been important in modern jazz, both in the jazz-rock fusion of the 1970s and the massive up swing of rock songs in the jazz repertoire in 2000s. Looking closely at the first attempts at combining jazz and rock provides a clear foundation for these efforts. Additionally, close study of 1960s jazz interpretations of rock music highlights certain musical, commercial and racial considerations that colored the choices made by artists in the 1960s and continue to influence artists' decision-making processes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## CHAPTER 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

"It's easily forgotten that for many in the jazz world, the main challenge posed by the 1960s was professional and economic survival. This was especially true for musicians who had come of age in earlier decades when jazz had enjoyed widespread popularity --- when young people danced to it, listened to their favorite bands in theaters and on the radio, and bought the latest recordings of Benny Goodman, Count Basie, or even Dave Brubeck and Gerry Mulligan. But jazz recordings weren't selling as well in the '60s, and teens were dancing to the beat of different drummers. It was too late for older artists to revamp styles and develop new personae, but at least they could try to keep up with changing times. Partly they did so through repertory, covering current hits and show tunes."

– Duke Ellington biographer Mark Tucker (Tucker 1999, 1)

The advent of rock and roll changed the jazz world's relationship to itself and its musical public. The popularity of jazz, in decline since the rise of bebop in the mid-1940s, was further eroded by rock and roll's rise to prominence in the mid-1950s. By the mid-1960s, the jazz world seemed to be faced with a choice: adapt to accommodate the burgeoning new genre or risk fading further into popular irrelevance. Jazz's relationship to rock and roll is aptly articulated in the *Downbeat* magazine "Message to the Readers" from the June 29, 1967 issue, written by editor Dan Morgenstern: "For well over a decade," the article starts, "the music world has been living – for better or worse – with a phenomenon called rock-and-roll. At first, it was often for the worse, but now it is increasingly for the better. The music has become a medium for creative expression undreamt of when Bill Haley began to rock around the clock." Morgenstern goes on to admit that rock and roll has "come of age" and that "many of the most gifted young rock musicians are showing an increasing awareness of jazz." As a result, *Downbeat* would "expand its editorial perspective to include the musically valid aspects of the rock

scene” (Morgenstern 13). The process that Morgenstern describes of *Downbeat’s* (somewhat reluctant) embrace of rock and roll can serve as a microcosm for much of the jazz world, which had watched and waited for the rock and roll “fad” to disappear. Like *Downbeat*, jazz musicians faced a practical consideration – rock and roll was eating away at what was left of their popular market share. As a result, *Downbeat* needed to *attempt* an appeal to the burgeoning rock audience in order to sell more magazines, just as jazz musicians expanded their approach in order to sell more albums and concert tickets.

As jazz historian Mark Tucker suggests in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, one way that jazz musicians attempted to remain relevant in the popular marketplace was by interpreting rock and pop music in a jazz context. In a way, this process is no different from traditional jazz practice; artists had always drawn repertoire from the popular music of their day. The adaptation of rock and roll, though, posed a different set of problems than the pop tunes of previous decades: Many musicians viewed the genre as inferior to jazz, citing its musical simplicity and therefore rejecting rock music as material to interpret. Additionally, many jazz artists held racial prejudices toward rock and roll, most often pointing toward the appropriation of black musical genres like rhythm and blues by white rock musicians.

By the mid-1960s, it became clear that rock and roll had more longevity than previously assumed and was developing into more complex and diverse musical style. As a result, several jazz artists began incorporating tunes by artists such as the Beatles and Bob Dylan into their repertoire.<sup>1</sup> Largely, these forays into the rock songbook were an

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably, the Beatles and Bob Dylan were representative of what Morgenstern would consider “creative expression” in rock.

attempt at capturing the lost youth audience and show the commercial considerations weighing on jazz musicians during this era. Regardless of intent, though, artists who covered rock songs in the 1960s laid the groundwork for the future of jazz music that would heavily cross-pollinate with rock: These early efforts at incorporating rock's musical attributes predated the enormous jazz-rock fusion movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, these artists from the 1960s were pioneering a process that would be extensively practiced by jazz artists in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries – interpreting rock songs in order to expand the standard jazz repertoire into new realms.

### **Project Background and Methodology**

This project began as an inquiry into the nature of jazz repertoire in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly focused on the huge upswing of jazz musicians incorporating rock music on their albums and in live performances. Indeed, this process of interpreting rock music has become an important trend in modern jazz – artists such as Brad Mehldau, Joshua Redman and the Bad Plus have made rock tunes into pillars of their respective catalogs. This observation led me to search for earlier examples of this phenomenon, which in-turn encouraged a focus on the time period when musicians made their first efforts at interpreting rock material in a jazz context – the 1960s. As my research soon revealed, there were many jazz artists who worked with rock repertoire during this period. My subsequent examination of the artists engaged in the interpretation of rock music during this tumultuous era in America brought up a new series of questions: How do jazz musicians deal with changing times, and how do their musical

choices reflect that? What do these choices and processes say about their musical/artistic worldview and what non-musical considerations influence the decision making process? How do commercial considerations fuel the choices made by jazz musicians? How do these early interpretations of rock music in a jazz context pave the way for future crossover between the two genres? These questions, combined with the sheer volume of jazz musicians covering rock music in the 1960s, formed the basis for my decision that this study should be narrowed to deal specifically with that decade.

After digging deeper into the material, I found it necessary to narrow the scope even further in order to avoid a laundry-list style project where substance was sacrificed for comprehensiveness. In order to be able to achieve the desired depth when considering artists from the 1960s, I developed a series of criteria that would yield subjects that were facing a relatively common set of circumstances and reacted (at least on the surface) in similar ways. The criteria are as follows:

- 1) This study concerns the interpretation of rock *repertoire* in a jazz context. Other attributes of rock that were appropriated by jazz musicians in the 1960s (i.e. rock beats or instrumentation) are discussed only if they are incorporated within the context of a jazz artist covering a rock tune.
- 2) The selections are limited to instrumental interpretations of rock tunes by jazz musicians. There are many jazz singers who interpreted rock songs in the 1960s, but, simply because they are *singing the words* to a particular tune, the interpretive process employed is somewhat different than that of the instrumental

- 3) jazz musician. Singers also face considerably fewer obstacles when attempting to crossover into the mainstream marketplace of popular music.
- 4) The selected artists are limited to those that have at least national recognition in the United States. An album reviewed in a publication such as *Downbeat* meets this criterion.
- 5) The artists are further limited to those that established straight-ahead jazz credibility prior to interpreting rock music.
- 6) Finally, the artists must have made a clear, intentional practice of including rock music in their repertoire during a portion of their career. For example, if an artist includes several rock songs on an album or series of albums, he/she qualifies; an artist who includes only one rock tune on an isolated album does not.

After applying the above criteria, I arrived at a complementary group of artists that serve for a robust comparative study: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Wes Montgomery, Ramsey Lewis and Steve Marcus.<sup>2</sup> Despite the commonality suggested by meeting the above criteria, these artists differ substantially in several ways, including, most importantly, age: Montgomery (1923-1968), Lewis (b. 1935) and Marcus (1939-2005) are a full generation younger than Ellington (1899-1974) and Basie (1904-1984), thus providing one reason for their differing methods of interpreting similar source material.

Through these artists and their work, I look for answers to the following specific questions that yield insight into the larger inquiries outlined above:

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<sup>2</sup> There are a few artists that meet these criteria but do not receive extended analysis in this text. I make a point of mentioning these artists for reference. (Woody Herman, Bud Shank and George Benson are examples.)

- 1) What artists/tunes do these musicians choose to interpret? Why did they choose those particular artists/tunes?
- 2) How do they interpret each tune? What is their specific method and does it vary between tunes and over time?
- 3) How does the commercial and/or artistic intent inform the method? What does this say about the artist and his relationship with jazz and rock music?

When considering specific musical examples, I take form, key, tempo, meter, melody and harmony into consideration. When an element is particularly relevant to the point at hand, I include a musical transcription in the body of the text. Other musical specifics are noted in Appendix A for reference. Through these musical specifics, in conjunction with relevant testimony from the artists and observers, I arrive at conclusions regarding the interpretive methods and their relative commercial and/or artistic success.

### **Literature Review**

The most comprehensive study on this subject to date is Stuart Nicholson's *Jazz-Rock*, in which the author documents the entire genre of jazz-rock from its inception in the late 1960s to the date of the book's publication in 1998. Nicholson covers a vast body of work in this volume, focusing on jazz-rock hybrid artists such as Lifetime, Weather Report and Mahavishnu Orchestra, but spends a comparatively small amount of space discussing rock/pop interpretations within a jazz context, devoting a few pages to Count Basie, Woody Herman and Steve Marcus. Largely, these sections are devoid of musical analysis; Nicholson sticks to documenting the historical details and importance of the

particular pieces. Despite the occasional factual inconsistency and frequent editorializing, *Jazz-Rock* is an extremely thorough and informative volume that provides a strong point of departure for my research.

One recent work that has addressed the practice of interpreting rock/pop repertoire in a jazz context is David Ake's 2002 book *Jazz Cultures*. In the chapter entitled "Jazz Traditioning: Setting Standards at Century's Close," Ake contrasts the different approaches to repertoire employed by Wynton Marsalis on *Standard Time Vol. 2* and Bill Frisell on *Have A Little Faith*. Marsalis incorporates a traditional version of the standard, interpreting tunes by Gershwin and Rodgers/Hart, while Frisell's selection includes rock/pop artists Bob Dylan, Madonna and John Hiatt. The author takes these two albums as a whole and analyzes production aspects (e.g. liner notes and cover art) alongside specific musical qualities (e.g. instrumentation and technique). Ake's study points directly to the notion that choices of repertoire are integral to musical identity, specifically concluding that Marsalis' recording represents "sophistication and elegance" while Frisell's is a "distinctly vernacular image of jazz" (Ake 172). Even though Ake's book deals with different eras of jazz musicians working with rock repertoire, it is an engaging study that offers substantial groundwork for my own research. I intend to build on Ake's foundation by offering more specific musical analysis in order to elaborate on *how* artists have interpreted rock/pop repertoire and what that says about their relationship to the popular marketplace. In addition to these contemporary sources that provide a starting point for my research, there is a wealth of jazz criticism that comments on the individual artists and recordings. Additionally, there are studies that explore the

jazz/rock dichotomy, but fail to make any substantive inquiry into the interpretation of rock music in a jazz context; Examples from both of these categories are referenced throughout the body of the paper.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, there has been relatively little academic analysis devoted to the covering of rock music by jazz musicians, and this paper is intended to fill that void. The influence of rock music on the jazz world has been important in modern jazz, both in the jazz-rock fusion of the 1970s and the massive up swing of rock songs in the jazz repertoire in 2000s. Looking closely at the first attempts at combining jazz and rock provides a clear foundation for these efforts. Additionally, close study of 1960s jazz interpretations of rock music highlights certain musical, commercial and racial considerations that colored the choices made by artists in the 1960s and continue to influence artists' decision-making processes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>3</sup> Steven F. Pond's *Head Hunters: The Making of Jazz's First Platinum Album* is an excellent work that considers the aforementioned jazz/rock dichotomy but does not focus on jazz interpretations of rock repertoire.

## CHAPTER 2: JAZZ VS. ROCK

### Jazz vs. Rock: Background

Today it is widely accepted that jazz and rock are separate musical genres with sharply differing characteristics – this was not the case when rock and roll began in the mid-1950s. In fact, when listening to many examples of early rock and roll, jazz and rhythm and blues, their shared musical histories are still clear in sound. In the New Grove Dictionary of Music, Robert Walser defines the musical qualities of rock and roll as combining “boogie-woogie rhythms, song forms and vocal styles from both the blues and Tin Pan Alley popular song, hillbilly yelping and the ecstatic shouts of gospel. Increasingly, electric guitar solos replaced the honking saxophone solos of rhythm and blues, and straight quaver rhythms became an alternative to swing rhythms, with either option providing strong rhythmic drive” (Walser). Indeed, many of these same qualities can also be attributed to jazz (Tin Pan Alley, boogie-woogie rhythms, blues influence). This hazy line of demarcation is evidenced by the fact that many observers are unsure whether to place saxophonist/vocalist Louis Jordan in the jazz or rock and roll genre.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the style of early rock and roll, which frequently incorporated swing rhythms and “jazzy instrumentations” (saxophone mostly), can be directly attributed to the influence of jazz artists such as Lionel Hampton and Count Basie.<sup>5</sup>

The distinction between rock and roll and jazz also brings up issues of race in American society. Walser notes that rock and roll “is often described as a merger of black

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<sup>4</sup> For an interesting discussion of Louis Jordan and his place in jazz and rock history, see David Ake’s chapter in *Jazz Cultures* “Jazz Historiography and the Problem of Louis Jordan” (Ake 42-61).

<sup>5</sup> The majority of jazz music from the 1950s would never be confused with rock and roll, but the meeting point remains vague even upon close listening. Again, Louis Jordan is a good example of this phenomenon.

rhythm and blues with white country music, with more emphasis on the contributions of black musicians; indeed, some historians argue that rock and roll began in the early 1950s, when many white teenagers began listening and dancing to rhythm and blues” (Walser). In this sense, the narrative of rock and roll is similar to that of jazz in the late 1910s and 1920s. White artists such as The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, Bix Beiderbecke and Paul Whiteman became well known for playing versions of music already being performed by black artists. The “white” versions often achieved more success in the mainstream white marketplace because of the familiar look and sound of the artists. Music businessmen took advantage of this phenomenon in the early days of rock and roll. The *Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll* quotes Sun Records founder Sam Phillips as saying, "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars" (Pareles). Phillips went on to discover and record Elvis Presley, who fit the desired mold exactly.

Even though it is tempting to define rock and roll strictly along racial lines – white people playing black rhythm and blues music – the matter is complicated by the fact that many artists who are considered to be early rock and roll-ers were black. Indeed, when you combine black artists such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Ray Charles with their white counterparts like Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Jerry Lee Lewis, you have a decidedly mixed bunch. As mentioned earlier, close analysis points to the fact that early rock and roll music was similar to jazz and rhythm and blues, and when white audiences started listening to this music, “rock and roll” began. Thus, the genre

determination may be more explicitly related to the racial makeup of the *audience* as opposed to the performers themselves.

In the late 1950s, most jazz musicians considered rock and roll to be a passing teenage fad, and by the early 1960s, this notion seemed to be true. The initial rock and roll boom ended with the disappearance of four of its primary stars: Elvis had entered the Army, Jerry Lee Lewis was facing controversy over marrying his thirteen-year-old second cousin, Chuck Berry spent twenty months in prison due to “transporting an underage girl across state lines for immoral purposes” (Larkin, “Berry, Chuck”) and Buddy Holly died. Additionally, the payola scandal had ravaged the music business, and, much to the delight of establishment forces (mostly local, state and federal governments), the original wave of rock and roll was silenced.<sup>6</sup> Despite these major setbacks, there was already evidence that rock and roll had diminished the appetite of the youth audience for jazz music. In *Jazz Rock*, Stuart Nicholson notes, “The writing had been on the wall for some time. When Elvis Presley encountered jazz lovers at a faculty party in the 1957 movie *Jailhouse Rock*, for example, they were depicted as pretentious and elitist. Rock and roll was portrayed as the music of adolescent rebelliousness and independence, while jazz was seen as hopelessly ‘square,’ the music of a previous generation” (Nicholson 10).

Indeed, when rock and roll was reborn as its stylistically disparate cousin “rock” in the mid 1960s, jazz musicians were forced to reconsider their relationship to this new musical movement that evidently had greater longevity than previously surmised. The

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<sup>6</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s, rock and roll disc jockeys were accused of accepting bribes (payola) in exchange for giving preferential treatment to certain records. The career of early rock and roll disc jockey Alan Freed was destroyed by the payola scandal.

rock movement picked up where rock and roll left off, claiming the youth audience that was occupied during the early 1960s by the music of schmaltzy teen idols like Pat Boone and the growing hipster-counterculture movement that aligned with the earthy sounds of folk and blues. By-and-large, the youth audience was not listening to jazz. During the mid-1960s, jazz musicians took particular note of rock artists that continued to erode the jazz audience, such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan – the same artists who were creating more complex versions of rock that proved more appealing to the jazz audience.<sup>7</sup> Now, no longer willing to dismiss rock as a passing fad, jazz musicians were faced with the question of how to adapt to the changing times, which they did largely through the incorporation of rock and contemporary pop tunes into their respective songbooks.

