

CAUGHT BETWEEN JAZZ AND POP: THE CONTESTED ORIGINS, CRITICISM,
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE, AND RECEPTION OF SMOOTH JAZZ

Aaron J. West, B.M., B.S., M.M.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2008

APPROVED:

John P. Murphy, Major Professor
Eileen M. Hayes, Minor Professor and Interim
Chair of the Division of Music History,
Theory, and Ethnomusicology
Mark McKnight, Committee Member
Graham Phipps, Director of Graduate Studies
in the College of Music
James C. Scott, Dean of the College of Music
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

West, Aaron J., *Caught Between Jazz and Pop: The Contested Origins, Criticism, Performance Practice, and Reception of Smooth Jazz*. Doctor of Philosophy (Musicology), December 2008, 273 pp., 10 figures, 30 musical examples, bibliography, 210 titles.

In *Caught Between Jazz and Pop*, I challenge the prevalent marginalization and malignment of smooth jazz in the standard jazz narrative. Furthermore, I question the assumption that smooth jazz is an unfortunate and unwelcomed evolutionary outcome of the jazz-fusion era. Instead, I argue that smooth jazz is a long-lived musical style that merits multi-disciplinary analyses of its origins, critical dialogues, performance practice, and reception.

Chapter 1 begins with an examination of current misconceptions about the origins of smooth jazz. In many jazz histories, the origins of smooth jazz are defined as a product of the jazz-fusion era. I suggest that smooth jazz is a distinct jazz style that is not a direct outgrowth of any mainstream jazz style, but a hybrid of various popular and jazz styles.

Chapters 2 through 4 contain eight case studies examining the performers of crossover jazz and smooth jazz. These performers have conceived and maintained distinct communicative connections between themselves and their audiences.

In the following chapter, the unfair treatment of popular jazz styles is examined. Many early and influential jazz critics sought to elevate jazz to the status of art music by discrediting popular jazz styles. These critics used specific criteria and emphasized notions of anti-commerciality to support their theoretical positions.

In Chapter 6, the studio recordings and live performances of smooth jazz are discussed. Critics frequently complain that most smooth jazz recordings feature glossy packaging and pristine studio editing, resulting in a too-perfect product. Although this aesthetic is the result of a unique series of interactions, recordings do not represent the complete musical nature of smooth jazz.

Live performances contain important, but typically neglected aspects of smooth jazz. Live performances enable performers to extend solos, interact, and communicate directly to the audience. While recordings are a useful source for musical analysis, smooth jazz, like other styles of jazz, is an improvisatory music that utilizes multiple sites of production and cannot be accurately judged on recordings alone.

Copyright 2008

by

Aaron J. West

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have encouraged and supported me throughout this long process. First, I would like to thank my advisor, John Murphy. Your attention to detail and tireless dedication has been an inspiration. Thanks, also, to Eileen Hayes, who offered me new ways to deal with old issues. Thank you, Mark McKnight. You supported me with your kind words and provided me with a once-in-a-lifetime working environment.

Also, I am appreciative of the library staff at the University of North Texas: Donna Arnold, Jean Harden, Ralph Hartsock, Marta Hoffman-Wodnicka, Andrew Justice, Morris Martin, Arturo Ortega, and Bob and Daisy Rogers. They not only work to make this library one of the finest in the world, they have supported my endeavors for years.

My colleagues and friends, Rebecca Ringer, Cynthia Beard, Bill McGinney, Stacey Ewing, and Tim Murray have been a part of this process from the very beginning.

I send thanks to my family: Matthew, Andrew, George, and Sandra West. Their belief in me has never wavered.

Lastly, thank you to my incredible wife, Janelle. Without your help I could never have finished this degree. We share this achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
 Chapters	
1. THE ORIGINS OF SMOOTH JAZZ: MISCONCEPTIONS IN MAINSTREAM JAZZ SCHOLARSHIP.....	6
Origins of Crossover Jazz: Soul Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Pop, and Soul Music	10
Soul Jazz.....	11
Soul, Pop, and Rhythm and Blues	18
2. BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FAR OUT THE FAR IN: CHRONOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES IN SMOOTH JAZZ (1960s)	21
Ramsey Lewis: Forging New Dialogues with His Audience.....	23
“The ‘In’ Crowd”	25
Lewis’s Communicative Methods	28
Bringing the People In: The Jazz Crusaders and the Synthesis of Jazz Sensibility with a Popular Repertoire	33
Marginalized by the Mainstream Jazz Community	36
Mixing Jazz Sensibility with a Pop Repertoire.....	40
Forging New Categories: Wes Montgomery.....	49
Beginnings of a Partnership: Wes Montgomery and Creed Taylor	50
“Goin’ out of my Head”	56
3. BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FAR OUT THE FAR IN: CHRONOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES IN SMOOTH JAZZ (1970s)	66
Grover Washington, Jr.: Methods of Improvisation.....	66
Inner City Blues and Its Influence.....	69

	Washington’s Use of Call and Response in “Mister Magic”	74
	Washington’s Use of Melodic Guide Tones in “In the Name of Love”	80
	George Benson: Combining Pop, Jazz, and Blues	84
	Success in Mainstream Jazz, Crossover Jazz, and Rhythm and Blues	85
	George Benson’s Improvisational Style: Combining Blues with Jazz	93
4.	BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FAR OUT THE FAR IN: CHRONOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES IN SMOOTH JAZZ (1980s & 1990s)	100
	Sound and Style: The Hybridic Nature of David Sanborn	100
	Critical Appraisals of Sanborn’s Sound and Style	102
	The Inseparable Elements of Sound and Style: “Straight to the Heart”	106
	Thriving Outside of Jazz History: Spyro Gyra and Fourplay	111
	Origins of Spyro Gyra	115
	Origins of Fourplay	120
	Compositional Processes	123
	Communicative Methods: Lead “Vocals,” Style, and Covers	126
	Ears that Work: Classifying the Critical Discourse Surrounding Kenny G	132
	Kenny G’s Popularity and its Ramifications	134
	Scholarly Criticism	138
	Journalistic Criticism	141
	Creative Criticisms	147
	Criticism from Musicians	150
	Public Criticism	154
5.	THE CRITERIA AND CONCEPTS USED IN ELEVATING, DEFINING, AND DEFENDING JAZZ IN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE	166
	Jazz Becoming “High Art”	169
	Criteria Used in Support of Jazz as High Art	177
	“True Jazz” vs. Commercial Music	187