### **Jazz vs. Rock – Attitudes in the 1960s**

In 1966, baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan released the album *If You Can't Beat 'Em Join 'Em*, which was comprised almost entirely of contemporary rock and pop compositions by artists such as the The Beatles, Petula Clark, Roger Miller and Bob Dylan (The lone original composition on the album is the title cut) (Nicholson 11).<sup>8</sup> The title of this album suggests that, by this point, jazz musicians were acutely aware that rock was a powerful new movement that demanded attention. Indeed, there was a new genre that was appealing to the “youth” audience, and it may have been in the best

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<sup>7</sup> Bob Dylan's early albums are usually considered to be folk records, but by the mid-1960s he can be squarely placed in the rock genre. This is both due to his “plugging in” and because he became an icon for the new mass counterculture movement of rock.

<sup>8</sup> The line between rock and pop is decidedly vague, and at times jazz musicians do not make the distinction between the two. In the case of this Gerry Mulligan album, it would be inaccurate to consider Petula Clark to be a rock artist, which is why I make the distinction here. The most important thing is to note that Mulligan is pulling from the field of contemporary popular music, which can be divided into rock and pop.

interest for jazz artists to “join ‘em,” at least by borrowing from their repertoire. By choosing to adapt, instead of ignore, the rock repertoire, the saxophonist became one of the earliest jazz musicians to interpret music from that genre.

Mulligan’s choice of album title also illustrates his perspective at the time, which can serve as a framework for the discussion to follow. Firstly, it must be pointed out that there is a clear dichotomy here – “Em,” refers to the rock and pop world. The implication here is that that world is separate or “other” from the world that Mulligan inhabits, presumably the jazz world. Jazz critic Don Nelsen, writing a review of the Mulligan album in *Downbeat*, further illustrates this point by noting, “This Mulligan outing offers the baritonist tackling works identified primarily with rock and roll and folk singers and the teenage market.” Nelsen goes on to refer to the album as a “gimmick,” but then sanctions Mulligan’s process, noting that he did not want to accuse Mulligan of choosing the tunes “only for their commercial value and to earn a few bob.” Nelsen continues, “The [liner] notes say he genuinely likes the tunes. I believe him. For one reason, I like them myself and think them good choices for jazz exploration. For another, each song has a pretty and/or infectious melodic character, and Mulligan is a great explicator and votary of the lyric muse” (Nelsen 25-26). Thus, while Nelsen acknowledges that the material chosen is from outside the standard jazz repertoire, the process is sanctioned because of his respect for Mulligan as an artist and because of a personal approval of the material.

Gene Lees’ liner notes to *If You Can’t Beat ‘Em...* further clarify how jazz critics viewed rock in the mid-’60s. He begins by pointing out that “The 1950s brought to

American popular music a severe depression of standards. Product of an unrestrained commercialism, rock-and-roll and other simplistic forms of music dominated the American scene, driving better music into a corner, very much on the defensive.” After this introduction, he goes on to note, similarly to Nelsen, that he personally approves of recent developments in the “pops” field. In particular, Lees notes that “one of the most amazing success stories in modern light music is...that of the Beatles” and that as of late “they also won the respect of musicians, who noted with pleased surprise that John Lennon and Paul McCartney wrote good songs” (Lees).

*If You Can't Beat 'Em...* is one example of a jazz artist interpreting rock songs from the mid-'60s and serves as a starting point for my analysis of the jazz-vs.-rock dichotomy. Thus far, based on Mulligan's album and the commentary by Lees and Nelsen, we can clearly say that jazz musicians and critics recognized that there was a clear divide between jazz and rock, with the jazz world often taking a condescending posture. Simultaneously, jazz critics considered it acceptable for a jazz artist to cross over into the rock songbook as long as the material had musical value. (The latter is, of course, a subjective determination.)

*Downbeat* magazine's two-part series “One Cheer For Rock and Roll,” written by jazz critic Martin Williams in 1965, also casts the contemporary state of rock/pop in a relatively positive light. While he begins the article with the statement that “Surely little in contemporary culture is as much deplored as the music currently favored by adolescents,” he continues by arguing the relative merits of rock/pop. Indeed, Williams

sees rock/pop as the leading candidate to fill the vacuum of quality popular music left in the wake of Broadway's heyday: "Well then, what sort of leadership does Broadway currently provide? To be entirely blunt about it, none at all. Lerner and Lowe's *My Fair Lady* may be the last Broadway musical to give the American people a collection of tunes it wants to hear on the air, sing in the shower, and try out on the parlor upright."<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>

Williams discounts the "so-called 'good music' stations of FM radio, being that they largely play "the Melachrino strings, the middle-brow Musak of Norman Luboff and his ooohh aahhh choir, plus (in moments of real daring) the quasi-jazz of Peter Nero, Al Hirt, and Henry Mancini" (Williams 26). This music is evidently not worthy of taking Broadway's place at the top of the popular music canon.

Williams looks to the Beatles as an answer to the lack of contemporary popular music because "at least two of the Beatles are talented musically." He continues: "Paul McCartney is a rare popular composer, and a great deal of the Beatles' repertory consists of ditties that might have been researched in Elizabethan song books or in collections of English and Irish airs." Williams then explicitly attempts to fit Lennon and McCartney into the format of the classic Broadway songwriting duo: "With McCartney, the promise of a refreshing popular tunesmith is at hand and with Lennon, the sartorial conservatism aside, the possibility of a truly contemporary lyricist" (Williams 39). Williams' argument, which places the Beatles at the apex of contemporary popular songwriting, provides a valuable explanation for why jazz musicians would interpret their material: By the

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<sup>9</sup> While Williams is correct that the heyday of Broadway was over, *My Fair Lady*, which premiered in 1956, is only the last great musical if one discounts titans of the canon such as *The Sound of Music* and *West Side Story* (1957).

<sup>10</sup> The early 1960s was also the time when the younger generation of Tin Pan Alley songwriters (so-called "Brill Building" songwriters) switched to composing music in a more pop-oriented format.

mid-1960s, with a void of inspiring Broadway material, some jazz artists looked to the new form of popular music, rock (particularly the Beatles), for their improvisational vehicles.

This is not to say that the Beatles were universally accepted among the jazz community. Less than two years later, *Downbeat* featured a cover story on the Beatles that thoroughly panned the group. In “The Beatles in Perspective,” John Gabree criticizes the band based on his personal musical opinion, evidently reacting to the popular and critical acclaim for their recent *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*: “The Beatles never achieve the tension that underlies all great art. Nor have they, except on rare occasions, written memorable compositions. Lovely often but memorable seldom. Art must simply be true to itself, and this, I believe, is the Beatles’ failure.” (Gabree 22) The significance of this attitude is two-fold: Firstly, the relationship between jazz and the Beatles was clearly tenuous, and secondly, even though Gabree is panning them, he acknowledges the Beatles’ music was widely considered “art” and not simply a collection of nice tunes. It is also worth noting that the following issue of *Downbeat* (12/14/67) included an angry letter to the editor, claiming that Gabree’s article is “based on no solid facts that I can see, and it is quite evident that you yourself don’t know your rock and aren’t really listening” (Butrym 6).

Nowhere is the jazz community’s complex relationship with the Beatles more evident than in interviews with the musicians themselves.<sup>11</sup> In the book *Notes and Tones*, drummer Art Taylor conducts several “musician-to-musician interviews” and frequently

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<sup>11</sup> Further opinions of the Beatles are particularly relevant because the vast majority of examples of jazz musicians interpreting rock songs from this time period are versions of Beatles tunes.

asks questions such as “How do you like the Beatles’ music” and “What do you think of the Beatles’ music.”<sup>12</sup> The responses to these questions, all given in interviews conducted between 1968-72, show how discussing the Beatles evoked questions of musical taste, race and commerce. These interviews, combined with others presented in *The Big Bands*, paint a complex portrait of attitudes of the time.

Certain interviews show that jazz musicians respect the Beatles on the basis of their music, but feel the need to qualify that they don’t *always* like the band. Bandleader Woody Herman likes them because “as composers, as individuals and collectively, they have proven that they have a complete understanding of the music they dig and want, and they can produce it and produce it very well,” but qualifies this with the idea that he is “not talking about the teeny-bopper things they wrote for a specific audience and sang and played for a specific audience, because that was just taking care of business.” Herman also thinks it is important that “legitimate people” have interpreted their tunes because “this proves that their melodies, their lyrics and their harmonic structure have lasting qualities” (Simon 532).<sup>13</sup> In a similarly qualified way, pianist Erroll Garner says that he likes “some of the Beatles stuff” (Taylor, Arthur 97). Freddie Hubbard admits that their music is “creative, for what they do” (Taylor, Arthur 205) and Count Basie notes that The Beatles have “done some fine things” (Simon 522). Vocalist Carmen McRae offers the most glowing review, but still qualifies her answer: “I’m very happy about contemporary developments in music...I love what I’m doing now. I do Beatles tunes.

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<sup>12</sup> *Notes and Tones* wasn’t widely released until 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Herman mentions the Boston Pops as an example of “legitimate people.” Evidently he is talking about classical musicians interpreting the Beatles tunes. The album *Arthur Fiedler & The Boston Pops Play the Beatles* was released in 1969.

Incidentally, I think they are excellent songwriters. I don't think they are so great singing or doing their thing, but their songs are fantastic." Not only is McRae proud of the fact that she covers Beatles tunes, but it is also clear from the rest of the interview that she views this choice as a sign of her own modernity (Taylor, Arthur 138).

As should be expected, negative opinions of the Beatles also abound in the interviews. Bandleader Stan Kenton thinks that "most of their music is still children's music" (Simon 540) while vocalist Leon Thomas "refused" to record a Beatles tune because he does not like the music, for the "same reason I don't like vaccinations, same reason I don't like nose drops or have sweet oil put in my ear, you dig? It ain't necessary"(103-4). Artie Shaw makes it clear that his opinion is not personal, but says, "I don't care very much about people getting up and telling me 'Hold My Hand and I'll understand.' I don't care who it is. If that sounds terrible, I'm sorry. I mean, I have nothing against the Beatles. They created a way of living. They were also the product of a mass medium" (Taylor, Arthur 549).

All of the opinions I have presented so far should come as no surprise – many people have differing opinions of The Beatles. What should be noted, though, is that thus far the opinions are centered strictly on The Beatles' music and the merits thereof. The following statements enter extra-musical territory, where it is clear that musicians are forming their opinion based on racial and commercial considerations. It is generally accepted knowledge that the Beatles were influenced by African-American artists, which the group readily acknowledged. The fact that they became so successful, though, draws varied and oftentimes heated opinions from the interviewees.

Drummer Max Roach sees that the Beatles “have definitely been influenced by and owe quite a bit to the African-American musical creativity,” but acknowledges that as a good thing because “they have stimulated an interest” (Taylor, Arthur 109). Singer Nina Simone has a similar approach, and is worth quoting here at length:

“The Beatles were good inasmuch as they drew attention to our music in the white world. They made white people listen to our music with a different attitude than they had before. It could be that they give their respect only to the Beatles and that they are as racist as they've ever been, but I think we are listened to more and given more respect than before the Beatles” (Taylor, Arthur 153-4).

Both Roach and Simone point out The Beatles’ readiness to acknowledge their African-American influences, which carries a certain amount of weight with both artists.

Other musicians have a much less favorable view of the Beatles’ music and position in society. Pianist Randy Weston notes: “I don't listen to the Beatles because I don't like what happened to the music called blues when the white artists got involved in it. I just sort of cut myself off from the whole rock-'n'-roll scene. I've been told by people that the Beatles have produced some very beautiful things, but when the white man starts singing the blues, I just cut him out. Because I know that all he can do is imitate” (Taylor, Arthur 31). Drummer Kenny Clarke takes a similarly negative view and uses it as a reason that he doesn't “see any future in music for black musicians in a white world.” Clarke sees this as systemic throughout contemporary music of the time: “Like the Beatles, who are copying Chuck Berry; or Blood Sweat and Tears, who are copying Ray Charles. You got this chick Julie Driscoll copying Aretha Franklin; Janis Joplin copying Bessie Smith and Peggy Lee copying Billie Holiday” (Taylor, Arthur 196). Trumpeter Charles Tolliver echoes Weston and Clarke by noting, “Thousands of Afro-American

themes and music would have succeeded if given the proper direction. The only credit I can give the Beatles is that they were well directed and produced. I don't have to listen to their music” (Taylor, Arthur 80).

Several important insights can be drawn from this final group of racially based opinions. Firstly, none of these artists are basing their determinations on knowledge of the Beatles’ music; indeed, it seems that Weston and Tolliver intentionally avoided their music. Additionally, the opinions are not simply based on racial factors, but were also informed by The Beatles’ commercial success. Presumably, it makes no difference that the Beatles were influenced by African-American artists – what matters is how *successful* they have been in the marketplace.

It is against this backdrop of ideas and opinions that jazz artists began to reach into the rock songbook for their repertoire. Indeed it is remarkable, considering the history of white appropriation of black music, that jazz musicians would “nod” to the rock community by interpreting their repertoire in the mid-1960s. Certainly, the process of interpreting popular music is a practice as old as jazz itself, but covering rock material posed a different set of circumstances because many jazz musicians looked down on rock music as simplistic and often harbored disdain for the artists based on racial and commercial considerations. Covering rock songs in the ‘60s also had a practical motivation – the vacuum left by the decline of Broadway left jazz artists wanting new popular music to interpret, and many artists viewed the Beatles’ and other rock artists’ music as worthy (enough) of their attention. Often, though, it was jazz artists’ own

commercial interests that drove the process: They were eager to reclaim the lost youth audience, and one potential method of appeal was through repertoire. I will elaborate on this point in the following chapters as I examine different methods of working with rock material and relate interpretive methods to particular commercial and artistic considerations of the musicians.

### CHAPTER 3: THE OLD GUARD GOES ROCK

The 1960s were a tough time for aging jazz musicians. They were no longer enjoying as much popular acclaim as they had in previous decades, which led them to try new paths toward commercial success. Duke Ellington and Count Basie, both iconic musicians from the older generation, were still leading bands on the road, which put them in a “particularly difficult position...aesthetically as well as economically” (Tucker 1999, 2). Demand for the big bands in particular was not what it used to be, and the vast majority of them were forced to quit touring entirely. Clearly, if Basie and Ellington “wished to remain successful recording artists, they had to respond to changing tastes and trends” (Tucker 1999, 2). As with other musicians from their generation, both Ellington and Basie looked to update their repertoire as a means of reaching a larger audience. In the mid-1960s, both men released multiple albums featuring jazz interpretations of rock and pop tunes, making them two of the first jazz musicians to incorporate this material into their repertoire.

#### **Duke Ellington**

##### **“Blowin’ in the Wind” from *Ellington ‘65***

By the 1960s, Duke Ellington was renowned as one of the foremost geniuses and elder statesmen of the jazz world. He kept up a relentless schedule of composing, performing and recording, and was “showered with awards, prizes, and honorary degrees” (Tucker 1993, 317). Yet despite all the accolades, he no longer enjoyed widespread popularity with the record-buying public. In his biography of Ellington,

James Lincoln Collier notes that Ellington was “forced to search for hits to help support what had now become a small industry. And by the late 1960s, when rock dominated popular music, he was finding it hard to get record companies to record him at all” (Collier 275). In response to his waning record sales, Ellington made an appeal to a wider audience by dipping into the rock and pop songbooks. Ellington’s 1964 recording *Ellington ’65* is comprised of mostly contemporary popular songs, such as “Hello Dolly,” “I Left My Heart in San Francisco” and “Danke Schoen.”<sup>14</sup>

*Ellington ’65* also includes a version Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” a tune that achieved widespread recognition largely due to Peter, Paul and Mary’s cover version.<sup>15</sup> If all of the material chosen for this album represents a significant deviation from Ellington’s usual repertoire of original compositions and jazz standards, the inclusion of “Blowin’” shows an even greater departure because it represents an overt attempt at “reaching a younger record buying audience” (Collar) by interpreting what many regarded as the youth “protest anthem” of the time. Ellington biographer Mark Tucker notes, “It stands apart from all the other material on *Ellington ’65*. The movie themes, theater songs and pop tunes --- and seems furthest removed, in every way, from the world of Ellingtonia” (Tucker 1999, 18-19).

In a 1966 interview with Stanly Dance, Ellington’s co-composer and co-arranger Billy Strayhorn sheds some light on the inclusive attitude that led the pair to interpret rock and pop tunes:

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<sup>14</sup> “Hello Dolly” is from the musical *Hello Dolly*, which debuted in January 1964. “I Left My Heart in San Francisco” (1962) and “Danke Schoen” (1963) were both popular tunes of the time, made known in the US marketplace by Tony Bennett and Wayne Newton respectively.

<sup>15</sup> The Peter, Paul and Mary version of “Blowin’ in the Wind” reached #2 on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart.

Dance: Several critics thought it regrettable that the Ellington band was employed on pop tunes and band themes. They felt it should play more---or only---original material. How do you feel about that?

Strayhorn: I feel it's not right for an artist to turn his back on a simple melody just because it's not a great suite or something or other...why shouldn't you play a simple melody? It's a matter of being humble. All artists are humble. All *great* artists are humble...that does not mean that you have to play it the way thousands of other people have played it. You can give it your own individuality. But don't look *down* on those things, because if you look down, that's the end of you, your integrity, and everything. It's snobbery. (Dance, 31)

When it came to expressing their individuality on "Blowin' in the Wind,"

Ellington and Strayhorn took a relatively Spartan approach – varying only what was necessary to give the piece an original twist. This may be reflective of the minimal amount of time they had to create the arrangements for this album. Trombonist Buster Cooper recalled: "A lot of the arrangements of those pop tunes were done on the spot in the studio. Duke hummed the sections or Billy scribbled ideas down, and Tom Whaley copied the parts right there. The ink on the sheet music would still be wet when we were cutting the record" (Tucker 1999, 17). Indeed, the form, harmony and melody are varied minimally from the original versions, with striking differences only in select places.

One of the significant variations is evident at the outset: The tune opens with a short introduction by the rhythm section playing a swinging Latin groove. Tucker describes it as a "lilting calypso groove to rock the melody, as Harry Belafonte might do if he were covering the tune" (Tucker 1999, 18-19). This groove, when combined with the pedal-point harmony on Bb7sus, immediately lets you know that there has been no attempt to preserve the rhythmic feel of the previous versions. Indeed, for the first five seconds of the tune, there are no clear indications that this is an interpretation of a tune

from outside the standard jazz repertory. Of course, the instrumentation itself makes it sound like jazz; this quality is amplified when the full big band enters as the arrangement unfolds.

When the verse begins (:06), it becomes clear (for all those familiar with the other versions of the song) that this is “Blowin’ in the Wind.”<sup>16 17</sup> Even though the Latin groove continues, Ellington and Strayhorn present an un-embellished version of the melody, with nearly identical pitch and rhythmic content to the Peter, Paul and Mary version. Additionally, the three-part harmony, which is assigned to clarinet, muted trumpet and muted trombone, adheres closely to vocal harmony of Peter, Paul and Mary. The most noticeable musical trait at this point is the wah-wah effect the brass players create using their plunger mutes. The Latin groove and three-part melody continue through the chorus relatively unimpeded, save a high-register countermelody played by the clarinet towards the end of the chorus.

The arrangement enters an entirely new space when the second verse begins (:54). The groove suddenly shifts to an up-tempo shuffle, and the alto saxophone of Johnny Hodges takes the lead. One can hear Hodges attempting to keep the melody recognizable yet still embellished enough so that it has a jazzy swing feel. He accomplishes this by incorporating bluesy figures, added anticipations and chromatic passing tones into his rendition of the melody (1:05-1:41) (See Figure 3.2). Hodges is accompanied by some punchy counter-hits from the rest of the sax section on the “one and” and “four and” of every other bar. The countermelody is elaborated in the last third of the verse (1:15) and

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<sup>16</sup> When discussing specific musical elements from a selection, I use the time markings from the particular recording as opposed to bar numbers.

<sup>17</sup> When discussing form, I use rock/pop terminology (verse, chorus, bridge) throughout the paper.

expands to include the brass section as well. The overall effect is of a swinging jazz big band playing over a simple chord progression and a sometimes awkwardly square-sounding melody. The arrangement continues in this fashion through the end of the second chorus, where the arrangers throw in a slick descending harmony in the saxophones to lead into the third verse and the return of the Latin groove.

Rhythmically and melodically, the third verse (1:42) sounds like the first verse, save the oddly dissonant brass hits and unison decrescendo-ing saxophone note on the super-tonic “F,” respectively placed (once again) on the “one and” and “four and” of every other bar. The arrangement then closes with a double chorus and a fade out. Save the fact that the final verse is cut down by 1/3<sup>rd</sup>, the Ellington/Strayhorn arrangement keeps the exact form of the Peter, Paul and Mary version. This fact, combined with the carbon-copy treatment of the vocal harmony in the first verse and the similar tempo, makes it clear that the PPM version is the one Ellington and Strayhorn had in mind.<sup>18</sup> Actually, it may have proved interesting if they had incorporated aspects of the Dylan version, as his 15 bar choruses (7 vocals + 8 harmonica solo) would have provided a challenging formal element for the arrangers. (See Appendix A for formal comparisons.) It is also worth noting that the piece is devoid of any solo section proper, with the embellishments during Hodges’ solo representing the only improvising during the whole piece. Thus, the arrangers largely forgo one of the primary avenues a jazz musician has at his/her disposal in the interpretation of any music – improvisation.

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<sup>18</sup> Ellington’s 80 beats-per-minute is closer to the Peter, Paul and Mary version (78 bpm) than the Dylan version (88 bpm).

Figure 3.1. Interpretation of “Blowin’ in the Wind” melody by Peter, Paul & Mary

(:12) F B<sup>b</sup> F

How ma - ny roads must a man walk down be

5 F B<sup>b</sup> C

fore they call him a man?

9 F B<sup>b</sup> F Dm

How ma - ny seas must a white dove sail be -

13 F B<sup>b</sup> C

fore she sleeps in the sand?

Figure 3.2. “Blowin’ in the Wind” melody rendition by alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges of Duke Ellington’s band

anticipations marked with arrows

(:53) E<sup>b</sup>

5 chromatic passing tone B<sup>b</sup> chromatic passing tone

9 E<sup>b</sup> bluesy figure

13 bluesy figure B<sup>b</sup>

Overall, Ellington and Strayhorn create a piece that keeps a large portion of the original intact, but add enough idiomatic ideas keep the interest of a jazz-listening audience. Notably, the piece is made up of swing grooves, showing that the arrangers were not interested in incorporating straight-eighth rock-style rhythms into this particular piece. In the end, Ellington's versions of "Blowin'" is not revolutionary, but serves the apparent purpose of appealing to both worlds at once. According to Tucker, though, the purpose was not simply musical or commercial, but also had a satirical element: "Unlike the earnest folkies, the Ellingtonians seem to be more interested in mockery --- just what, after all, did these young, white, middle-class Americans know about suffering, discrimination and injustice? The African-American musicians who had played with Ellington since the 1920s and '30s, by contrast, were experts on the subjects" (Tucker 1999, 18-19). Even upon close listening, though, it is difficult to glean the musical characteristics that serve as Tucker's basis for this evident "mockery." Perhaps the wah-wah effect created by the plunger mutes in the first verse? Maybe the dissonant brass hits in the last verse? These are certainly possibilities, but tenuous ones at best. Furthermore, Strayhorn's quote from earlier in this chapter suggests that the pair was unlikely to make an intentional mockery of a tune, at risk of being "snobbish." Without providing evidence to support his claim, Tucker's opinion functions more as unfounded critical hindsight rather than any true reflection of the artists' intentions.

*Ellington '65* did not receive much critical or commercial attention and does not seem to have expanded Ellington's audience. Rather, it leaves us with a "weirdly fascinating cultural artifact from the 1960s" that "refracts and embodies tensions of race,

class, age, musical style and commerce" (Tucker 1999, 18-19). It also provides an early example of a jazz luminary working with contemporary rock/pop music and shows how the foremost master of jazz composition and arranging approached this new material.

**"All My Lovin'" from *Ellington '66***<sup>19</sup>

On his subsequent album, *Ellington '66*, Ellington continued his evident attempt to capture a younger audience by including the Beatles tunes "All My Loving" and "I Want To Hold Your Hand" among contemporary popular songs ("People"), standards ("Moon River") and Ellington originals ("Satin Doll"). At this point, the Beatles' music was ripe for interpretation by jazz artists because the group was incredibly popular in the wake of their 1964 "invasion" of America. "All My Loving" is a joint Lennon/McCartney composition that originally appeared on *With the Beatles* (1963) and became a favorite among Beatles fans (Gould 189). Even though the tune was not released as a single in the United States, it still reached number 45 on the *Billboard Hot 100* charts (Whitburn).<sup>20</sup> On their version of the tune, Ellington and Strayhorn take a similar approach to "Blowin' in the Wind." The piece is given a Latin treatment – in this case a cha-cha – which is alternated with a medium swing feel during the chorus (1:06). Again, like "Blowin'," the melody of "Lovin'" is not altered from the original, presumably in an effort to keep the piece recognizable for the average Beatles fan. In this case, the melody is played by a solo clarinet in the first verse (:13) and then by the sax section harmonized (starkly) in octaves during the second verse (:40). This verse features some backing figures in the

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<sup>19</sup> The Beatles tune that Ellington covers is called "All My Loving." It is unclear why the Ellington version is called "All My Lovin'."

<sup>20</sup> All references to Billboard album charts come Joel Whitburn's *The Billboard Albums*. (See works cited).

trombone section and a virtuosic countermelody improvised by one of the clarinetists.<sup>21</sup> The sax-section melody is noteworthy for being *straighter* than the original. Indeed, there is no syncopation in this rendition of the melody, where the original contains accented off beats and anticipations throughout (See figure 3.4). Overall, the only real interest in this opening segment is created by the distinct Latin groove and the clarinet's dancing countermelody during the second verse.

The chorus brings the aforementioned swing groove and some extended improvisations from the band. The baritone sax is first up (1:06), followed closely by alto sax (1:20) and tenor sax (2:00). All of the soloists incorporate the melody into their extended excursions, bringing the tasteful extemporizational style of the Ellington band to the Beatles' composition. Indeed, the improvisational nature of "Lovin'" represents a departure from the remaining material on either of the albums at hand: "While most of the pop tunes on *Ellington '65 and '66* featured one or two soloists, 'All My Lovin'' showed off the entire Ellington reed section, moving from clarinetists Procope and Hamilton to Carney, Hodges and Gonsalves" (Tucker 19).

The form is kept mostly intact, with an added 8 bars of the verse material (1:20) and a return to the bridge that serves as an outro vamp (2:52 to fade). In keeping with the style from in "Blowin' in the Wind," Ellington and Strayhorn do not stray far from the original version. The 146 bpm tempo is slightly slower than the Beatles' 157 bpm, a technique that gives the cha-cha more laid-back feel. Indeed, it seems that the arrangers vary enough of the elements to put an original stamp on the tune, but not so far as to

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<sup>21</sup> Both Russell Procope and Jimmy Hamilton are listed as clarinetists for this session on 1/19/65 (Tucker 1999, 28).

confuse the lay-listener. In the end, they successfully strike the middle ground, creating interest through the cha-cha-based groove and beautifully executed improvisations by the reed section.

Unlike *Ellington '65*, *Ellington '66* garnered critical acclaim, placing fifth for “Record of the Year” in the 1965 *Downbeat* critics poll (DeMichael August 1965, 14). In his five-star review of the album for *Downbeat*, critic Leonard Feather calls the album “miraculous” and notes, “nobody but Ellington could have done it. “All My Loving” is the first of two Beatles songs on the album, and without derogating the songwriting abilities of Messrs. Lennon and McCartney one can still marvel at what this band has done with a comparatively flimsy piece of material.” It is also clear that Feather sees Ellington as a potential jazz ambassador to the youth audience when he says “This album should be required listening for a diversity of groups: Ellington fans; Beatle fans; people who don't dig jazz...” (Feather April 1965, 30).

Neither *Ellington '65* nor *Ellington '66* receives much attention in hindsight, which is probably due to the fact that the albums get lost in the sea of Ellingtonian genius. During the same time period, he also released works such as *Afro-Bossa* (1963) and *The Far East Suite* (1966), which received far more attention and are still considered to be essential parts of the Ellington canon. In the end, the rock and pop tunes did not become a part of Ellington’s regular repertoire (Tucker 1999, 17) and function as something of a blip-on-the-radar when considered in the overall arc of Ellington’s

career.<sup>22</sup> The albums receive relatively little attention in Ellington biographies and retrospectives. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain first-hand information as to *why* Ellington felt the need to interpret rock and pop tunes at this point in his career.<sup>23</sup> Tucker doubts that it was Ellington's idea, noting, "he was caught in the web of supply and demand" (Tucker 1999, 17).<sup>24</sup> As Tucker also relates, it is possible that Ellington may have ventured into rock catalog because he liked to stay "hip." In a 1962 interview with Stanley Dance, Ellington held forth on his perspective toward popular trends: "The Twist is bringing people back to dancing, which I think is a very good thing...With everyone in the whole world doing the Twist, you're out of step if you don't do it. I do it. I don't like to be odd" (Tucker 1999, 2).

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<sup>22</sup> On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1970, Ellington taped a Beatles medley for his appearance on the Ed Sullivan show. The medley included "She Loves You," "All My Loving," "Eleanor Rigby," "She's Leaving Home," "Norwegian Wood" and "Ticket To Ride" (Vail 374). This does not appear to be representative of his performing repertoire, and is most likely a function of the occasion.

<sup>23</sup> All of the sources quoted so far *assume* that Ellington's foray into covering rock and pop tunes was so that he could appeal to the youth audience, but there is no evidence of Ellington or Strayhorn actually *saying* that. Nevertheless, it seems a logical conclusion.

<sup>24</sup> Tucker does not venture as to whose idea it was – presumably it was a record company executive or someone concerned specifically with album sales.

Figure 3.3. The Beatles' melody for "All My Loving"

(:00) F#m B E C#m

Close your eyes — and I'll kiss you — to - mor - ow I'll miss you — re -

5 A F#m D B

mem - ber I'll all - ways be true. And then

9 F#m B E C#m

while I'm a - way — I'll write home eve - ry day — and I'll

13 A B E

send all my lov - ing — to you.

Figure 3.4. Interpretation of the melody on Duke Ellington's "All My Lovin'"

(:39) Fm B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> Cm

5 A<sup>b</sup> Fm D<sup>b</sup>

9 Fm B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> Cm

13 A<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

Figure 3.5. Interpretation of the melody on Count Basie’s “All My Loving”

### Count Basie

#### **“All My Loving” from *Basie’s Beatle Bag***

Fellow big-band leader Count Basie took a similar approach to Ellington by including rock and pop numbers on his albums *Pop Goes The Basie* (1964) and *Basie’s Beatle Bag* (1966). Basie, who was quoted earlier saying that the Beatles have “done some fine things,” knew that including contemporary pop tunes was crucial to expanding his appeal to the younger generation: “You’ve got to bend a little their way, meet them halfway at least - give them a little of their flavor...just to let them know that we know they’re alive” (Simon 523). *Pop Goes the Basie* includes tunes such as Roy Orbison’s “Oh, Pretty Woman” and The Everly Brothers’ “Bye, Bye, Love” and received little critical attention, save for a dismissive *Downbeat* review that describes the album as “undistinguished in material, arrangements, or solos” (DeMichael April 1965, 30).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> “Bye Bye Love” was written by Felice and Boudleaux Bryant.

He clearly was not discouraged, though, as he delved deeper into rock on his next album. *Basie's Beatle Bag*, is a collection of Beatles songs such as “Michelle,” “Help,” “A Hard Days Night” and “All My Loving.”<sup>26</sup> All of the tunes receive an instrumental treatment except for “Yesterday,” which features Bill Henderson on vocals. The arrangements are by Chico O’Farrill and highlight the hard-swinging style of the Basie band. Indeed, every tune on this album is dominated by a swing feel, immediately separating this from Ellington’s similar efforts that incorporate a wider variety of grooves.

Analysis of “All My Loving” provides an interesting comparison with the Ellington version, and shows how the arrangers took different approaches to the same source material. The crisp brushes on the snare drum at the outset combined with Basie’s piano entrance at (:06) announce that this is a swinging affair.<sup>27</sup> When the brass plays the melody (:16), the listener becomes aware of one of the primary ways this differs from the Ellington/Strayhorn approach – the melody is changed and heavily interpreted so as to differentiate it from the original. The melody is recognizable upon close examination, but O’Farrill boils the material down into short, crisp melodic fragments that play to the strengths of the band (see Figure 3.5). A second trip through the verse (:26) shows the sax section providing contrapuntal phrases along with a nearly identical statement of the melody in the brass. (The last few bars of the phrase are varied slightly.) The chorus (:38)

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<sup>26</sup> “Kansas City,” written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, is the lone non-Beatles composition on *Basie's Beatle Bag*. The song was covered by the Beatles on their 1964 release *Beatles for Sale*.