	The Exclusion of Smooth Jazz from the Standard Jazz Narrative	195
	Conclusion.....	202
6.	SITES OF MUSIC PRODUCTION: THE DIALOGUES OF SMOOTH JAZZ RECORDINGS AND LIVE PERFORMANCES.....	204
	Style and Genre	206
	Defining Genre	210
	Bakhtin and Dialogics	216
	Realms of Potential Dialogue.....	224
	Smooth Jazz Recordings: Expecting Perfection.....	228
	Nostalgia and Smooth Jazz.....	233
	Diversity of Venues and Smooth Jazz Audiences.....	238
	Live Performances of Smooth Jazz: Expecting the Unexpected ...	243
	Onstage: Mainstream and Smooth Jazz Musicians	246
	Diversity of the Smooth Jazz Repertoire	248
	Mainstream Jazz Influences in Live Performances of Smooth Jazz	251
	
	CONCLUSION.....	256
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	259

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
2.1 Harmonic outline of original version of “The ‘In’ Crowd”	29
2.2 Harmonic outline of Ramsey Lewis’s “The ‘In’ Crowd”	30
4.1 Compilation of star ratings for all of Kenny G’s albums	156
4.2 Compilation of star ratings for Grover Washington, Jr.	157
4.3 Compilation of star ratings for David Sanborn	157
4.4 Compilation of star ratings for Kenny G’s <i>Classics in the Key of G</i>	158
6.1 Ethnic composition of smooth jazz radio listeners between 2005 and 2007	239
6.2 Ages of African-American listeners of smooth jazz in 2007	240
6.3 Education of African-American listeners of smooth jazz in 2007	241
6.4 Education of African-American listeners of smooth jazz in 2007	241

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

	Page
1.1	Excerpt from Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" (1:50)..... 14
1.2	Excerpt from Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" (2:00).....15
1.3	Excerpt from Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" (3:02)15
2.1	Excerpt from Joe Sample's solo on "Eleanor Rigby" (2:35)..... 47
2.2	Excerpt from Joe Sample's solo on "Eleanor Rigby" (4:00) 47
2.3	Excerpt of "Goin' out of my Head" 59
2.4	Excerpt of "Goin' out of my Head" 59
2.5	Excerpt of "Goin' out of my Head" 59
2.6	Excerpt of "Goin' out of my Head" 60
2.7	Excerpt of "Goin' out of my Head" 60
2.8	Orchestral accompaniment to "Goin' out of my Head" (:30)..... 62
2.9	Orchestral accompaniment to "Goin' out of my Head" (:40)..... 63
2.10	Orchestral accompaniment to "Goin' out of my Head" (1:09) 63
2.11	Wes Montgomery's solo on "Goin' out of my Head" (1:40) 64
3.1	Opening bass ostinato to "Inner City Blues" 72
3.2	Introduction to "Mister Magic" 75
3.3	Opening phrase of "Mister Magic" (:25)..... 76
3.4	Excerpt from "Mister Magic" (:35) 77
3.5	Excerpt from "Mister Magic" (:40)..... 77
3.6	Grover Washington's use of call and response (4:45) 78
3.7	Grover Washington's use of call and response (5:14)..... 79
3.8	Grover Washington's use of melodic guide tones (2:35)..... 82
3.9	Grover Washington's use of melodic guide tones (2:35)..... 82

3.10	Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “Body Talk” (1:40).....	95
3.11	Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “Body Talk” (2:56).....	96
3.12	Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “C-Smooth” (2:43)	97
3.13	Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “On Broadway” (3:39).....	98
4.1	Opening phrase of David Sanborn’s “Straight to the Heart”.....	107
4.2	Excerpt from David Sanborn’s solo on “Straight to the Heart” (:55).....	108
4.3	Excerpt from David Sanborn’s solo on “Straight to the Heart” (1:50).....	109

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2002, I had recently completed a master's degree in jazz studies at the University of North Texas, one of the most prominent music institutions in the nation. I was a product of a rigorous program that emphasized the importance of transcribing jazz solos, jazz theory, and building a large repertoire of jazz tunes. I was confident that I could perform any style of jazz. Armed with this knowledge, I was called to perform with an eminent local smooth jazz trumpeter. Along with many of my peers, I believed that smooth jazz was a relatively simple style that I could "pull off" with minimal trouble. After all, I had been trained by prominent instructors and felt certain that if I could navigate complex jazz tunes, I could certainly play a "one-chord vamp."

The performance began with a series of jazz standards, like "Four" and "Little Sunflower," then the trumpeter called "Sunny" and promptly counted off. At the last second I said, "What's Sunny?" The group's collective silence and glares of incredulity let me know that I was not prepared for this jazz style. None of the musicians could believe that I did not know this tune; in fact, I dared not admit that I had never even heard of it. As the bass player yelled out the chord progression, the other players alerted me that I was not "playing it right." Considering my extensive jazz training, I was confident that my modal interpretation was appropriate and it was *they* who could not appreciate the brilliance of such a performance. Of course, "Sunny" was only the first in a long list of tunes that I had never heard of and could not play "right." I was lucky to be called back, beginning my present association with smooth jazz.

Having performed smooth jazz for years now, I have found that smooth jazz consists of a canonic repertoire and a rich history of personal styles. For example,

“Sunny,” in smooth jazz circles, is as common as “All the Things You Are” in mainstream jazz circles. In other words, if you don’t know “Sunny,” you don’t know much about smooth jazz. In smooth jazz, like other jazz styles, knowing the tune is just the beginning. When a bandleader calls “Sunny,” what style is appropriate? Should I interpret it like Joe McBride, Kim Waters, Les McCann, or Stevie Wonder? There are hundreds of versions of the tune. Just as a mainstream pianist must determine what style is appropriate for a version of “All the Things You Are,” a smooth jazz pianist must make the same stylistic decisions. When I first performed “Sunny,” I was not playing it “right” because I was not aware of the long performance history of the tune, and was therefore unable to determine an appropriate style.

I have discovered that smooth jazz exhibits a large repertoire of standard and original compositions, includes a variety of performing styles, has a large, receptive, and affluent audience, and surprisingly—to a player steeped in mainstream jazz—is fun to play. So why do so many jazz critics and scholars hate it so much? “Caught Between Jazz and Pop” examines the origins, performance, and reception of this maligned jazz style and the concepts that the mainstream jazz community uses in misrepresenting it.