<sup>27</sup> The tempo of Basie’s “All My Loving” is 165 bpm – slightly faster than the original 157 bpm and significantly faster than Ellington’s 144 bpm. Evidently the faster tempo suited O’Farrill’s needs, whereas the slower tempo suited Ellington and Strayhorn’s needs.

features Basie playing the melody as a piano solo. He varies the original melody slightly, but in this case the content is very recognizable. The send-off (:49) launches the solo section, which features muted trumpet followed by tenor sax. Both of the solos are punctuated by crisp background figures staggered throughout the rest of the band. The soli section (1:46) consists of freshly composed material and seemingly has little to do with the Beatles version. The same can be said about the shout chorus at (2:20), which includes an only cursory nod to the original (2:40) before the band cuts out for a standard Basie piano-break finale prior to the last chord.

Overall, the arrangement feels like a classic Basie piece – a swinging rhythm section and blasting horns that specialize in extreme dynamic variations and creative solos. The arrangement provides a clear break from the original and truly brings the material into Basie’s world. Even the form is altered to suit the band’s needs: the bridge section, which may not have proved stimulating enough, has been eliminated entirely. In this circumstance, it seems that O’Farrill and Basie were willing to take a chance that the audience might not recognize the piece, as the opening melody is significantly altered and only stated once before the band launches into improvisations.

### **“Michelle” from *Basie’s Beatle Bag***

“Michelle” is a Lennon/McCartney composition from the Beatles’ 1965 release *Rubber Soul*. The tune has a gently swinging ballad feel and an advanced harmonic sequence for rock and pop music; *The Rough Guide to the Beatles* considers “Michelle” to be “probably the most harmonically adept of all Beatle songs” (Milton 238). The piece also offers an interesting challenge to any interpreter: a potentially awkward structure of

six-bar verses with ten-bar choruses. Considering the adventurous nature of the song's formal and harmonic elements, it is unsurprising that Basie selected "Michelle" to interpret in a jazz context.

In keeping with the Beatles' version, O'Farrill puts a four-bar solo introduction at the top. In this case, Basie takes the intro, playing some tastefully bluesy piano licks that refer to the descending line in the Beatles' intro. The tempo is slowed down considerably from the original version – 96 bpm vs. 119 bpm – which adds to the laid-back, bluesy feel. At :09 the full band comes in playing the melody in a lushly orchestrated and beautifully executed tutti passage. The melody is interpreted in a similar fashion to O'Farrill's "All My Loving" – the original vocal line is recognizable, but the phrases and articulation have been adjusted to fit the Basie style. There are specific examples of this adaptive method in the first bar of the band entrance. In the original version, McCartney enters singing the first syllable of "Mi-chelle" as a half note on the downbeat. O'Farrill adapts this slightly yet effectively by having the band anticipate the entrance on the "four-and" of the previous bar, creating a loping swing effect from the outset. The second note of this phrase is similarly anticipated and given a staccato articulation that creates a snappy swing effect. This syncopated technique is continued through the full opening statement of the melody (see figure 3.7). The opening phrase of the melody also shows harmonic adaptation that gives the piece a chord structure more typical to jazz music: In the third bar of the melody (both versions) there is an Eb major chord. In order to create harmonic drive toward this goal chord, O'Farrill inserts Bm7 – E7 in place of the Bbm7 chord in bar 2. (Bm7 – E7 is the tritone substitution for the standard ii-V in Eb major of

Fm7 – Bb7.) Additionally, O’Farrill turns the D<sup>o7</sup> – B<sup>o7</sup> progression in bar 4 of the Beatles version into Db7 – G7, thus inserting dominant chords containing the same F-B tritone as their diminished counterparts. This use of dominant instead of diminished chords further brings the sound of jazz harmony to the piece. Overall, these chordal insertions complement the distinctly swinging rhythmic interpretation nicely.

Figure 3.6. The Beatles’ melody on “Michelle”

(:08) F B<sup>b</sup>m<sup>7</sup> E<sup>b</sup>6 D<sup>o7</sup> B<sup>o7</sup> C D<sup>o7</sup>/C C

*Mi - chelle my belle these are words that go to -geth - er wel my Mi - chelle*

Figure 3.7. Interpretation of melody of Count Basie’s “Michelle”

anticipations marked with arrows

(:09) F Bm<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> E<sup>b</sup>Δ <sup>4</sup> D<sup>b</sup>7 G<sup>7</sup> C D<sup>b</sup> Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>

tritone sub ii-V substituted dominant chords ii-V

Basie follows with a solo-piano statement of the second verse (:24). These two six-bar statements of the verse are followed by the ten-bar statement of the chorus by the full band (:40). This tutti passage features more idiomatically big-bandy articulation, including a fall (:43) and more crisp cut-offs. Once again, the original melody is recognizable, but highly stylized and may not be apparent on the first listen. A muted trumpet fills over the final statement of the verse (1:06), with a full-on trumpet solo starting at 1:20 over the verse changes.

Like “All My Loving,” O’Farrill composed some new material for the recording: There are two additional bars inserted at the end of the trumpet solo before the tutti return of the verse (1:53), and a newly composed coda (2:23). Overall, though, the form and harmony of the original version are kept intact. The additional material flows nicely with the piece as a whole, and serves to bring the Beatles’ music even further into Basie’s world. The final result is a gently swinging and tasteful interpretation that could easily be misidentified as an original Basie composition.

Despite the apparent musical success of *Basie’s Beatle Bag*, it does not appear that the album made much of an impression on either jazz or popular audiences of the time. Bill Quinn of *Downbeat* gave the album a lukewarm 3 ½-star (out of 5) review, noting that the Beatles tunes are “a bit better off for the Basie treatment” but the album suffers because “all the tunes are played in a more or less similar mood and tempo” (Quinn 1966, 34). Scott Eder of the All Music Guide gives the album a more positive reading, noting that the tunes are “treated with the same kind of dignity and enthusiasm that the band would give to the likes of Johnny Mercer or Harold Arlen” and that “the band romps” (Eder). Other observers have been less kind, however. In *Profiles in Jazz*, Raymond Horricks refers to the album as “excruciating” (Horricks 179) and the *Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings* notes: “We think that the less said about *Basie’s Beatle Bag*, the better” (Cook and Morton 92). It is difficult to know whether the last two opinions are based on listening or the writers simply dismiss the album based on the perceived unworthiness of the source material. It is a shame to overlook this album, though, as the

band plays the crisp arrangements with swing and gusto, which is what the listener can expect from any quality Count Basie performance.

Like Ellington, Basie's foray into the rock songbook is a mere hiccup within a stalwart career of jazz greatness, and it is easy for jazz traditionalists to dismiss the results based simply on their opinions of the source material. Upon close examination, though, these albums provide valuable musical and cultural insights. Additionally, they show that even established jazz legends like Duke Ellington and Count Basie were not immune to commercial pressures. Indeed, these two men were still leading bands on the road, and were faced with the "practical problem of appealing to their audiences" (Tucker 1999, 2). Basie and Ellington were not the only big-band leaders that worked with rock songs in order to stay current in the 1960s – Woody Herman, Buddy Rich and Maynard Ferguson all blazed similar paths during the this period. Ultimately, the generational gap would prove too big a hurdle to overcome, as neither Basie nor Ellington enjoyed a significant crossover success as a result of interpreting the rock/pop songbook. Also, both leaders stick to jazzy rhythmic feels (swing and Latin) thought these efforts, betraying no incorporation of a straight-eighth rock style. This failure to incorporate rock rhythms most likely contributed to the lack of mainstream recognition for Ellington and Basie's rock/pop efforts. In the next chapter, I will focus on certain younger jazz artists who *did* adapt rock/pop rhythms into a jazz context and fared much better in the popular marketplace. As we will see, this younger generation incorporated rock/pop grooves and

production techniques which, combined with popular repertoire, proved to be a formula for mainstream popularity.

## CHAPTER 4: THE JAZZ-POP CROSSOVER

“I want to tell people – this is those who write about it as well as the public – not to worry about what it’s called; worry about whether it pleases people. That’s what it’s all about anyway, people are the final judges...I have changed my way of playing, just as many others have, to fit with the times. Lee Morgan, Horace Silver, and many others could have had the same doors opened for them that have opened for people like Jimmy Smith and Ramsey Lewis – it seems to me that they just decided against it... Those who criticize me for playing jazz too simply and such are missing the point. When I first came up big on the Billboard Charts they couldn’t decide whether to call me a jazz or a pop artist. I think I originated a new category, something like ‘Jazz-Pop’ artist. There is a different direction on my records these days; there is a jazz concept to what I’m doing, but I’m playing popular music and it should be regarded as such.”

– Wes Montgomery (Quinn 1968, 18)

Unlike Count Basie and Duke Ellington, guitarist Wes Montgomery and pianist Ramsey Lewis succeeded in expanding their mass-market popularity due largely to their renditions of rock and pop songs. They were part of the same generation (younger than the big band leaders) and had established jazz credibility before they began their crossover efforts. Their open-minded approach to rock/pop material combined with a willingness to streamline their playing style and embrace new production techniques created a commercially winning combination that thrust them toward the top of the pop charts. Indeed, they are among the first jazz artists of their generation who successfully

crossed over into the mainstream marketplace, making them worthy of the ‘jazz-pop’ genre label.<sup>28</sup>

### **Wes Montgomery**

By the mid-1960s, Wes Montgomery had established himself as the premier jazz guitarist of his generation. He had performed and recorded with jazz greats from Lionel Hampton to John Coltrane and had many critically acclaimed albums including *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* (1960) and *Full House* (1962). In 1964, Montgomery moved to the Verve label where Creed Taylor acted as the “chief executive and main record producer.” At that point, Taylor was already known for “firm organization, daring ideas and a willingness to promote younger jazz artists – often towards a more commercial acceptance” (Horricks, 178). Indeed, in his previous tenure with ABC-Paramount, Impulse! and Verve, Taylor presided over several commercially and artistically successful recordings, including Oliver Nelson’s *Blues and the Abstract Truth* (1961) and Stan Getz and Joao Gilberto’s *Getz/Gilberto*, which won the 1965 Grammy award for Record of the Year.

Now under Taylor’s tutelage at Verve, Montgomery released *Movin’ Wes* and *Bumpin’*, two albums with a “brass-laden orchestra” that garnered considerable commercial success for a jazz release (Giddins 259). It was at this point that Taylor

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<sup>28</sup> As alluded to earlier in the paper, the distinction between rock and pop is a muddy one, complicated by the fact that “pop” began as a term to describe rock and roll music in the 1950s. In Grove Music Online, Richard Middleton takes a stab at defining the boundary between rock and pop: “‘rock’ is generally thought of as ‘harder’, more aggressive, more improvisatory and more closely related to black American sources, while ‘pop’ is ‘softer’, more ‘arranged’ and draws more on older popular music patterns.” He goes on to note, “fundamentally, it is an *ideological* divide that carries more weight: ‘rock’ is considered more ‘authentic’ and closer to ‘art’, while ‘pop’ is regarded as more ‘commercial’, more obviously ‘entertainment’” (Middleton). As I will explore further in this chapter, Montgomery and Lewis incorporated elements of rock *and* pop repertoire during the 1960s, with the resulting aesthetic more closely resembling pop than rock.

“realized something about Montgomery's talent: it was his octave technique and lyrical sound, not his audaciously legato eighth-note improvisations with their dramatic architectural designs, that appealed to middle-of-the-road ears. So he set Montgomery on a course of decreasing improvisation and increasingly busy overdubbed arrangements, while the octaves, once used so judiciously, became the focus of his new ‘style’” (Giddins 259). *Movin' Wes* includes two contemporary popular songs – “People,” the Styne/Merrill composition written for the musical *Funny Girl*, and “Matchmaker, Matchmaker,” from *Fiddler on the Roof*, written by Bock/Harnick. This trend was continued on *Goin' Out Of My Head*, which included “Chim, Chim, Cheree,” from *Mary Poppins*, by Sherman/Sherman and “It Was A Very Good Year” by Ervin Drake.

On *Goin' Out Of My Head*, the combination of Montgomery's octave guitar technique with orchestral arrangements by Oliver Nelson and contemporary popular repertory brought the guitarist a new level of appreciation in the pop market. Taylor's recount of the lead-up to *Goin' Out Of My Head* is worth quoting at length:

“I had taken a 45 rpm copy of Little Anthony and the Imperials' hit to give to Wes at The Half Note Club on Hudson Street in New York City. Wes was appearing there with Wynton Kelly. I quietly explained to Wes that I thought that ‘Goin' Out of My Head’ might work for his upcoming record date. Wes (not so quietly) exclaimed ‘You must be out of yours!’ But Wes, being as ever the reasonable gentleman, agreed to come by my office at Verve for a meeting with Oliver Nelson. Wes was very aware of Oliver's Blues and the Abstract Truth that I had produced. This helped lead us into the issue of the improbable wisdom of including ‘...Out of My Head’ in Wes' next date. The ever-articulate Oliver proceeded to outline the musical and philosophical reasons why he thought the song would work as an instrumental vehicle for Wes. Three weeks later we had finished recording” (Taylor, Creed).

Taylor's commitment to “Goin' Out Of My Head” for Montgomery's album proved to be commercially savvy – the track received a Grammy award in 1966 for Best

Instrumental Jazz Performance, Group or Soloist with Group – but the critical reception was decidedly mixed. Critic Chris Albertson claimed that the guitarist’s new sound was “tantamount to hearing Horowitz play ‘Chopsticks’” (Ingram 33). Gilbert M. Erskine of *Downbeat*, however, noted that “The music is remarkably successful” and that the album is a “reminder of the vital role the jazz arranger can play when he is able to collaborate with a first-rate instrumentalist” (Erskine 37).

After the success of *Goin’ Out Of My Head*, Montgomery evidently became further convinced of the value in Taylor’s ideas; the guitarist employed the same style on many of his subsequent albums. Even though Montgomery’s playing on these recordings is vastly simplified when compared with his earlier output, biographer Adrian Ingram opines that Montgomery’s stellar musicianship, as manifested in his “unfailing ability to play the right notes in the right places,” had much to do with his success. Ingram also notes that these recordings removed him “from the mainstream of jazz and [placed] him in the category of popular or light music” (Ingram 37). Despite his overly simplified sound on certain recordings Montgomery continued to play “good swinging jazz” on his live dates (Ingram 35). Gary Giddins proclaimed that a Montgomery live set from this period was “the most firey, exquisite set of guitar music I’ve ever heard” (Giddins 261). Indeed, during the late mid ‘60s, he released a few critically acclaimed albums comprised of traditional jazz: *Smokin’ At the Half Note* (1965), *The Dynamic Duo* and *Further Adventures of Jimmy and Wes* (both from 1966).

Montgomery’s next commercially oriented albums, *Tequila* and *California Dreaming*, were his last for Verve before moving (with Taylor) to Herb Alpert and Jerry

Moss' A&M label. *Tequila* features the string arrangements of Claus Ogerman and versions of the contemporary popular tunes "What The World Needs Now" and "The Big Hurt."<sup>29</sup> Largely, these tunes feature light string arrangements along with Montgomery's streamlined guitar style. There are selections, however, that feature some satisfying improvisational activity: The rhythm section of Montgomery, Ron Carter, Grady Tate and Ray Barretto interact nicely on "The Thumb," and "What The World Needs Now" features the guitarist playing an extended solo that includes single-note lines. (This solo ends up with Montgomery playing octaves.) Like *Tequila*, *California Dreaming* displays brief moments of Montgomery's virtuosic ability as a guitarist, but is mostly dedicated to his new streamlined style along with the orchestral arrangements of Don Sebesky. On the title-track version of The Mamas & The Papas' hit, Montgomery's guitar is almost swallowed by Sebesky's dense orchestration. Bobby Hebb's popular anthem, "Sunny," shows Montgomery playing entirely in octaves. Unsurprisingly, observers largely pan both *Tequila* and *California Dreamin'*, with the qualification that there are periodic moments of satisfactory music. The usually sympathetic Adrian Ingram even refers to *California Dreamin'* as "a pastiche of the worst elements of Wes' previous commercial records" (Ingram 38).<sup>30</sup>

### **"A Day in the Life" from *A Day in the Life***

Taylor and Montgomery's first release for the A&M label, *A Day in the Life*, would prove to be his most commercially successful effort to date. In 1967-68, the album

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<sup>29</sup> "What the World Needs Now," popularized in 1965 by Jackie Shannon, has music by Burt Bacharach and lyrics by Hal David. "The Big Hurt" was a pop hit in 1959 for Toni Fisher and written by Wayne Shanklin.

<sup>30</sup> With the exception of "California Dreamin'," all of the tunes Montgomery covers on *California Dreamin'* are decidedly pop, not rock.

spent 26 weeks as #1 on *Billboard's* "Best Selling Jazz LPs" chart and even rose to #13 on the *Billboard 200* chart, which tracks sales from all genres. Montgomery's recording of The Association's hit "Windy" rose to #44 and spent 11 weeks on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart. "Willow Weep For Me" won the Grammy award for "Best Instrumental Jazz Performance" in 1969 and the album was certified "gold" by the Record Industry Association of America (RIAA) for selling 500,000 copies. Ingram describes the approach to this and his subsequent A&M releases: "Taylor's directive 'Play it in octaves' may well have changed to 'Play the tune in octaves and then drop out'...if Wes got two choruses in succession he was lucky" (Ingram 38). Indeed, Montgomery's increasingly simplified guitar approach and the "background" string arrangements are given even more emphasis. The repertoire on *A Day In The Life* was mostly selected from contemporary rock/pop tunes, including the Beatles' "A Day in the Life" and "Eleanor Rigby."

The Lennon/McCartney composition "A Day in the Life" is the closing selection from the Beatles' 1967 release *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The *Oxford Encyclopedia of Popular Music* sums up the importance of this album well: "This one album revolutionized, altered and reinvented the boundaries of 20th century popular music, style and graphic art. More than 30 years on, this four-track recording is still a masterpiece" (Larkin, "Beatles – Sgt. Peppers"). Even though "A Day in the Life" was never officially released as a single, the album's widespread popularity and *Billboard 200* #1 status guaranteed that many members of Montgomery's targeted audience would be

familiar with the tune.<sup>31</sup> According to *The Beatles on Record*, “Never in the history of popular music has one single album had such an immediate and total impact on the entire music industry” (Wallgren 66). As with much of *Sgt. Pepper’s*, “A Day In The Life” included orchestral accompaniment, which made the tune a prime candidate for selection by Taylor and Sebesky.

Montgomery’s version on “A Day in the Life” begins with a straight-eighths light-rock groove with a smooth, funky feel. Herbie Hancock plays some tasteful bluesy licks on the piano over the static harmony of D minor. Immediately, it is clear that arranger Don Sebesky is content to dispose of certain aspects of the original tune – in this case, the chord progression during the introduction of the Beatles’ version is ignored. This trend continues into the verse, with Sebesky opting for a drastically streamlined interpretation of the chord changes. Indeed, Montgomery’s version of “A Day in the Life” features a *simplification* of the harmonic information present in the original version, which is the opposite of what would be expected from a “jazz” arrangement. The only harmonic motion that Montgomery’s version retains from the original is the movement up a fourth in the third bar, although in this case it is a minor iv chord instead of the major IV chord in the Beatles’ version (See figures 4.1 and 4.2).

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<sup>31</sup> *Sgt. Pepper’s* spent 175 weeks on the *Billboard 200* chart.

Figure 4.1. Harmonic progression during the first verse of the Beatles’ “A Day In The Life”

Figure 4.1 shows the harmonic progression for the first verse of "A Day In The Life" by The Beatles. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff begins at measure 12 and contains the following chords: G, B7/F#, Em, (IV) C, C/B, Am, G, and Bm7. The second staff begins at measure 6 and contains the following chords: Em, C, F, Em, C, F, and Em.

Figure 4.2 Harmonic progression during the first verse of the Wes Montgomery’s rendition of “A Day In The Life”

Figure 4.2 shows the harmonic progression for the first verse of "A Day In The Life" by Wes Montgomery. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff begins at measure 18 and contains the following chords: Dm7, (iv) Gm7, and Dm7. The second staff begins at measure 6 and contains the chord: Dm7.

Montgomery enters playing a slightly syncopated interpretation of the melody voiced in octaves (:16). The orchestral accompaniment is sparse during the first verse: the vibes play subtle background chords (:19 and :29) while the rhythm section supports Montgomery with a light funky groove. During the second verse, the orchestra becomes more aggressive, providing dynamic swells (:45, :50, :55) and a countermelody that seems to swallow the guitarist’s statement of the melody, which is still voiced in octaves. During the third verse, Sebesky uses the orchestra to provide a variety of different colors and punctuations between the phrases of the melody (1:06, 1:13, 1:17).

The next section is a bridge that corresponds with “turn you on” in the Beatles’ version. That segment is a 27-bar (counted in double time) crescendo that ends with the sudden arrival of the fourth verse (McCartney’s section). Instead of including a

corresponding 27-bar crescendo section, Sebesky inserts a four-bar vamp with an orchestral swell that functions as a send-off into a 56-bar solo section (1:38). While the sheer presence of an extended solo section suggests that “A Day In The Life” is being given a “jazzy” treatment, Montgomery is left to improvise under strict confines: Firstly, the solo is entirely constructed of the octave-technique. Secondly, the harmony is a static D minor through the entire solo. This is particularly noteworthy: the Beatles’ “A Day in the Life” provides several interesting harmonic progressions that Sebesky could have adapted for the solo section, but he instead selected this simplistic one-chord treatment. If Montgomery was given free rein to improvise creatively over this vamp it may have proved an interesting choice, but in this case, he sounds restrained. The solo is comprised mostly of notes from the D blues scale and the rhythmic content is square, particularly in the first eight bars of the solo where the final “D” is the only syncopated note in that passage (see figure 4.3). This restrained soloing style combined with static harmony suggests the piece was being watered down for a mass audience.

Figure 4.3. First ten bars of Montgomery’s solo on “A Day In The Life”

(1:38) Dm<sup>7</sup>  
 (piano comping)  
 passage contains notes only from the D blues scale  
 only syncopated note  
 6

The last eight bars of the solo section feature the re-entry of the orchestral accompaniment (3:39). In this case, the orchestra builds with a few trill-swells that lead into the aforementioned McCartney verse section (3:51). During this portion of the tune, the band closely mimics the double-time feel of the original version. Montgomery plays a straight version of the melody (in octaves) and the orchestra provides color during the second half of the verse. At 4:17, the next bridge section starts and Montgomery disappears entirely. Indeed, the orchestra takes over playing the theme in a way that is quite similar to the original. Montgomery is absent for 20 seconds until he returns to play the final verse (4:26). The rhythm section (with guitar as lead) plays the first portion of the verse by itself, until the orchestra re-enters at 4:55. This leads into the closing section, where Sebesky has the orchestra closely mimic the dissonant corresponding passage that ends the Beatles' version (5:01). The track fades out after this; evidently a decision was made that Montgomery's version would make no attempt at the famous extended piano chord at the end of the Beatles' original.

The form of Montgomery's "A Day in the Life" displays some of the same idiosyncrasies of the Beatles' version, although with some rounding out. The first three verses, which come out to 10, 9 and 9½ bars (one bar of 2/4 is included at the end of the phrase) are slightly altered to 10, 9 and 9 in the Montgomery version. The 27-bar bridge in the Beatles' version is streamlined, with Sebesky opting for a short four-bar section that functions as the pre-solo send-off. The tempo, which varies widely from 95 bpm to 102 bpm by the end, is faster than the Beatles' tempo, which begins at 78 bpm and ends at 82 bpm. Overall, Sebesky, Montgomery and Taylor create a streamlined arrangement

that is instantly recognizable as “A Day In The Life.” Montgomery extensively utilizes his octave technique, plays clear versions of the melody, and takes an accessible, bluesy solo. This restrained approach, combined with the streamlined harmonic information, the presence of an orchestra and the light rock groove, is evidence that this piece was being targeted to a mass audience.

The other Beatles’ tune on *A Day In The Life*, “Eleanor Rigby,” receives a very similar treatment. Like “A Day In The Life,” the original version of “Eleanor Rigby” features an orchestral background, making it ripe for the picking by Taylor and Sebesky. This track once again displays Montgomery playing a relatively unchanged version of the melody along with a solo section over a simple-chord vamp, and once again the guitarist performs the melody and solo entirely using his octave technique. The result is another smooth instrumental version of a rock tune. Indeed, the characteristics of *A Day in the Life* – streamlined improvising, simple harmonies, orchestral accompaniment, light rock beats and popular repertoire – bring these tunes closer to Muzak than to either jazz or rock.<sup>32</sup>

After *A Day In The Life*, Montgomery recorded two more albums on A & M before his untimely death on June 15, 1968. *Down Here On The Ground* followed a similar formula to its predecessor, with octave-laden guitar playing and orchestral accompaniments, although the size of the ensemble is decidedly scaled back and

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<sup>32</sup> “Muzak - A term for recorded background music played in public places (e.g. hotels, airports, and shops) and offices, to create a soothing atmosphere, to enhance workers' productivity, etc. The recordings used typically consist of a seamless string of bland, unobtrusive orchestral arrangements of pop and light music, with a narrow range of dynamics and tempo. Such music was first broadcast in 1922 by the American company Wired Music, later renamed Muzak (hence this generic name), but it is now available commercially worldwide. The term has also come to be applied pejoratively to any characterless recorded music” (Latham).

Montgomery is afforded slightly more improvisational space, especially on his original composition “The Other Man’s Grass Is Always Greener.” Most of the material is from contemporary popular songs, and the album was quite successful in the popular marketplace, reaching #38 on the *Billboard 200* chart. (“Georgia On My Mind” also crossed over as a single into the pop mainstream to reach #94 on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart.) The posthumously released *Road Song* includes the Beatles’ “Yesterday” and Simon and Garfunkel’s “Scarborough Fair (Canticle)” and continues in the same vein.<sup>33</sup> In this circumstance, the backgrounds are performed by a Baroque ensemble, which creates a slightly different feel from the previous albums. Unsurprisingly, the album claimed mainstream success, reaching #94 on the *Billboard 200* chart.

As a result of his crossover efforts, Wes Montgomery became one of the most famous jazz musicians in the popular marketplace. Towards the end of his life, he was featured in *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines, received the *Record World* award for “1967 Jazz Man of the Year” and *Billboard* acknowledged him for having the all-time best-selling jazz LP on its charts (*Goin’ Out of My Head*) (Quinn 1968, 17). For someone who struggled for years to provide for his family, this kind of success brought much-needed financial security: “Montgomery, in his early forties, the father of six, was earning the kind of money he had long deserved...in a period when jazz was supposed to be dead or dying” (Giddins 260).

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<sup>33</sup> “Scarborough Fair” is a traditional English song that was popularized in the American market by Simon and Garfunkel in the mid-1960s. The “Canticle” section is an arrangement of an earlier Paul Simon original composition called “The Side of a Hill.”

This period of his life also brought Montgomery criticism for altering his playing style in order to appeal to a wider audience. Some critics see the commercialism of a jazz artist as a crime in itself, as Harvey Pekar relates: “Now that Montgomery has attained some measure of commercial success, I wonder if he’ll ever make another good album... maybe he’ll record serious music again under a pseudonym” (Ingram 33). Indeed, the case of Wes Montgomery clearly displays the tension between jazz and the popular marketplace – if one is successful, they are not considered to be a real jazz artist any longer (Ingram 34). Montgomery’s choice of repertoire also provided fuel for criticism. While it does not seem that he had any deep personal connection to the new music around him, he certainly had an open-minded approach: “While some cats turned up their noses at Elvis Presley and the Beatles, I tried to find out what was best about what they were doing and incorporate it into my thing – without duplicating their stuff” (Quinn 1968, 44).

Certain critics assign Creed Taylor, not Montgomery, most of the blame for this period of the guitarist’s career. Indeed, Montgomery admits to being heavily influenced by his production team: “My a & r men and arrangers usually work with me on the recordings. I accept their suggestions in numerous cases, sometimes even when I’m doubtful myself. So far, though, things have worked out better than I thought” (Quinn 1968, 18). As a response to this sort of attitude, Gary Giddins wrote an article entitled “Jazz Musicians Consider Wes Montgomery,” which is devoted entirely to criticizing this portion of the guitarist’s career, specifically the role that record companies play in the production of jazz albums. Giddins believes that “The Montgomery-Taylor relationship...

proceeded inexorably from Taylor's cost-accountancy approach to producing music. Don Sebesky, a hack arranger with a talent for blending received ideas into an eclectic goulash, was hired to write and overdub strings and woodwinds arrangements on the tracks Montgomery recorded with rhythm. The material was occasionally good but more frequently not" (Giddins 260). Giddins holds that the role of the producer in jazz should be different than in rock and pop, noting: "the myth has grown that the producer is the key to a good recording. This may apply to some areas of pop music, but in jazz, where individuality is everything, this kind of arrogance amounts to an extension of the 'invisible man' syndrome." Giddins then extends this idea to apply to the jazz record business as a whole: "If there's anything to be learned from Montgomery's story, it is that musicians must accept their relationship with the record industry as a basically adversary one, an analogue to the relationship film directors have with studio moguls... Too many artists of rich ability, however, have been reduced to quaking whores reporting to cost-accountant pimps" (Giddins 263-4).

Lewis Porter writes that Montgomery's albums between 1964-67 are "unrepresentative of his talents" while simultaneously admitting, "these [albums] considerably broadened his audience" (Porter). Indeed, the late period of Montgomery's career exemplifies how the intimate marriage of popular repertoire, streamlined sound, light rock beats and slick production could broaden a jazz artists' appeal into the popular marketplace. Unfortunately for Montgomery, popularity brought widespread criticism from the jazz community and confusion by some of the rock community. With his

newfound success, he found himself in a difficult predicament: “caught between critics and jazz fans demanding pure jazz on one side, and the general public demanding perfect renditions on his hit records on the other” (Ingram 37). Indeed, for the last few years of his life, Montgomery sat at the uncomfortable intersection of the jazz and rock/pop worlds, each with their ideals and subsequent criticisms. The guitarist was a true product of the new era – one who embraced rock and pop repertoire and production techniques with the rare distinction of succeeding in his commercial intent.

### **Ramsey Lewis**

Pianist Ramsey Lewis began his career playing jazz, gospel and dance music in his native Chicago. In 1956, he formed a jazz trio with bassist Eldee Young and drummer Redd Holt, and the group was signed to Chess Records subsidiary Argo/Cadet.<sup>34</sup> The trio recorded several albums in the ‘50s and early ‘60s that had a “strong jazz content” (Yanow). During this time period Lewis also worked as a studio sideman with Sonny Stitt, Clark Terry and Max Roach (Larkin “Lewis, Ramsey”). Selective choice of non-jazz repertoire was important to Lewis and the trio from the early days – their debut album, *Ramsey Lewis and his Gentlemen of Swing* (1956), includes a jazzed-up version of Bizet’s “Carmen,” which garnered radio airplay. Subsequently, the group “made a point of always including a ‘fun song’ in their repertoire” (Nicholson 160). *At The Bohemian Caverns* (1964) includes the aforementioned “People” and Chris Kenner’s

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<sup>34</sup> The Chess brothers founded the Argo label as the jazz subsidiary of their blues and r&b-centric Chess Records in 1955. The label was later renamed Cadet to avoid confusion with a European label of similar name.

“Something You Got” which gained some crossover success.<sup>35</sup> Lewis’ trio plays the latter tune with a bluesy straight-eighths feel and is clearly recognizable to the audience, who sings along at appropriate moments.

### **“The In Crowd” from *The In Crowd***

Lewis recalls that the group attempted to emulate the sound of “Something You Got” on their follow up album, *The In Crowd*: “A year or so ago, on the first Bohemian Caverns album, we did *Something You Got*, and this was the track that most of the pop stations jumped on. We had so much air play out of that, we figured we’d put another tune of the same type in our new album, which was going to be our second live-at-the-Caverns set” (Feather, Dec. 1965, 11). Three days before the session, Lewis still had not decided on what tune to use. As Leonard Feather relates, “Then he was sitting in a club in Washington that had a jukebox, and somebody played a record by Dobie Gray doing *The In Crowd*, a song by young Los Angeles writer Billy Page. ‘I figured we’d give this one a try,’ Lewis said. ‘A night or two before the taping started, we began to play it in the club, and the response immediately was tremendous’ (Feather, Dec. 1965, 11).