Chapter 1, “The Origins of Smooth Jazz: Misconceptions in Mainstream Jazz Scholarship” begins with an examination of current misconceptions about the origins of smooth jazz. Many scholars describe smooth jazz as an evolutionary outcome of the jazz-fusion era. I argue that smooth jazz is an autonomous jazz style that is not a direct outgrowth of a mainstream jazz style. This chapter contains an examination of the complex origins of smooth jazz, focusing on the blending of popular musical characteristics with jazz improvisation.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4, “Bridging the Gap between the Far Out and the Far In: Chronological Case Studies in Smooth Jazz,” examine the performers of early crossover jazz of the 1960s to contemporary performers like Kenny G. In these chapters, I discuss the dialogues that these artists conceived and maintained between themselves and their audiences. These dialogues exist within audience participation, repertoire, improvisational style, and compositional style. While the particular manner in which these dialogues occur is specific to each artist, it is within these dialogues that much of the uniqueness of smooth jazz resides.

Chapter 5, “The Criteria and Concepts Used in Elevating, Defining, And Defending Jazz in Historical Discourse,” examines how popular jazz styles have been unfairly treated in mainstream jazz scholarship and criticism. I suggest that many early and influential jazz critics employed fixed criteria and positioned “true jazz” against commercial music in order to elevate jazz to the status of art music. These concepts continue to be used in contemporary writings and result in the marginalization of more popular jazz styles, such as smooth jazz.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, “Sites of Music Production: The Dialogues of Smooth Jazz Recordings and Live Performances,” I examine studio recordings and live performances of smooth jazz. Much of the criticism of smooth jazz focuses on supposedly slick and overproduced studio recordings. Critics frequently charge that most smooth jazz recordings feature glossy packaging and pristine studio editing, resulting in a too-perfect product. I argue that these recordings do not represent the complete musical nature of smooth jazz. Many smooth jazz studio recordings are designed for diverse listening environments. Smooth jazz artists realize that their

recordings should be as universally accepted as possible, making sure to record in a musical style that will have the largest radio appeal. Radio airplay is especially important because radio stations broadcast to such a wide range of venues and listeners. A successful smooth jazz recording must be distinctive enough to interest an active listener and, at the same time, not interfere with casual or background listeners. This product is the result of communicative loop between consumers, marketing research companies, media outlets, and musicians.

Live performances show an equally important, but typically neglected, side of smooth jazz. Live performances enable performers to extend solos, interact with each other, and communicate directly with the audience. While recordings are a useful source for musical analysis, smooth jazz, like other styles of jazz, is an improvisatory music that utilizes multiple sites of production and cannot be accurately judged on recordings alone.

Each of these performance sites hosts specific kind of dialogues. Using genre studies borrowed from literary, popular music, and jazz scholars, I examine these unique interactions based on audience expectations. I argue that audiences expect different musical, social, and physical gestures according to each performance site. These expectations can be complied with, bent, or broken.

Admittedly, smooth jazz is an unlikely topic for a dissertation. Many critics, scholars, and musicians have dismissed smooth jazz as a distant and unappealing offshoot of mainstream jazz, a synthetic and soulless commercial enterprise, or simply as a style not worthy of consideration. My experience with this style has shown that there is as much validity in smooth jazz as there is in any other jazz style. In fact, the

disdain that mainstream critics and scholars have for smooth jazz has fueled my interest. After all, the mainstream jazz community has historically expressed contempt for swing, bebop, soul jazz, hard bop, funk, rock and roll, and fusion. My intent is not necessarily to place smooth jazz within the standard jazz narrative but to show that peripheral or scorned jazz styles merit examination.

CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS OF SMOOTH JAZZ: MISCONCEPTIONS IN MAINSTREAM JAZZ SCHOLARSHIP

This chapter addresses some of the existing misconceptions about the origins of smooth jazz. Many jazz histories position smooth jazz as a direct result of the fusion era. For example, Bill Milkowski in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* states:

The fusion movement had become codified and diluted by the late '70s. Groups and individuals like the Crusaders, Chuc k Mangione, Bob James, Ramsey Lewis, Grover Washington Jr., Spyro Gyra, and Je ff Lorber Fusion began smoothing off the rough edges, producing a more palatable strain of pop-jazz . . .¹

Milkowski's comments are typical of how the origins of smooth jazz are treated in mainstream jazz scholarship.² First, he states that the jazz-fusion style had become codified and diluted by the end of the 1970s. The term "codified," as Milkowski uses it, alludes to the homogenization of the aesthetics, performances, and performers of the jazz-fusion era. This usage reinforces Milkowski's underlying message: crossover music of the 1970s was the result of the dilution of the individuality and the spirit of the jazz-fusion era.³ Upon closer examination, diverse performers such as Ramsey Lewis, Spyro Gyra, and The Crusaders have very different musical influences and backgrounds and were not part of a diluted or homogenous style. For instance, Ramsey Lewis's musical background is in classical and gospel piano styles, and he achieved critical success early

¹ Bill Milkowski, "Fusion," in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (Oxford University Press, 2000), 508-509.

² I am using the admittedly vague term "mainstream jazz" to denote the performers, performances, and styles articulated in the standard jazz narrative. This narrative has been constructed and reinforced in texts such as Barry Ulanov's *A History of Jazz in America*, Mark Gridley's *Jazz Styles*, and Lewis Porter's *Jazz: From Its Origins to the Present*.

³ I have chosen to use the term "crossover" as a descriptor for the era of music that occurred generally between 1970 and 1985. The term "smooth jazz" was not used until the mid 1980s. Important performers such as Grover Washington, Jr., The Crusaders, Spyro Gyra, and Bob James gained prominence as crossover artists in the 1970s.

on by winning his first Grammy award in 1965. His earlier recordings feature a balance of gospel and traditional jazz piano styles. Spyro Gyra, on the other hand, is a musical group that reached national prominence around 1979. Spyro Gyra's sound is based on the unmistakable timbre of Jay Beckenstein's alto saxophone. It is, therefore, inaccurate to conclude that artists as distinctive as Ramsey Lewis and Spyro Gyra are part of a so-called homogeneous jazz style. The crossover era, a term that I use to denote a pre-1980s smooth jazz style period, contains as many diverse artists as in any other jazz era. Second, many of the artists that Milkowski cites as contributing to a diluted version of jazz fusion gained attention well before the late 1970s. Grover Washington, Jr. recorded *Inner City Blues* in 1971 and The Crusaders fully adopted their crossover style in the early 1970s. Milkowski's chronology is most likely the result of the common belief that smooth jazz is an evolutionary outcome of the jazz-fusion era. Considering that significant works by Grover Washington, Jr. and The Crusaders occurred simultaneously with much of the music of the jazz-fusion period, it is incorrect to state that these artists "smoothed off the rough edges" of jazz fusion.

Other writers, like Stuart Nicholson, have repeated the misconception that smooth jazz evolved from the jazz-fusion era:

As we have seen, one direction saw the colonisation of jazz-rock by record companies resulting in fusion, which with further commercial refinement during the 1980s and 1990s produced so-called 'smooth jazz'. A contemporary update (in terms of dance beats, melodic hooks and electronic technology) of 1970s fusion . . .⁴

Like Milkowski, Nicholson dismisses smooth jazz as simply a contemporary update of the jazz-fusion era. He overlooks the fact that many early smooth jazz artists

⁴ Stuart Nicholson, "Fusions and Crossovers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, eds. Mervyn Cooke and David Horn (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 231.

were performing contemporaneously with jazz-fusion artists like The Headhunters, Weather Report, and Miles Davis.

Not all scholars have adopted the fusion-crossover-smooth jazz paradigm. Ted Gioia briefly questioned these misconceptions in *The History of Jazz*. Gioia, within a section discussing Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, states: "This record may be, as many claim, the father of jazz-rock fusion. Yet if so, one struggles to see its paternal resemblance to the overly arranged, ever-so-slick Grover Washington and Spyro Gyra releases it supposedly spawned."⁵ Gioia's observations are well founded.⁶ It is difficult to view the melodic, groove-oriented music of Grover Washington, Jr. as an evolutionary result of the thickly dissonant music of fusion-era Miles Davis, but even if these two styles were more alike, their chronological position would indicate that there is a negligible cause-and-effect relationship.

As Gioia points out, there are many fundamental differences between crossover jazz and jazz fusion. First, the high degree of instrumental virtuosity of many of jazz-fusion's performers (Chick Corea, Jaco Pastorius, Joe Zawinul, Stanley Clarke) was never a vital part of crossover jazz. This is not to say that crossover jazz is not a virtuosic music; virtuosity can exist in many forms. For instance, the meaningful phrasing of a well-crafted melody can be as challenging as any high-speed scalar passage.⁷ Second,

⁵ Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 366.

⁶ Later, Gioia dismisses his earlier point and states "Grover Washington, Al Jarreau, Ronnie Laws, and Hubert Laws strived to create a slicker fusion style. Softening the rawness of *Bitches Brew*, avoiding the intricacies of McLaughlin or Corea." in *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 368.

⁷ Miles Davis is certainly considered a virtuosic performer but is not generally regarded as a masterful technician. He is renowned for virtuosic phrasing and melodic interpretations. It may be advantageous to utilize some of the same aesthetic analyses used in examinations of Davis's work to analyze the works of crossover artists like Grover Washington, Jr.

crossover jazz has a history of cover treatments of popular tunes (“Inner City Blues,” “Eleanor Rigby,” “Ain’t No Sunshine”). There is little history of cover tunes in the jazz-fusion era. Lastly, the harmonic foundation of many jazz-fusion compositions, like “Birdland” or “Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy,” is usually much more complex than those of crossover jazz. In fact, many popular tunes, such as “Inner City Blues,” are built on only one or two harmonies. This apparent simplicity enabled other musical aspects, such as melody or groove, to become more prominent. Of course, “harmonic simplicity” can be as misleading as virtuosity. What may be simple on paper is not so simple in actual performance. Nesbert “Stix” Hooper, drummer and founding member of The Crusaders, comments on the understated demands of simplicity: “The challenges of the music are not always in the complexities. The so-called simplicities can be *very* challenging. As much as I respect Chick Corea and Mahavishnu and a lot of other great musicians, it takes a different kind of person to sit in on a Mahalia Jackson soul session.”⁸

The musical differences between crossover jazz and jazz fusion are too great to ignore. The performers of these two genres may have influenced each other, but there are fundamental musical distinctions that indicate that crossover jazz did not directly evolve from jazz fusion. So, if crossover jazz did not evolve from jazz fusion, from where did it originate?

⁸ Lee Underwood, “The Crusaders: Knights Without Jazz,” *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976, 40.

Origins of Crossover Jazz: Soul Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Pop, and Soul Music

Crossover jazz is the result of the diverse musical environment of the 1960s. It is impractical here to encapsulate the nature of American music of this period, but it is possible to focus on specific genres that led to the crossover era of the 1970s. Early crossover artists like Ramsey Lewis and Wes Montgomery were influenced by soul jazz (sometimes known as hard bop) and such popular styles as soul and rhythm and blues. Mark Gridley offers one of the few in-depth discussions on the origins of smooth jazz in *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. In “The Soul Saxes and Contemporary Jazz,” Gridley explains that some of the saxophonists of the “soul jazz” genre were influential on crossover jazz and ultimately on smooth jazz. Gridley briefly discusses popular saxophonists from the 1940s such as Earl Bostic and Eddie “Cleanhead” Vinson. He draws connections from this earlier generation to King Curtis, Junior Walker, Wilton Felder, and to later generations represented by Maceo Parker, Stanley Turrentine, and Grover Washington, Jr. According to Gridley, these influences have manifested in three different styles in the 1980s. The first style is a refined smooth jazz style, represented by Kenny G (Kenneth Gorelick). Gridley describes Kenny G’s style: “building upon the 1960s style of Wilton Felder and 1970s style of Grover Washington, Jr., Kenny G softened their manners and simplified their tendencies toward melodic development. He stressed ornamentation more than generating new melodic ideas.”⁹ This is a perceptive description of Kenny G’s style because it underscores his emphasis on ornamentation and further differentiates his style from the improvisational phrasing of

⁹ Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 9th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006), 335.

mainstream jazz saxophonists. Indeed, Gorelick's melodic style is based on non-mainstream saxophonists such as Wilton Felder and Grover Washington, Jr. The second of Gridley's three styles targets the "rough, raw style" of David Sanborn. As in the case of Kenny G, Sanborn's style is not entirely derived from mainstream saxophonists, but is closely aligned with the styles of Hank Crawford and Maceo Parker. Lastly, Gridley recognizes the versatility of Michael Brecker's style. Gridley acknowledges that Brecker's versatility embodies influences from John Coltrane to Stanley Turrentine. While these categories may appear overly simplistic to some, Gridley succeeds in demonstrating the influences of non-mainstream, soul jazz performers. He summarizes:

These styles emulated blues singing and gospel singing by using short, simple phrases and voice-like cries, wails, and moans. The tone qualities were not the lightweight, dry, pale timbres associated with cool jazz saxophonists Stan Getz, Lee Konitz, or Paul Desmond. Nor were they the rich, lush, smooth timbres of swing era saxophonists Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter. Instead, they were coarse, and were delivered with a hard-edged insistence.¹⁰

Gridley is correct in stating that crossover and smooth jazz performers did not necessarily associate their styles with mainstream artists. In the case of crossover jazz in the late 1960s, many artists were influenced by, or affiliated themselves, with the soul jazz style.