This anecdote concerning the spontaneous choice of “The ‘In’ Crowd” explains several things about the resulting recording. Firstly, it has the feeling of freshness – the intangible quality that emanates from music when artists are excited to be playing it for the first or second time; “The ‘In’ Crowd’ radiates this energy. Secondly, the band seems to still be working out the arrangement, as evidenced by the awkward

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<sup>35</sup> Lewis’ “Something You Got” reached #63 on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart and stayed on the chart for six weeks. *At The Bohemian Caverns*’ peak was #103 and spent 13 weeks on the *Billboard 200* chart.

miscommunications at a few junctures (documented in the musical analysis). Thirdly, it is one possible explanation for the band playing a different form from the Dobie Gray version – perhaps because they did not have time to learn the intricacies of the original before performing it. The other potential reason for this change is that they intentionally streamlined the form so as to create 16-bar verses as opposed to the 13-bar verses in the original (see figure 7.4 and 7.5).

Figure 7.4. The first verse of Dobie Gray’s “The ‘In’ Crowd”

The musical score for the first verse of Dobie Gray's "The 'In' Crowd" is presented in three systems. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 1-4) has a duration of 09 seconds. The lyrics are: "I'm in with the in\_\_ crowd I go where the in\_\_ crowd goes\_\_". The second system (measures 5-8) has lyrics: "I'm in with the in\_\_ crowd And I know what the in\_\_ crowd knows". The third system (measures 9-12) has lyrics: "Any time\_\_ of the year don't you hear?\_\_ Dress -ing fine\_\_ mak -ing time". Chord symbols A, D/A, and D7 are indicated above the staff.

Figure 7.5 The first verse of Ramsey Lewis’ “The ‘In’ Crowd”

The musical score for the first verse of Ramsey Lewis's "The 'In' Crowd" is presented in four systems. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 1-4) has a duration of 12 seconds. The lyrics are: "I'm in with the in\_\_ crowd I go where the in\_\_ crowd goes\_\_". The second system (measures 5-8) has lyrics: "I'm in with the in\_\_ crowd And I know what the in\_\_ crowd knows". The third system (measures 9-12) has lyrics: "Any time\_\_ of the year don't you hear?\_\_ Dress -ing fine\_\_ mak -ing time". The fourth system (measures 13-16) has lyrics: "Any time\_\_ of the year don't you hear?\_\_ Dress -ing fine\_\_ mak -ing time". Chord symbols D7 and (G/D) are indicated above the staff.

The groove of “The ‘In’ Crowd” is almost identical to the straight-eighths beat of “Something You Got”: the two are differentiated only by the faster tempo on the latter recording.<sup>36</sup> The trio also felt that capturing the audible presence of an audience was key, as it was on “Something You Got.” Lewis “insisted on a live sound, complete with handclaps and exclamations, an infectious translation of a black church feel into pop” (Larkin “Lewis, Ramsey”). This is clear from the outset of the tune, which includes a full seven seconds of applause before the band begins. The rhythm section enters playing the aforementioned straight-eighths boogaloo groove (:08) with Lewis stating the melody after a two-bar intro vamp (melody at :12). By the time the melody enters, members of the audience are already clapping on the two and four of each bar. Lewis includes jazz sensibilities, particularly the flatted third and fifth scale degrees amidst his relatively straight interpretation of the original melody (see figure 7.5). The fervor of the audience grows stronger during the second verse (:55), complete with shouts, laughs and a louder clapping rhythm, now on the two, four and four-and.

After the statement of two verses and two choruses, the band heats up the groove as it heads into the first section of improvisation (1:40). Lewis settles in with a bluesy riff that he repeats six times with slight variation. The first evidence that the band is unsure of their new or possibly non-existent arrangement comes after eight bars of the solo section when bassist Young sounds unsure if he is supposed to change to the IV chord (1:53). The group evidently chooses to stay on the tonic of D minor, and then settles into a groovy vamp over that pedal point. The aggressive energy at the beginning of the solo is brought

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<sup>36</sup> “Something You Got” is 120 bpm and “The In Crowd” is 140 bpm.

down to a quieter dynamic at 2:00, with Lewis settling into more tastefully short bluesy phrases. The audience continues to clap and say a variety of things, including “Yeah baby!” (2:01), “Walk it on home!” (2:11), and “The In Crowd!” (2:18). The group plays sparsely at a medium dynamic level, thus making the statements of the crowd both an audible and integral part of the music, bringing to mind a gospel church during celebration. The group creates interest over the static harmony with rising and falling dynamics before moving into a restatement of the chorus (3:07), which is followed immediately by another solo vamp in D minor (3:24). This improv section feels like the first: more clapping, more repeated blues figures by Lewis, and continuing shifts in the dynamic level of the group to create interest.

The tune begins to wind down at 4:38 with a drop in volume and the beginning of a final vamp in the piano. By 5:15 the dynamic level has gotten so soft it sounds like they are going to perform a live fade-out, but a blues-type tag is added: Lewis plays a bluesy figure, followed by an awkward hit that the bassist misses (5:20), which leads to a pedal on the dominant “A” (5:22). An uncomfortable pause comes next, followed by laughter in the audience and then the final chord at 5:31. This awkwardly loose ending suggests that the group was unsure of how they were going to finish the tune, and perhaps had not even decided beforehand. The spontaneity, though, only adds to the appeal of the recording – it is not about “serious jazz,” but rather the good-time-funky-freewheeling vibe that translates onto the record. Lewis sums it up well: “It’s an interesting thing. The Bohemian Caverns is the kind of room where Monk and Coltrane play – representatives of what you’d call the real hard jazz in the purest sense. Yet when we play a thing like this, those

audiences would react in what some people would call a square manner – clapping hands and singing along, the whole bit...The most intricate chord in the whole thing, I think, is a seventh” (Nicholson 161).

In addition to “The ‘In’ Crowd,” the album contains one other tune that was popular at the time, “Since I Fell For You.”<sup>37</sup> Overall, *The In Crowd* represents a mixture of styles and consistently portrays a feel-good vibe with plenty of audience participation. During his introduction to “The Tennessee Waltz,” bassist Young jokes with the audience on a few occasions. Antonio Carlos Jobim’s “Felicidade” is taken as a medium-up samba that features some crowd-pleasing trio interaction. The most somber number of the affair, Duke Ellington’s “Come Sunday,” is given a beautifully expressive reading by Lewis and “should remove any doubts about his jazz credentials” (Cook and Morton 801).

The popular success of “The ‘In’ Crowd” was extraordinary. It soared to #5 on the *Billboard Hot 100* and stayed on the chart for 16 weeks, making it one of the few jazz versions of rock/pop hits to be *more* popular than the original.<sup>38</sup> *The In Crowd* reached #2 on the *Billboard 200* and stayed on the chart for 47 weeks, selling over a million copies during 1965 and subsequently earning the trio a Grammy award for Best Jazz Recording By A Small Group (1965). Critic Leonard Feather notes that the crossover power of *The In Crowd* was somewhat shocking: “It is a jazz performance by a jazz group, and its presence on the charts these last four months, towering over Bob Dylan, Barbra

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<sup>37</sup> The Lenny Welch version of “Since I Fell For You” was popular in 1963. The tune was written by Buddy Johnson.

<sup>38</sup> The Dobie Gray version of “The In Crowd” peaked at #13 on the *Billboard Hot 100* and stayed on the chart for 9 weeks.

Streisand, the Beach Boys, and the Dave Clark Five, has come as a shock to everyone, including Lewis himself” (Feather, Dec. 1965, 11).

Prior to *The In Crowd*, Lewis had a primarily adversarial relationship to the jazz press. A feature article in the May 6, 1965 issue of *Downbeat* relates that “To the embarrassment of jazz’ critical hierarchy, Ramsey Lewis will not close his piano top and go away.” Later in the same article, writer Barbara Gardner cites another critic who dismissed Lewis’ music as “pop jazz... semiclassical schmaltz and stylized funk” (Gardner 24). The *Downbeat* review of *The In Crowd*, which appeared in the September 23, 1965 issue was slightly more positive, noting that “The mixture of a polished, deliberately dramatic surface over an insistently rhythmic beat continues to work well for Lewis' group” (Wilson 30). In hindsight, though, the record has received widespread acclaim.

*The In Crowd* made Lewis and the trio “the hottest commercial property in jazz” (Feather, Dec. 1965, 11). The success was clearly no accident – Lewis and the trio carefully calculated the sound of the album to appeal to a wide audience, capitalizing on the “infectious” live feel, straightforward bluesy riffs and the choice of contemporary pop/rock repertoire. Indeed, a 1965 interview (pre-*The In Crowd*) displays that Lewis had an intention to “bridge the gap between jazz and rock n roll”; the pianist suggests “it would do my heart good to see the two get closer together again” (Feather, Dec. 1965, 11). As his career moved forward, Lewis continued to cross this divide through choice of repertoire, instrumentation, production and rhythmic feel.

Following the success of *The In Crowd*, the trio decided to stick to their formula of playing non-jazz derived hits in a live setting. *Hang On Ramsey* (1965) features The McCoys' "Hang on Sloopy"<sup>39</sup> and the Beatles' "Hard Day's Night," both of which have the audience clapping and singing along. This album proved to be another huge success for Lewis and the trio, peaking at #15 on the *Billboard* 200 chart.<sup>40</sup> Yet despite their success, the band broke up after this record, with Young and Holt going on to form their own group. *Wade In The Water* (1966) is a studio effort that features Lewis' newly formed trio, consisting of Cleveland Eaton II on bass and Maurice White on drums.<sup>41</sup> The sound is varied somewhat from the previous records, this time including arrangements for a larger ensemble. The repertoire is made up of the gospel standard "Wade In The Water," along with pop/rock/soul tunes like the Beatles' "Day Tripper" and Marvin Gaye's "Ain't That Peculiar."<sup>42</sup> Clearly, Lewis was committed to choosing repertoire from outside the standard jazz canon, regardless of its origins were rock, pop, gospel or soul. This album also continues Lewis' tradition of live-feeling recordings – even though this is a studio record, "Wade" includes hand-claps on the two and four throughout. (Evidently Lewis learned that hand-claps were an integral component of creating a cross-over jazz instrumental hit.)

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<sup>39</sup> "Hang On Sloopy" was written by Wes Farrell and Bert Russell.

<sup>40</sup> *Hang On Sloopy* stayed on the chart for 27 weeks. The single for "Hang On Sloopy" reached #11 on the *Billboard Hot 100* and stayed on the chart for 8 weeks. The single for "Hard Day's Night" peaked at #29 and stayed on the chart for 6 weeks.

<sup>41</sup> Maurice White went on to substantial commercial success as the leader/producer/drummer in the funk/soul outfit Earth, Wind & Fire.

<sup>42</sup> *Wade in the Water* peaked at #16, and spent 34 weeks on the *Billboard* 200 chart. On the *Hot 100* chart, "Wade In The Water" reached #19 and spent 13 weeks on the chart while "Day Tripper" peaked at #74 and spent 4 weeks on the chart.

Through 1967-68, Lewis continued releasing successful albums on Cadet: Both *Goin' Latin* (1967), *The Movie Album* (1967) and *Up Pops* features the trio with large ensembles, and *Dancing in the Street* is a live trio set that has a similar vibe to *The In Crowd*. These albums are peppered with popular hits, such as the Martha and the Vandellas title track on *Dancing in the Street* and Aretha Franklin's "Respect" on *Up Pops*. *Maiden Voyage* (1968) featured the trio with strings and background vocals doing versions of rock and pop tunes such as the Beatles' "Lady Madonna" and Bob Dylan's "Quinn the Eskimo."<sup>43</sup> On *Mother Nature's Son* he put out an entire album of Beatles music – in this case, all tunes that were originally released on *The Beatles*, a.k.a. "The White Album."

### ***Mother Nature's Son***

The idea to create an entire album of Beatles music was courtesy of the influential Chicago musician Charles Stepney, who was the staff arranger and producer at the Chess Records studio. Lewis remembers the role that Stepney played in encouraging him to produce the project: "When he brought the Beatles *White Album* to me and said 'Listen to this, I think we should do it, I can't say I didn't like it, it's just that I didn't see how I could make it my own. He said, 'Trust me on this one. I can really do it. I can write the arrangements so that they become you.' He did just that. It became one of my favorites, especially 'Julia'" (Ruffin 3). The producer was already known for his work with The Rotary Connection, The Dells, Minnie Riperton and later for his work with Earth, Wind

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<sup>43</sup> "Quinn the Eskimo" was written by Dylan and became a hit for the British group Manfred Mann in 1968.

and Fire. He and Lewis were long-time friends and the pianist held Stepney in high esteem: “He had a style that had high artistic values and lots of integrity, yet the general market could relate to it” (Ruffin 3).

Lewis respected Stepney’s ability to arrange and produce albums with large ensembles, an aesthetic that would dominate both *Mother Nature’s Son* and its predecessor, *Maiden Voyage*. *Maiden Voyage* featured a large orchestra with voices, while *Mother Nature’s Son* includes orchestra with added electronics created by a Moog synthesizer. This latter element is important in the scheme of Lewis’ career, as the pianist credits Stepney with introducing him to the world of electronics, which would come to dominate many of his later albums (Lyons 207).

*Mother Nature’s Son* shows Lewis incorporating a different approach to the interpretation of rock music and provides an interesting comparison with *The In Crowd*. Firstly, *Mother Nature’s Son* is a huge production – the full orchestra with trio creates a completely different effect than *The In Crowd*. Secondly, the addition of the Moog synthesizer and other electronic keyboards (e.g. Wurlitzer electric piano on “Sexy Sadie”) creates a different vibe than the completely acoustic older album. Indeed, the electronics give the album a quirky (and somewhat unique) feel – Stepney includes electronic introductions to several tracks that have nothing to do with the actual tune they precede (e.g. “Mother Nature’s Son” and “Dear Prudence”). The rhythm section plays mostly straight-eighth rock grooves, even on tunes that did not include drums in the original version (“Julia”). In this sense, the rhythmic concept is of a piece with the boogaloo “The ‘In’ Crowd,” although the beat is decidedly updated for the late-‘60s rock market.

One of the most striking features of *Mother Nature's Son* is Lewis' virtuosic yet tasteful piano work. This results in melodically adventurous passages in "Mother Nature's Son" and "Julia" amongst Lewis' traditionally bluesy piano lines. Indeed, it seems that, in contrast to Wes Montgomery's later output, the pianist was given carte-blanche to play as he wished. This notion suggests that the presence of a producer and lavish string arrangements does not necessarily mean that the artist will be restrained.<sup>44</sup>

As with many of his albums from the mid-late 1960s, *Mother Nature's Son* became a crossover hit. "Julia" topped at #76 on the *Billboard Hot 100* and spent 8 weeks on the chart, while the album peaked at #156 on the *Billboard 200* and stayed on the chart for 14 weeks. Compared to his previous albums, this may not sound like much of a success, but it must be remembered that for *any* jazz album to reach the *Billboard* pop charts it is a commercial achievement. Certainly the all-Beatles program contributed to that popularity.

After his work with Stepney in the late '60s, Lewis went on to a successful career of crossover success. The overall production of *Mother Nature's Son* was a rough template for his work in the 1970s – electronic instruments and lavish production juxtaposed over straight-eighth grooves. He continued to experience success throughout the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with 30 of his albums making the *Billboard Top 200* (Larkin – "Lewis, Ramsey"). Much of his post-1970 work is usually dismissed by critics as "middle of the road instrumental albums" (Larkin – "Lewis, Ramsey"), which trend closer to smooth jazz than traditional jazz. He did, though, return to performing acoustic

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<sup>44</sup> It is also noteworthy that, by 1968, Lewis had already been an established jazz-pop crossover artist for three years. It is possible he felt that he could "get away" with a little more adventurous playing without alienating his audience.

jazz in the 1980s, showing that he was not to be pigeon-holed into any category. Overall, Lewis has produced an enormous amount of music and has achieved tremendous mainstream popularity, particularly for a jazz artist.

Wes Montgomery and Ramsey Lewis demonstrate that it *was* possible in the 1960s for a jazz artist to realize crossover success in the mainstream marketplace. In large part, their success was due to their interpretations of rock and pop songs. Like Basie and Ellington, neither artist showed any particular passion for rock/pop material, but rather had an open-minded approach to using non-jazz tunes as repertoire. Both Montgomery's and Lewis' methods of interpretation differ greatly from the aforementioned big band leaders though: Basie and Ellington's renditions were decidedly *jazzy*; the swing and Latin grooves throughout those albums betray no concessions to the popular mainstream, which provides substantial rationale for their lack of crossover success. Montgomery and Lewis went beyond the material selected to embrace non-jazz *techniques*, such as straight-eighth rock grooves, streamlined pentatonic soloing and lavish production techniques. This willingness to incorporate the musical aspects of rock, pop and soul can be explained both by the influence of powerful producers and the artists' ages – Montgomery and Lewis are a full generation younger than Ellington and Basie. Even though Montgomery and Lewis' music from the mid-to-late 1960s is *not* considered to be among the best jazz music from that era, it *is* amongst the most popular. By examining their choices in repertoire and adaptive techniques, one can see the detailed inner-workings of jazz tunes-turned-mainstream hits. Additionally, the success of these artists

had a significant bearing on the future of jazz: The formula that brought Montgomery and Lewis commercial success provided a template for the smooth-jazz movement that gained popularity in the 1970s as “jazz-lite” or “crossover” and has continued to have mass-market appeal into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Gilbert).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Other artists that have incorporated this similar formula of rock/pop repertoire with streamlined sound and (sometimes) rock/pop production techniques include Les McCann, George Benson, Grover Washington and many smooth jazz artists from the ‘80s, ‘90s and ‘00s.

## CHAPTER 5: ROCK IS MY MUSIC

### Steve Marcus

“I had spent much of my previous years completely enveloped in Coltrane and Bartok. Really heavy profound music and then, when the Beatles came along, I just felt like a kid again. I was a neighbor of Gary Burton at the time, for some years we lived in the same block in Manhattan and he and I went to the Colony Record Shop at 3 o’clock in the morning when *Revolver* came out, like two 15 year-olds, and we went back and we listened all night long, over and over and over again. Up until then we were such elitists – we were so above it so to speak – and the Beatles came along and words fail me! Then an idea came to me just sitting around and listening to that music. I thought to myself, ‘Gee whiz, you’ve got these vamp tunes, “Tomorrow Never Knows” or “8 Miles High” by the Byrds, this is so Coltrane-y, in terms of the material but then you’ve got that added animal growl of the guitar, you know, and you’ve got beats, rhythms that have never been used in improvised music before,’ and I thought ‘let’s try it.’”

- Steve Marcus (Nicholson 2003)

As indicated by the quote above, saxophonist Steve Marcus developed an affinity for rock music during the 1960s. Rather than viewing the more popular genre strictly as a vehicle to greater commercial success, he viewed a potential foray into the rock songbook as a logical musical expansion of already-existing jazz styles. Indeed, Marcus saw the incorporation of rock tunes into jazz repertoire as being in accord with the jazz tradition: “If you examine what Charlie Parker played, what Sonny Rollins played, what Miles played...they were playing popular songs, songs by Rodgers and Hammerstein and all of those guys, it was the pop music of its day. They were basically drawing on material that was around them. Rock n’ roll was the pop music of its day, which you take and you add yourself to that, your own musical personality” (Nicholson 2003). Marcus and his group developed a genuine affinity for the music of the Beatles, the Byrds and the Rolling Stones, thus leading them to incorporate rock grooves, beats, and production techniques

in their own music. The result is a singular style of jazz that mirrors the raw energy of rock and captures the ever-present rock aesthetic of rebelliousness.

In the early 1960s Marcus had established his straight-ahead jazz credibility as a young saxophonist touring with Stan Kenton. After the dissolution of that band in 1962, Marcus worked with Woody Herman and settled back in his native New York City. During this time, he cultivated relationships with an extensive group of young, forward-thinking jazz musicians, including Herbie Mann, Gary Burton, Mike Nock, and Larry Coryell. This group took pride in the notion that they had equal reverence for rock and jazz. Guitarist Coryell noted: “We love Wes Montgomery, but we also love Bob Dylan, we love Coltrane, but we also love the Beatles, we love Miles Davis, but we also love the Stones. We wanted people to know we were very much part of the contemporary scene, but at the same time we had worked our butts off to learn jazz too” (Nicholson 2003). Marcus also recalls the direct, visceral connection he felt to rock music at the time: “You’re in your twenties, and you want to play all this stuff that feeds into your soul, bring it into your music, if you’re lucky enough to have the opportunity, and we were” (liners). This “opportunity” was Count’s Rock Band, the group Marcus formed with Nock on piano, Coryell on guitar, Chris Hills on bass and Bob Moses on drums. Together the group would produce three albums, the first of which exemplified how the interpretation of rock songs could be combined with a genuine rock aesthetic to pioneer the nascent genre of jazz-rock fusion.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> It is worthy to note that the members of Count’s Rock Band were born between 1939 and 1946, placing them in their early-to-mid twenties at the time of the rock boom. As a group, they are significantly younger than any of the artists we have looked at so far, with the possible exception of Ramsey Lewis who was born in 1935. Undoubtedly, the age of these younger musicians helped them form a bond with the rock music that was distinctly of their generation. Additionally, Marcus and his band are the only white artists discussed thus far, which perhaps contributed to their kinship with artists such as the Beatles and the Byrds.

### **“Tomorrow Never Knows” from *Tomorrow Never Knows***

*Tomorrow Never Knows* was released on the Vortex label in 1968 and represents Marcus’ first album as a leader. The repertoire is composed of contemporary rock tunes from the likes of the Beatles, the Byrds, Herman’s Hermits and Donovan.<sup>47</sup> The overall musical approach on the album also draws considerably from rock, incorporating a psychedelic improvisational framework (one-chord vamp) and distorted effects, particularly on Coryell’s guitar. The improvisational approach, though, comes squarely from the contemporary jazz camp. Mike Nock remembers: “Our idea was to play free contemporary jazz over modal rock grooves” (Nicholson 1998, 35). The use of a modal one-chord vamp links Marcus’ album with Wes Montgomery’s efforts in the same vein, but the aesthetics of the artists’ recordings are completely different: Marcus’ album is full of aggressive energy while Montgomery’s recordings are characterized by a laid back approach. Indeed, the use of a one-chord solo vamp and the working with rock and pop repertoire are the only things that link the artists’ work from this period.

“Tomorrow Never Knows” is a John Lennon composition from the 1966 album *Revolver* and is regarded as “By far the most radical music The Beatles had yet produced” (Milton 239). Essentially, the compositional elements of the tune are quite simple – it is a repeating eight-bar verse over a drone-like pedal point of “C.” The song’s production and effects, though, could hardly be more advanced, particularly for its era. The tune begins with a tamboura drone that immediately shows the Beatles’ newfound

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<sup>47</sup> The lone original on the album is “Half A Heart” by Larry Coryell. The original album mistakenly credits Gary Burton as the composer.

Indian influence. Lennon's voice is altered drastically using a rotating Leslie speaker.

Seemingly random external references abound, including a simulated flock of seagulls.

Marcus' version begins with an emulation of the opening drone of the original. In this case, the sound is created by guitar feedback by Coryell. When the groove enters, it is clear that the group is attempting to emulate Ringo Starr's beat on the original.<sup>48</sup> The four-bar intro from the original tune is preserved, with Marcus playing the melody on soprano sax (:12). The rendition of the melody is kept relatively straight on the in-head, save a few unobtrusive flourishes, most notably the quick upward scale at :39. In addition to the similarity of form, groove and melody, the pedal-point harmony is also preserved from the Beatles' version – the only chord change in both instances is the Bb/C chord in bars 5-6 of each verse.

After the three opening verses, Marcus and the group begin an extended solo vamp that corresponds to the sixteen-bar interlude in the Beatles' original. Coryell begins the first solo by playing distortion and feedback on his guitar (:54), nodding directly to the rock tradition that was such a prominent part of his musical influence at the time. The guitarist increases the rock-like component by adding a wah-wah effect to his distorted chords at 1:34. The sudden shift to 16<sup>th</sup>-note lines (1:52) displays Coryell's chops, but the distorted sound and pentatonic content continues to refer to rock rather than jazz. Coryell begins the closing section of his solo by returning to distorted chords with guitar feedback (2:12) before an abrupt tape splice cuts directly to Mike Nock's ethereal acoustic piano entrance (2:37) which provides an immediate contrast to Coryell's solo.

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<sup>48</sup> The tempo of Marcus' version is slightly faster than the original, with the Beatles clocking in at 130 bpm and Marcus at 140 bpm.

Shortly into the solo, though, Nock shows his own fascination with extended techniques by muting the piano string with his hand to produce a staccato percussive effect (2:51). He periodically returns to this technique throughout the improvisation, most strikingly at 3:25. Nock's left-hand chords at 4:03 serve as substantial evidence that we are indeed listening to jazz musicians, and the side-slipping fourth chords at 5:06 drive this point home. Later in his solo, Nock incorporates fast-rising dissonant clusters that clearly display his free-jazz influence (6:07). The sheer length of this solo (over four minutes) clearly suggests a jazz approach; the piano solo alone is significantly longer than the entire Beatles' recording.<sup>49</sup>

Marcus begins his soprano saxophone solo (7:10) in a diatonic fashion, but quickly moves into some Coltrane-style explorations that stress notes dissonant to the tonic key of C major (7:26). The influence of late-era Coltrane is evident throughout the solo, particularly with the fast flourishes at 7:55. The effect of Marcus' extemporization as a whole is of a jazz musician blowing fiercely over a modal rock-inspired groove. The return of the melody at (9:39) shows the jazz-rock dichotomy in full relief: Marcus embellishes the melody using angular phrases from outside the key, bringing John Lennon's melody squarely into the jazz world; in bars 4 and 5 of figure 5.2, Marcus shifts his melody into a Bb minor tonality in order to create a sharp dissonance with the "C" pedal-point. Additionally, the saxophonist relies heavily on triplet subdivisions in his interpretation of the melody, creating the modern effect that he is floating above the band. Marcus continues these rhythmic and melodic devices through the remaining three

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<sup>49</sup> Nock's solo is 4:30, where the entire Beatles' version of "Tomorrow Never Knows" 2:57.

statements of the eight-bar verses, bringing the complexity a jazz vocabulary to the Beatles' straightforward melody. Despite Marcus' substantial embellishments, it is noteworthy that the structure of the Beatles' version is followed exactly, save the extended improvisational section that occupies the bulk of Marcus' eleven-minute version.<sup>50</sup> This approach to form represents Marcus' overall method of interpreting rock music: reverence for the original composition and aesthetic while expanding the improvisational sections to reflect his own artistic voice.

Figure 5.1. The Beatles' melody on the first verse of "Tomorrow Never Knows"

The musical score for the Beatles' melody is written in 4/4 time. The first line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. The lyrics are "Turn off your mind re - lax and float down stream." The second line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. The lyrics are "It is not dy - ing It is not dy - ing".

Figure 5.2. Steve Marcus' interpretation of the melody on the out-head of "Tomorrow Never Knows"

The musical score for Steve Marcus' interpretation is written in 4/4 time. The first line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. The lyrics are "It is not dy - ing It is not dy - ing". The second line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. The lyrics are "It is not dy - ing".

<sup>50</sup> Marcus' version is 11:11 while the Beatles' is 2:57.

### **“Eight Miles High” from *Tomorrow Never Knows***

The Byrds’ “Eight Miles High” was a ripe choice for Marcus and the group for a few reasons. Firstly, the original version was *itself* heavily influenced by Coltrane (Larkin “Byrds,” and Zwerin 38) and includes an extended single-chord vamp. Additionally it was quite popular, having reached #20 on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart in 1966. Marcus’ version of “Eight Miles High” follows a similar formula to “Tomorrow Never Knows,” albeit in this case with a few more variations. After a short two-bar bass introduction, drummer Moses enters with a hard driving straight-eight rock groove that references but does not mimic the pseudo-Latin feel of the original (:03). In addition to straightening the groove, Marcus gives his version additional forward propulsion by speeding up the tempo from the Byrds version.<sup>51</sup> Surprisingly, Marcus forgoes the opening guitar solo present in the original and instead moves directly into the melody (:17). As with “Tomorrow Never Knows,” Marcus’ interpretation of the melody is completely straight, with Coryell’s guitar and Nock’s clavinet providing the harmonies that correspond to the backing vocals of the original. After one full and one half verse, the group launches into an extended solo improvisation, although this time Marcus is the only soloist. Again, the group opts to stay with the same one-chord vamp present in the original (1:04). Marcus wears his Coltrane influence on his sleeve, particularly with the quick four-note bursts at 1:31 that are directly influenced by Coltrane’s playing on *A Love Supreme* (or, for that matter, most other post-1964 Coltrane recordings). Coryell and Nock play an active role in accompanying Marcus: they often opt to play countermelodies rather than chords, and

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<sup>51</sup> The Byrds’ original is 130 bpm, while Marcus’ version is 148 bpm.

work themselves up to such a fever pitch by 2:43 that it has the effect of collective improvisation. The group winds down to begin the final verse (3:30), which proceeds similarly to the first verses, although Marcus' "howl" at 3:58 kicks the band into a high gear that was hitherto unforeseen prior to the solo section. Like "Tomorrow Never Knows," the overall impression of Marcus' "Eight Miles High" is of an aggressive band that draws as much from rock as they do from jazz with "Marcus's tenor biting huge lumps out of the popular Byrds hymn with such intensity he seems to leap out of the speakers" (Nicholson 2003).

Marcus' version of Scottish songwriter Donovan's "Mellow Yellow" is noteworthy for its adventurous production technique. In the left channel, the band plays a straight version of the tune. (The bass is actually in the center channel.) Beginning at :32 it becomes clear that something strange is afoot: Nock enters in the right channel with two notes that are completely foreign to the key of the tune, and continues to play an increasingly dense free improvisation to accompany the relentlessly straight version of the original tune that continues in the left channel. The band continues to enter gradually in the right channel, all-playing in an aggressive free style. By 2:45 the result is complete cacophony in the right channel while the melody plods away in the left channel. The result is a rather Ivesian effect of two ensembles playing completely different things simultaneously, which is made possible by the stereo production technique of panning the two recordings "hard-left" and "hard-right." This embracing of extended studio

production techniques further underlines Marcus' willingness to use all aspects of rock music in his work, not just repertoire.

Overall, *Tomorrow Never Knows* is a raw and aggressive album that shows what was possible if a group of late-1960s jazz musicians incorporated rock aesthetics and repertoire into their playing. Mike Zwerin of *Downbeat* respected this experimentation and gave the album a glowing five-star review primarily for its "originality" and "willingness to move into unexplored territory." He notes the crossover elements, saying that Moses' playing is "somewhere between Elvin Jones and Mitch Mitchell," Coryell's playing is "spinetingling" and acknowledges, "the whole album has a sense of adventure which overpowers any lack of polish or perfection" (Zwerin 38). Indeed, this last observation could sum up the appeal of most rock groups of the time, further connecting this jazz group to the rock aesthetic.

It seems that the musicians were conscious of the insubordinate nature of the album and took pride in rebelling against the conservative elements in the jazz world at the time. Mike Nock notes, "Our music was inspired by the Beatles, the Byrds, the Stones and Coltrane's 'free style.' It was also a protest against a lot of the conservatism that was so prevalent in jazz even then. I remember a night when Steve Marcus played me a choice selection of Beatles music, it had a profound affect on both of us. I was playing all this musicians' music, not really getting off on it. Then I heard a James Brown record and it floored me. I'd been in the jazz syndrome and you can't find jazz musicians to play that kind of time. They think it's beneath them, yet they can't play it. I wanted to play a simple kind of music that grooved me, in those days we didn't think of it as 'jazz-rock,' it

was just the music we wanted to play” (Nicholson 1998, 34). Marcus also notes the rift that was forming between different camps of jazz musicians at the time: whereas he and Nock openly played rock music for one another, “in many situations somebody would knock on my door and I’d be hiding my Rolling Stones records under the bed because I just didn’t want to explain! They’d come in and say, ‘Hey man what are you doing with that crap!’ you know?” (Nicholson 2003).

Despite the glowing review in *Downbeat*, the group did not have much commercial success with *Tomorrow Never Knows*. According to Marcus, this lack of success was due to poor management: “We weren’t handled properly, it was that kind of thing because when you leave management and what have you in the hands of the musicians, you’re not going to get any kind of order to events, you’re not going to have any kind of flow. All of a sudden other gigs come up and this guy’s going here and this guy’s going out with this one and so on and so on and so forth, so I have always regretted it never took off like it should have” (Nicholson 2003). This trend continued through the subsequent releases *Count’s Rock Band* and *The Lord’s Prayer*, both of which feature rock-influenced repertoire and production. The band separated in the early 1970s, after which Marcus played in a variety of fusion outfits before returning to straight-ahead jazz with the Buddy Rich Big Band in 1975. He stayed with Rich until the drummer died in 1987, after which Marcus took over leadership of the band. In 2000, Marcus attempted to capitalize on the burgeoning popularity of the improvisational “jamband” scene by forming Count’s Jam Band. The saxophonist died in 2005 in New Hope, PA.