Soul Jazz

Like crossover and smooth jazz, soul jazz is frequently misunderstood and under-represented in mainstream jazz scholarship. Soul jazz is a hybrid jazz style incorporating traits from traditional jazz, popular music, and gospel music. The hybrid nature of this music and its proximity to popular music may account for its limited role in the

¹⁰ Ibid., 334.

standard jazz narrative. For example, Alyn Shipton's *A New History of Jazz* contains only two pages dedicated to soul jazz and almost all of it relates to more mainstream jazz artists like Joe Henderson.

In order to understand the origins of crossover jazz, one must have a comprehensive understanding of soul jazz. Unfortunately, defining soul jazz is difficult.

Barry Kernfeld attempts to define it in the entry "Soul Jazz" in the *New Grove*

Dictionary of Jazz:

A type of hard bop dating from the mid-1950s . . . Harmonic progressions and riffs often emphasize the subdominant and the plagal cadence (IV–I) long associated in church music with the singing of the word "amen." In most respects, however, the definable differences between soul jazz and hard bop – the instrumentation, structures of tunes, melody, harmony, rhythm, and techniques of improvisation – are negligible, and the stylistic labels connote feeling and atmosphere rather than distinctive musical characteristics.¹¹

Kernfeld states that there are few real musical differences between soul jazz and hard bop and cites the use of the plagal cadence as being the only quantifiable difference between the styles. Unfortunately, Kernfeld is missing the connections that many soul jazz performers had with popular music, the blues, and even Latin music. Although these vital connections may be grouped together in his "feeling and atmosphere," these connections may offer more substantial identifying characteristics than just the plagal cadence and deserve more scholarly study. As Kernfeld's definition demonstrates, soul jazz is difficult to define because of the diversity of performers and styles.

David Rosenthal, in *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music, 1955-1965*, describes soul jazz as one of three divisions of hard bop. Rosenthal states that soul jazz performers were "musicians on the borderline between jazz and the popular black tradition: for

¹¹ Barry Kernfeld, "Soul Jazz," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed October 6, 2007).

instance, Horace Silver, alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley, and organist Jimmy Smith.”¹² These “borderline” musicians drew from disparate styles and defined their own musical personalities. Their blending of popular and jazz elements produced such defined musical personalities that they are three of the most beloved figures in jazz history. Rosenthal continues, “Artists like these, whose LPs and singles often appeared on *Billboard’s* charts, drew heavily on urban blues (Jimmy Smith’s “Midnight Special”), gospel (Horace Silver’s “The Preacher”), and Latin American music (Cannonball Adderley’s “Jive Samba”). Without renouncing bebop’s discoveries, their heavy beat and blues-influenced phrasing won broad popular appeal, reestablishing jazz as a staple on ghetto jukeboxes.”¹³ Indeed, artists such as Bobby Timmons, Jimmy Smith, Les McCann, Gene Harris, and Horace Silver drew on a variety of sources which resulted in a diverse and rich style that deserves in-depth study.¹⁴ This diversity makes defining the entire genre difficult, but certain general characteristics can be discussed.

Horace Silver, a proponent of the “soul jazz” style, summarizes some of these characteristics on the liner notes of his *Serenade to a Soul Sister* (1968).¹⁵ Silver presents a glimpse into what he thought was essential in performing and writing soul jazz in the 1960s. On *Serenade to a Soul Sister*, Silver states that a good jazz composition and solo should include these elements: melodic beauty, meaningful simplicity, harmonic beauty, and rhythm. Examining Silver’s points may provide a foundation for a better understanding of this genre.

¹² David Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music: 1955-1965*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 44.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A comprehensive study of soul jazz is necessary but beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁵ Horace Silver, *Serenade to a Soul Sister*, Blue Note BLP 4277, 2004, re-issued CD.

The first of Silver's characteristics of soul jazz is melodic beauty. Of course, melodic beauty is important to every musical genre but it is especially important in soul jazz. Unlike some styles of mainstream jazz, where the melody sometimes becomes secondary to the accompanying solo, the melody is of central importance in soul jazz. The melody must be memorable and well designed to withstand repetition and ornamentation. Some of the soloists of soul jazz did not necessarily demonstrate high levels of virtuosity.¹⁶ Long passages of scalar improvisations are not a common characteristic of soul jazz. Instead, soul jazz artists looked toward ornamentation and clever variations to maintain listener interest. For instance, Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" displays a mastery of ornamentation over scalar treatment.¹⁷ In measure one of his solo (ex. 1.1), Morgan emphatically states the tonic note, E-flat, and does not venture beyond the tonic blues harmony.

Example 1.1 Excerpt of Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" (1:50).



¹⁶ While it is true that the performers of soul jazz generally did not demonstrate the same level of technical virtuosity as their bebop predecessors, it does not mean that they were not virtuosos. Performers such of Julian "Cannonball" Adderley and organist Jimmy Smith possessed a very high level of technical skill. These musicians were equally proficient in the style of bebop as they were in soul jazz, and this highly refined mixture of style makes categorizing performers difficult.

¹⁷ Lee Morgan, *The Sidewinder*, Blue Note Records BN 84157, 1963.

He repeats this treatment again during the sub-dominant A-flat (ex. 1.2).

Example 1.2 Excerpt of Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" (2:00).



In fact, in all three choruses that Morgan improvises on he never ventures far from the bluesy melody of the tune. He goes as far as to repeat B-flat throughout the first seven measures of the third chorus, de-emphasizing any scalar treatment and focusing on the tension created by a held note (ex. 1.3).

Example 1.3 Excerpt of Lee Morgan's solo on "The Sidewinder" (3:02).

Morgan had the technical ability to play complex scalar improvisations throughout "The Sidewinder." Instead, he chose to ornament the melody with blues-derived phrases.