The Count's Rock Band period of Steve Marcus' career provides a unique example of a jazz musician working with rock songs in the 1960s. More so than any of the musicians we have examined thus far, Marcus and the group felt a strong connection with rock music, claiming it as their own. This affiliation was fueled at least partially by the fact that they all *were* part of the rock generation, each of them being only in their early-to-mid-20s during the late 1960s. The respect that the group had for rock material led them to augment their choice of rock repertoire with rock beats, rock production and the overall rock aesthetic of rebelliousness. Indeed, extended solos over a simple vamp and psychedelic production gels into a style that has more in common with the Grateful Dead or Cream than it does with straight-ahead jazz of the time. However, the strong presence of jazz chops and improvisational acuity make this much more of a jazzy-sounding recording than any improv-rock of the time. The resulting fusion formed the foundation for the emerging jazz-rock movement, most famously exemplified by the groups of Miles Davis and John McLaughlin. Interestingly, these groups enjoyed crossover success, heavily fueled by high profile performances opening for rock groups at the Fillmore East and Fillmore West. The success of these groups leads me to ask *why* Marcus was unable to succeed with Count's Rock Band. In the end, it is difficult to know, and one can only take Marcus at his word that it was "poor management." Certainly it seems that he had the correct formula, and under different circumstances he would be widely regarded as a preeminent pioneer of the jazz-rock fusion movement.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The Fillmore-style album cover on *Tomorrow Never Knows* certainly suggests that Marcus was conscious of appealing to the Fillmore-going crowd.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The 1960s was a turbulent time in America. There was a potent counterculture that was threatening established norms in all areas of society. “Out with the old and in with the new” could sum up the prevailing attitude of the time – and jazz was no exception to this rule. Once the most popular music in America, jazz had lost some of that stature in the 1940s and was threatened into commercial marginality by rock and roll music in the 1950s and 1960s. In response to this trend, jazz musicians were faced with a choice: engage with the new music and try to ride the wave of its success, or ignore it and risk becoming further marginalized. Many jazz artists chose to ignore rock, oftentimes viewing it as a simple-minded pursuit dominated by white artists stealing from black musicians. Other artists, though, chose to engage with the new music and bring it into the jazz world by interpreting rock repertoire. In a way, this trend was no different than the time-honored jazz tradition of interpreting contemporary popular songs. Interpreting rock songs and incorporating them into their repertoire was different, though, because of the many prejudices that jazz musicians held toward rock music and the relative simplicity of rock’s musical attributes.

Those artists who chose to interpret rock music largely did so in order to reach the 1960s youth audience and increase their commercial success. Jazz legends Duke Ellington and Count Basie, showing they were not immune to these market pressures, brought the music of the Beatles and Bob Dylan into their musical worlds. Their attempt at crossing over stopped with repertoire though; the overall aesthetics of these recordings are decidedly *jazzy*, providing a possible explanation for the failure of these big-band

leaders to reach a mass audience with their renditions of rock/pop tunes. Unlike Basie and Ellington, Wes Montgomery and Ramsey Lewis *were* able to achieve commercial success through a savvy combination of popular repertoire, streamlined playing, straight-eighth grooves and rock/pop/soul production techniques. This formula largely served as the template for the smooth jazz movement, which would gain momentum starting in the 1970s. Steve Marcus placed his love for rock music and John Coltrane at the foreground of his approach, but failed to reach a large audience despite his groups' authentic assimilation of rock's rebellious attitude. Despite the lack of sales, Marcus' band aesthetic, largely fueled by aggressive drumming and distorted guitar, has led observers to acknowledge his albums from the late-'60s as breakthrough works in the genre of jazz-rock fusion.

Largely, these jazz versions of rock tunes from the 1960s are ignored or dismissed by critics and biographers. Duke Ellington and Count Basie's recordings of rock tunes are swamped amongst massive bodies of big-band jazz that focus on original compositions and jazz standards. Critics largely frame Wes Montgomery's mid-to-late 1960s work as a tragedy: a top-notch jazz artist who fell prey to commercial pressures. Ramsey Lewis' primary affiliation as a smooth jazz artist has precluded much serious critical or biographical hindsight of his work, although *The In Crowd* usually receives an approving nod. Steve Marcus is largely unknown, with *Tomorrow Never Knows* functioning as a jazz-rock fusion cult classic to a small body of listeners. Even Stuart Nicholson, the author who created the largest volume to date on the jazz-rock movement (*Jazz-Rock*)

largely dismisses jazz interpretations of rock tunes as a failed efforts with little relevance to his study of fusion music.

Despite the lack of attention paid to their 1960s versions of rock/pop tunes, these artists created the foundation for the continued expansion into the rock/pop songbook throughout the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup>. By 2010, some tunes, such as the Beatles “Yesterday,” have been performed so often that they can now be considered standards in their own right. As jazz and rock have both evolved, so has the process of crossing-over between the two genres. The covering of a Beatles’ tune is no longer considered controversial, both due to the frequency of this occurrence and the generally accepted excellence of their songwriting. Other artists, such as Frank Zappa, Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell and Steely Dan (Donald Fagen and Walter Becker) have achieved a similar status within the jazz community largely due to the quality and complexity of their work. Unsurprisingly, jazz musicians have subjected these artists to a multiplicity of treatments. Amidst the gradual acceptance of 1960s and 70s rock music amongst the jazz community, some contemporary artists have interpreted rock/pop music that is still controversial in a jazz setting due to musical unworthiness (Herbie Hancock’s covering of Nirvana’s “All Apologies” in 1994), the overtly “poppy” nature of the material (Bill Frisell’s interpretation of Madonna’s “Live To Tell” from 1993) or the distorted, “un-jazzy” character of the original piece (The Bad Plus’ cover of Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” from 2003 and Brad Mehldau’s rendition of Soundgarden’s “Black Hole Sun” in 2006). Largely, though, the covering of rock material has become so

common that there are very few choices of repertoire that can truly surprise an audience in 2010.

In the interpretations of rock music by contemporary jazz artists we see a drastic expansion of the musical possibilities first presented by the 1960s artists represented in this paper. Whereas Ellington, Basie, Lewis, Montgomery and Marcus all stuck largely to variations in melody and groove, contemporary jazz versions of rock tunes display radical changes in harmony, meter and form along with the aforementioned re-vamping of melody and rhythmic feel. Herbie Hancock's 1994 release *The New Standard*, which features wide swath of music from artists such as the Beatles, Peter Gabriel and Nirvana, is a good example these trends. On Don Henley's "New York Minute," Hancock (with a substantial contribution from arranger Bob Belden) renders the original tune virtually unrecognizable. The form has been completely reworked, the harmony has been expanded to reflect jazz sensibilities, and the melody is a mere pointillism of its former self. This reworking of the melody is evidence that Hancock did *not* intend for the lay listener to connect this new version with the original hit, thus showing that he was not looking for crossover success. Rather, Hancock seems bent on an expansion of the standard jazz repertoire to include material by newer composers without ostensible regard for commercial potential.<sup>53</sup>

Other artists show a similar bent towards the renovation of the jazz songbook without simultaneously making an effort toward connecting with mainstream pop fans.

On the 1998 release *Timeless Tales for Changing Times*, Joshua Redman converts the

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<sup>53</sup> Hancock has had several successful albums in his career on which he has attempted crossover success and largely succeeded. *Future Shock* (1983) and *Possibilities* (2005) are examples. Comparatively, *The New Standard* is clearly intended for a jazz audience.

Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" into 5/4 meter and radically reworks the harmony. The melodic statement is recognizable as the Beatles' tune, but the surrounding musical traits suggest that Redman was not intending for this piece to be played on popular radio. Pianist Brad Mehldau, who has made rock music a cornerstone of his repertoire, typically leaves the form and meter of the original versions untouched, yet improvises the melody, harmony and rhythmic feel with such elasticity that his renditions could never be considered an attempt at crossover success. Furthermore, Mehldau often chooses harmonically dense tunes from artists such as Radiohead and Nick Drake that require little tampering-with in order to create interest in a jazz context. These songs are often more obscure than the body repertoire mentioned so far in this paper, further supporting the notion that he is not attempting mainstream success.

The specifics of *why* these jazz artists have ventured into the rock/pop songbook should be subjected to further detailed study. Inside the context of this paper, it is possible to conclude that they have further expanded the jazz songbook into the realm of rock music – a process that began with the pioneers from the 1960s. Furthermore, based on the aforementioned musical characteristics of contemporary jazz versions of rock tunes, it is clear that the commercial intent has become somewhat different than it was in the 1960s: Jazz artists seem more concerned with creating a rendition that has complexity and jazz integrity, rather than making any attempt to crossover into the mainstream by creating an instrumental version of pop/rock hits. Indeed, jazz in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is so thoroughly removed from popular consciousness that it seems impossible for an instrumental rendition of a rock/pop tune to attain popular success. That being said, it is certainly

within the realm of possibility that these artists are reaching out to a youth audience, though not the mainstream segment. Rock is no longer the central focus of popular music, with hip-hop, r & b and various other pop genres commanding a larger share of the marketplace.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, the cultural positions of jazz and rock have decidedly changed over the last half-century. Just as the popularity of jazz was declining in the 1960s, jazz's reputation as "high art" continued to escalate. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, this transition is largely complete, as the inclusion of jazz within the academic curriculum of most universities would suggest. During the 1960s, though, this notion of jazz as "high art" was still contentious, thus shedding further light on the controversial nature of interpreting the "low art" genre of rock music within a jazz context. By the end of the 1960s, though, it was clear that many had accepted rock music, particularly that of the Beatles, as "high-enough art" to merit serious consideration. The testimonials of Steve Marcus and his group suggest that they subscribed to this belief, whereas the other artists concerned in this study maintained decidedly more distance from the burgeoning new genre. As jazz continued its ascendance toward being perceived as "high art," so did rock, thus creating a more amicable relationship between the two worlds. Indeed, the two genres have enjoyed a long and often fruitful relationship of cross-pollination, the scope of which this paper merely scratches the surface. The jazz artists who interpreted rock

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<sup>54</sup> Smooth jazz artists have made a substantial effort at incorporating elements of these r & b and hip-hop genres into their respective sounds. This style, which, as mentioned earlier, is directly derived from the mid-to-late 1960s style of Wes Montgomery, features light pop grooves and singable melodies over simple vamps and lush production. Even though smooth jazz is typically considered to be a completely different genre than traditional jazz, artists affiliated with this genre continue to interpret popular music in an instrumental context, usually to wide commercial success. The continued popularity of smooth jazz points to the longevity of Wes Montgomery and Creed Taylor's template from the 1960s, and, much to the dismay of many critics, supports the popular relevance of their production techniques.

music in the 1960s laid the groundwork for this future of collaboration between artists from these two genres. Furthermore, regardless of musical result or commercial intent, these artists represented the inclusive nature of jazz: the process of pulling from the surrounding world in order to enhance one's art. Indeed, the tradition of jazz is to include, rather than exclude other genres and ideas. This elasticity is foundational to the continued relevance of jazz music in a rapidly changing society, and has formed the philosophical foundation for the expansive nature of jazz in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## APPENDIX A:

## COMPARISON OF MUSICAL ELEMENTS BETWEEN VERSIONS

### **“Blowin’ in the Wind” – Bob Dylan’s version**

Key: D major

Tempo: 88 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:49

Intro (2)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Chorus (7 + 8)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)

Chorus (7 + 8)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Chorus (7 + 8)

### **“Blowin’ in the Wind” – Peter, Paul & Mary’s version**

Key: F major

Tempo: 78 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:57

Intro (8)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Chorus (8)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)

Chorus (8)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Chorus (8)      Outro (8)

### **“Blowin’ in the Wind” – Duke Ellington’s version**

Key: Eb major

Tempo: 80 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:29

Intro (4)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Chorus (8)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)

Chorus (8)      Verse (8)      Vamp and Fade (8)

**“All My Loving” – The Beatles’ version**

Key: E major

Tempo: 157 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:13

Verse (8 + 8)   Verse (8 + 8)   Chorus (8)   Bridge (8)   Verse (8 + 8)

Chorus (8 + 8)

**“All My Lovin’” – Duke Ellington’s version**

Key: Eb major

Tempo: 146 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 3:25

Intro (2 + 6)   Verse (8 + 8)   Verse (8 + 8)   Chorus (8 + 8)   Bridge (8 + 8)  
*(solo)*

Verse (8 + 8)   Chorus (8)   Verse (8)   Bridge and fade (8)  
*(solo)*   *(solo)*   *(solo)*   *(solo)*

**“All My Loving” – Count Basie’s version**

Key: G major

Tempo: 165 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 3:02

Intro (4 + 4 + 4)   Verse (8 + 8)   Chorus (8)   Verse (8 + 8)   Chorus (8)  
*(solo)*   *(solo)*   *(solo)*   *(solo)*   *(solo)*

Verse (8 + 8)   Verse (8 + 8)   Chorus (8)   Verse (8 + 8 + 8)  
*(solo)*   *(tutti)*   *(solo)*   *(tutti)*

**“Michelle” – The Beatles’ version**

Key: F major

Tempo: 119 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:42

Intro (4)      Verse (6 + 6)      Bridge (10)      Verse (6)      Bridge  
(10)

Verse (6)      Bridge (10)      Verse (6)      Outro and fade (14)  
*(solo)*

**“Michelle” – Count Basie’s version**

Key: F major

Tempo: 96 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:47

Intro (4)      Verse (6 + 6)      Bridge (10)      Verse (6)

Verse (6)      Verse (8)      Verse (6)      Coda (10)  
*(solo)*      *(solo w/ 2 added bars)*

**“A Day In The Life” – The Beatles’ version**

Key: G major / E minor

Tempo: 78 bpm at beginning, 82 bpm at end

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 5:34

Note: The measures are counted in double-time starting at the beginning of “Bridge A” (1:41) where John Lennon sings “Turn you on...”

Intro (3 of 4/4 + 1 of 7/8)      Verse A (10)    Verse A (9)      Verse A (9 of 4/4 + 1 of 2/4)

Bridge A (27)    Verse B (19)    Bridge B (20)    Verse B (19)    Bridge C (24)    Ending Chord  
*Begin counting double time here*

**“A Day In The Life” – Wes Montgomery’s version**

Key: D minor

Tempo: 95 bpm at beginning, 102 bpm at end

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 5:49

Intro (6)      Verse (10)      Verse (9)      Verse (9)      Bridge (4)

Solo vamp (32 + 24)      Verse B (22)      Bridge B w/ break (16 + 1)  
*Double time*      *Double time ends*

Verse A (9)      Bridge A and fade (18)

**“The In Crowd” – Dobie Gray’s version**

Key: A major

Tempo: 124 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:49

Intro (4)      Verse (13)      Bridge (10)      Verse (13)      Bridge (10)

Verse (8 + 5)      Bridge (10)      Vamp and Fade (10)

*Horn section riffs first 8*

**“The In Crowd” – Ramsey Lewis’ version**

Key: D major

Tempo: 140 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 5:54

Intro (2)      Verse (16)      Bridge (10)      Verse (16)      Bridge (10)

Solo Vamp (52)      Bridge (10)      Outro Vamp (69)      Tag (2)  
*rubato*

**“Tomorrow Never Knows” – The Beatles’ version**

Key: C major

Tempo: 130 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 2:57

Intro (4)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Interlude (16)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8 + 8)  
*Solo*

Verse (8 + 8 + 8 + 8)      Tag/Outro (14)

**“Tomorrow Never Knows” – Steve Marcus’ version**

Key: C major

Tempo: 140 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 11:11

Intro (4)      Verse (8 + 8 + 8)      Extended Solo Vamp (lasts 8:45)

Verse (8 + 8 + 8 + 8)      Tag/Outro and Fade (16)

**“Eight Miles High” – The Byrds’ version**

Key: C major

Tempo: 130 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 3:36

Intro (16)                      Verse (8 + 8)    Interlude (2)    Verse (8 + 8)    Interlude (2)  
*Solo last 10 bars*

Solo Vamp (24)              Verse (8 + 8)    Interlude (2)    Outro Vamp (16) (tempo dissolves)  
*solo*

**“Eight Miles High” – Steve Marcus’ version**

Key: E major

Tempo: 142 bpm

Meter: 4/4

Total Track Time: 4:47

Intro (10)              Verse (8+8)    Interlude (4)    Verse (8)              Solo Vamp (lasts 2:26)

Verse (8 + 8)    Interlude (4)    Outro vamp (8) (tempo dissolves)  
*solo*