Second, Silver identifies "meaningful simplicity" as an important musical characteristic of soul jazz. Many soul jazz artists derived complex meanings from simple musical materials. For instance, the use of plagal cadences can be considered simple when compared with other, more complex, jazz harmonic cycles. In soul jazz, though, the plagal gesture can represent a complex level of meaning. The common "amen"

cadence is a widely recognizable musical gesture in North America and Europe. Its use commonly recalls a religious environment. Considering the large number of African-American performers in soul jazz, the plagal cadence more precisely recalls gospel music. In fact, the frequent use of the plagal gesture may be one of the many reasons that this music was characterized as “soul” jazz.

The plagal gesture exemplified more than just a religious environment; it represented a powerful mix of sacred and secular. Live venues for soul jazz were bars and juke joints. Furthermore, soul jazz pieces such as Lee Morgan’s “The Sidewinder” were played on juke boxes most commonly found in commercial establishments. Yet one of the most prominent characteristics of this music, the plagal cadence, evoked a religious atmosphere. This mixture of sacred and secular was already in use in much of African-American popular music. Artists such as Ray Charles, Marvin Gaye, and Stevie Wonder incorporated plagal gestures throughout their repertoire. Soul jazz performers were working with multiple gestural mixtures. First, they used a religious gesture within performances of secular music at a secular venue. Second, they used secular gestures (from popular music) within a culturally sacred genre (mainstream jazz).

Titles further exemplifying the mixing of sacred and secular are another identifiable aesthetic at work in soul jazz. Titles like Jimmy Smith’s “The Sermon,” Joe Zawinul’s “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy,” and Horace Silver’s “The Preacher” convey a sacred meaning. As with the plagal gestures, this sacred meaning is used within a secular context. Aside from the plagal gestures themselves, there is little overt religiosity in these pieces.

Silver's third characteristic of soul jazz is "harmonic beauty." Once again, beauty can be simple. Many of the tunes of the soul jazz era remain popular among performers because the harmonic foundation leaves room for interpretation. For example, the A section of Bobby Timmons's "Moanin'" is comprised almost entirely of plagal gestures. Of course, the performer can choose to play these gestures but this piece offers the performer other options. Instead of the plagal gestures, one can perform a wide variety of harmonic cycles based on tonic or a variety of harmonic cycles based on minor tonic. If the performer chooses, he or she can dispense with cyclic treatment altogether and use the tonic as a pedal tone. Timmons's harmonic foundation provides performers with an unlimited variety of harmonic options. Timmons's "Moanin'" may not be typically considered harmonically beautiful, but its beauty lies in its versatility.

Lastly, Silver names "rhythm" is also an important characteristic of soul jazz. In fact, rhythm is one of the key identifiable traits of soul jazz. Soul jazz was not based entirely on the typical jazz swing pattern. The "even eighth" pattern was an integral part of popular music in the 1960s and was adopted by many soul jazz artists. Songs such as Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man," Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder," and Ramsey Lewis's "The 'In' Crowd" utilize a non-swing drum pattern. Swing is an important characteristic of mainstream jazz, but this pattern, used prominently in soul jazz, is an antecedent to the prominent backbeat feel of crossover jazz in the early 1970s. Other even eighth-note based styles, such as Latin music, were also influential. For example, Julian Adderley's "Jive Samba" and Horace Silver's "Nica's Dream" call for distinctive treatments of Latin rhythms. The use of Latin rhythm is unquestionably linked to the popularity of bossa nova in the 1960s. Unlike popular treatments of bossa nova, for

example those by Stan Getz, artists like Cannonball Adderley invigorated the rhythm and used it to support high-energy improvisations.

In summary, the soul jazz style featured diverse performers such as Lee Morgan, Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons, and Cannonball Adderley. Despite this diversity, the soul jazz style conveyed certain musical characteristics. First, the interpolation of gospel influences, such as the plagal cadence, was a recognizable trait of soul jazz. Second, soul jazz performers relied on melodic improvisations, not necessarily relying on virtuosic scalar passages. Lastly, soul jazz frequently featured non-swing patterns which were borrowed from popular music and Latin influences. All three of these traits proved to be influential to crossover and smooth jazz artists. An equally important influence on crossover jazz was the rich environment of popular music in the 1960s.

Soul, Pop, and Rhythm and Blues

American popular music in the 1960s is a model of diversity. Dissimilar performers such as the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan, Frank Zappa, Jimi Hendrix, The Rolling Stones, and Johnny Cash reached their highest levels of popularity in the 1960s and extraordinarily popular groups like the Beatles changed the landscape of popular music forever. The songwriting abilities and business expertise of the Beatles transformed the American popular industry.¹⁸ After the group broke up, the individual members maintained a high level of personal popularity and tunes such as “Yesterday,” “Eleanor Rigby,” and “Hey Jude” have remained popular. Their songs have influenced jazz artists

¹⁸ Scholars are finally acknowledging the multi-faceted influence of the Beatles. Scholarly publications include: Walter Everett, *The Beatles As Musicians: The Quarry Men through Rubber Soul* and *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver Through The Anthology*, Allan F. Moore, *The Beatles: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society*, edited by Ian Inglis.

as well. Jazz musicians including Count Basie, Paul Desmond, George Benson, Brad Mehldau, and Joshua Redman have performed Beatles tunes.¹⁹ Versions of Beatles tunes performed by crossover artists Ramsey Lewis and The Jazz Crusaders are discussed later.

In regards to crossover jazz, soul music was particularly influential. A history of soul music in the 1960s is beyond the scope of this study but specific performers and musical traits should be addressed as influences on crossover jazz artists. “Soul music” is a term that does not completely convey the complexity and stylistic diversity of the music. For example, the southern soul styles of Stax Records performers Otis Redding or Wilson Pickett are different from the musical styles of Detroit soul performers Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. As in the case of soul jazz, umbrella terms like “soul” do little to demonstrate the stylistic diversity of these artists. Nevertheless, the common label of soul music did represent the most prominent emergence of African-American music at that time. Performers such as Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin blended elements of gospel music and rhythm and blues, perfecting a popular music style that appealed equally to white and African-American audiences. The popularity of this genre resulted in widely recognizable African-American artists. Many soul artists such as Marvin Gaye, Ray Charles, and James Brown used their popularity to further the goals of the African-American Civil Rights Movement. Consequently, these artists, and their music, became respected not only by the public but by jazz musicians as well.

¹⁹ There is a very large repertoire of Beatles tunes performed by jazz musicians. It would be worthwhile to investigate the various connections between the Beatles and jazz. These connections could include individual stylistic variations, choice of repertoire, or generational differences in treatments of Beatles tunes.

Early crossover musicians used elements of soul music. As mentioned, gospel music was a part of soul jazz, as it was in early crossover. For instance, Ramsey Lewis used gospel and blues gestures in order to convey an authentic or “down home” aesthetic. In Lewis’s case, these gestures were representative of his own musical background and were exemplified while utilizing popular aesthetics and repertoire.

CHAPTER 2

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FAR OUT AND THE FAR IN: CHRONOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES IN SMOOTH JAZZ (1960s)

In mainstream jazz criticism and scholarship, smooth jazz is frequently maligned, misrepresented, or overlooked altogether.²⁰ Its connections to popular music aesthetics, its avoidance of typical mainstream jazz musical attributes, and its popularity contribute to its marginalization by critics and scholars alike. Jazz scholars and critics typify this marginalization in writings that use terms such as “anodyne” or “sellout” to describe smooth jazz performers.²¹ Furthermore, considering the enormous popularity of this jazz style, it is remarkable that its discussion in most jazz histories is commonly reduced to a few paragraphs.

I argue that smooth jazz is the most recent version of a jazz style that has a long and rich history. This history features artists who have customarily combined the popular music and culture of their day with the instrumentation and improvisational nature of jazz. The synthesis of elements of popular music and jazz improvisation not only created unique musical styles but it also opened new dialogues between the performers and the audience. These dialogues did not form as the simple outcome of jazz musicians playing popular songs; rather, they were purposely created and cultivated

²⁰ I am using the phrase “mainstream jazz criticism” to describe the works of jazz journalists such as Martin Williams, Ralph J. Gleason, Stanley Dance, and Dan Morgenstern. These critics specialized in journalistic critiques of recordings and live performances, and had a shared interest in documenting the lives of jazz musicians. An excellent critique and history of jazz criticism is John Gennari’s *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). I use the phrase “mainstream jazz scholarship” to represent the works of writers who specialize in diverse analyzes. This group consists of writers such as Ingrid Monson, Krin Gabbard, Scott DeVeaux, and Lewis Porter.

²¹ The term “anodyne” is found in Alyn Shipton’s description of Kenny G in his *A New History of Jazz*, page 872. The term “sellout,” in reference to smooth jazz, is found on the cover of *Jazz Times*, August 2005, “Was guitarist Wes Montgomery a Genius and a Sellout?”

by musical or social means and culminated in a specific repertoire, album packaging, and musical arrangements.

The following case studies explore misconceptions in jazz scholarship, examine the styles, artists, and social conditions that contributed to crossover jazz, analyze the improvisational styles of crossover and smooth jazz artists, address some of the dialogues that these artists formed with their listeners, and evaluate the critical discourse surrounding crossover and smooth jazz.

Ramsey Lewis: Forging New Dialogues with His Audience

Ramsey Lewis was born in Chicago on May 27, 1935. His early piano lessons were based on classical and gospel music. In 1950, Lewis joined a local jazz-dance band called The Cleffs [*sic*] which was comprised of Wallace Burton, saxophone, Eldee Young, bass, and Redd Holt, drums. During his tenure with The Cleffs, Lewis was exposed to jazz artists such as Oscar Peterson, John Lewis, and Charlie Parker. Lewis recalled that at this point, “jazz soon became a major force in my musical life, but European classical and gospel music were of almost equal importance.”²² Lewis drew from a variety of musical styles, and this predilection for musical variety was prominent early in his career. In 1956, Lewis joined with Young and Holt to form the Ramsey Lewis Trio. They released their first album, *Ramsey Lewis and the Gentlemen of Swing*, that same year. This album features typical jazz standards such as “My Funny Valentine” and “I’ll Remember April” as well as atypical pieces like Bizet’s *Carmen*. *Carmen* stands out as an unusual repertoire choice for a jazz artist. Even at this early point in his career, Lewis had begun utilizing his stylistic diversity as a way to reach out to his audience. Lewis’s attempts paid off and his version of *Carmen* remained popular throughout the 1950s; he highlighted it in his live shows and on *Ramsey Lewis Trio in Chicago* (1960).

Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, Lewis displayed a wide variety of repertoire. For instance, in 1958 Lewis released *Down To Earth*, a collection of traditional songs such as “Greensleeves,” “John Henry,” and “Come Back to Sorrento.” *Down to Earth* features Lewis performing gospel and jazz-styled treatments of these

²² This statement is taken from Lewis’s website, <http://www.ramseylewis.com/main> (accessed January 1, 2008).

traditional folk tunes. In 1962, Lewis released *Country Meets the Blues*. This album contains Lewis's versions of country and blues tunes such as "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Blueberry Hill," and "My Bucket's Got a Hole in It." These albums demonstrate Lewis's strong interest in a variety of styles and genres.

Through the early 1960s, Lewis's stylistic diversity and gregarious stage presence helped make the trio moderately successful. In 1964, *At the Bohemian Caverns*, boosted by a hit single "Something You Got," reached number 63 on the pop charts. With this success in mind, Lewis recorded again at the Bohemian Caverns in 1965. This live recording was released in 1965 as *The 'In' Crowd*. As was customary with Lewis, the majority of his repertoire was jazz standards with one or two popular tunes added. *The 'In' Crowd* (1965) includes jazz standards like "Come Sunday" and "Felicidade," but also features the popular tunes "You Been Talkin' 'Bout Me Baby" and "The 'In' Crowd." The popularity of the single, "The 'In' Crowd," helped Lewis become one of the most popular and successful jazz musicians of the 1960s.

"The 'In' Crowd" reached No. 5 on *Billboard's* Pop Singles Chart in 1965 and helped Lewis win a Grammy for "Best Jazz Performance-Small Group or Soloist with Small Group" in 1965. Unfortunately, this popular success was followed by criticism by the mainstream jazz press that continues today. While discussing the soul jazz style, Chip Stern stated: "The genre certainly encouraged a lot of greasy posturing, but the borrowings of a few hacks like Ramsey Lewis shouldn't overshadow the genuine celebration that Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons . . . achieved."²³ Stern's bold description of Ramsey Lewis as a "hack" is unfortunate and Lewis is aware of these critical

²³ Chip Stern. "The Crusaders Lose the Groove," *The Village Voice*, July 30, 1980, 55.

statements: “We had begun, even maybe with the eleventh or twelfth album, putting one or two songs on that weren’t too heavy, maybe something more fun. We lived through that and remained the darling of the jazz crowd until one of those songs became a huge hit. And when that happened, the critics said, ‘Wait-jazz artists don’t sell these kind of numbers, so even though there’s only that one song, “The ‘In’ Crowd,” on that one album, that one song no longer qualifies you to be a full-fledged member of the jazz community.”²⁴ Lewis may have lost his full-fledged membership to the jazz community, but the single “The ‘In’ Crowd” helped to pioneer a new style of jazz that would lead into the crossover era of the 1970s.

“The ‘In’ Crowd”

“The ‘In’ Crowd” was written by Billy Page and later popularized by Dobie Gray in 1965. Gray’s version of the “The ‘In’ Crowd” exemplified the cool and hip aesthetic of the mid 1960s. During live performances, Gray surrounded himself with stylish dancers and musicians, dressed in tailored suits, and sang in a smooth, assured, and coolly detached style. While performing “The ‘In’ Crowd,” Gray created an image of himself, and his crowd, as being unreachable by the general public. Gray’s “in crowd” was a social elite that few could ever hope to belong.

Unlike Grey, Ramsey Lewis was not detached from his audience; instead, he relied on connecting with his listeners. In fact, Lewis’s “The ‘In’ Crowd” explores and utilizes various communications with his audience. These dialogues became more fine-tuned and pronounced by crossover artists in the 1970s.

²⁴ Ramsey Lewis, interviewed by Bill Dahl, from *Ramsey Lewis’s Finest Hour*. Verve 314 543 763-2, 2000.

“The ‘In’ Crowd” features a series of audience interactions.²⁵ As the tune begins, the audience demonstrates an immediate recognition of the tune. This is not surprising; Dobie Gray’s version was at the peak of its popularity during Lewis’s performance. Immediately, the audience begins clapping, in fact, they never completely stop clapping throughout the tune. In popular music, this kind of interaction is common. During jazz performances, though, clapping along with the music is not only unusual, it is considered to be outside the parameters of proper conduct. As the clapping indicates, “The ‘In’ Crowd” is not representative of a mainstream jazz performance. This performance exemplifies the hybrid nature of Lewis’s style, which combines jazz with elements of popular music. Lewis comments on the differences between jazz and pop audiences, “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.”²⁶ “Clapping hands and singing along” was a reaction that Lewis was aiming for. Lewis cleverly chose and arranged “The ‘In’ Crowd” to appeal to his audience. The audience’s initial response was confirmation that Lewis’s choices were correct, but Lewis’s initial success is based on more than simple tune recognition. Lewis’s successful version of “The ‘In’ Crowd” is also predicated on his manipulation of the lyrics and imagery of the original.

²⁵ I realize that the live aspects of “The ‘In’ Crowd” could have been staged by the recording company (Argo/Cadet). Considering that there was a live recording at the Bohemian Caverns a year before *The ‘In’ Crowd* and also considering the close connections between the audience’s response and the music itself, I believe that “The ‘In’ Crowd” is a true live recording.

²⁶ Ben Sidran, *Talking Jazz* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1992), 112.

Billy Page's lyrics feature two characters: the lone, hip singer, and a social group known as the "In" crowd. The lyrics feature the singer, espousing his own charms while promoting the various attributes of his social clique, the "In" crowd. The listener does not know what race, economic status, age, or gender makes up this "In" crowd. This particular "In" crowd could consist of college-aged students, middle-aged African-American men, or even a group of teenagers.

Ramsey Lewis's "The 'In' Crowd" offers a detailed interpretation of his own "In" crowd: hip jazz performers and their equally hip audience. In fact, Lewis's imagery is aided by the vagueness of the lyrics. "The 'In' Crowd" could perfectly describe and reinforce the mysterious cultural aesthetic of the jazz musician. Lyrics such as "Dressin' fine, makin' time," "It's easy to find romance, at a spot where the beat's really hot," and "We got our own way of walkin' and we got our way of talkin'" exemplify the common belief that jazz musicians dressed well, were romantically inclined, and invented their own dialect.²⁷

Unlike Doobie Gray, Lewis is not simply creating his "In" crowd through veiled imagery and imagination; he is actively inviting the audience to become part of his "In" crowd. In order for Lewis to create his own "In" crowd, he must utilize various methods of inclusion. First, the fans of Ramsey Lewis were an "In" crowd unto themselves. Compared to pop artists such as the Rolling Stones or The Beach Boys, Lewis was still a lesser known performer so his audience was generally few in number. Furthermore, the

²⁷ One of the most informative articles on the myth of the jazz musician is Ingrid Monson "The Problem With White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48 (1995): 396-422. Other jazz scholars like Ted Gioia (1988), John Gennari (1991), and Gary Tomlinson (1991) have also explored the mythologizing of jazz artists.

attendees of a jazz show in a nightclub in Washington, D.C. represent an even smaller group of dedicated and well-informed listeners. Therefore, even before the first note was performed, there was an “In” crowd in the Bohemian Caverns that night. Second, after years of performing, Lewis was certainly in tune with his audience and chose a tune that most listeners would recognize. The audience recognition, indicated by their yells and clapping, further strengthens the communal experience. Third, Lewis ingeniously employs musical techniques that continue to draw the audience deeper into the performance.

Lewis’s Communicative Methods

Lewis is careful never to venture too far from the original melody. Except for a musical interlude, where he lightly fills, the melody is stated throughout the tune. Considering the overall simplicity of “The ‘In’ Crowd,” Lewis could have constructed long improvisations based on an almost endless number of chord alterations and rhythmic permutations. Why did he choose to stay so close to the original melody? First, the presence of the melody enabled non-jazz listeners to recognize the tune. This is an important aspect of Lewis’s performance. Lewis could have quickly distanced himself from the original melody, but by maintaining close proximity to it, he made it easier for his pop-oriented listeners to appreciate his version. Second, Lewis enabled his more jazz-oriented listeners to appreciate a jazzy version of a popular song. More experienced jazz listeners could readily identify and appreciate the clever modifications that Lewis was applying to “The ‘In’ Crowd.” In performing an easily recognizable version of the

“The ‘In’ Crowd,” Lewis merged his jazz and non-jazz listeners, creating his own “In” crowd.

Rhythmically, Lewis (or Redd Holt) chose a non-swing pattern and increased the tempo from the original. The use of an even eighth-note pattern exemplifies the popular origins of the tune and signals to the audience that this will not be a typical jazz performance. The even eighth-note pattern also helps the listeners identify the tune and aids in establishing its pop origins. It can be challenging to maintain an audience’s interest without lyrics, so the increased tempo can be attributed to Lewis attempting to maintain a high degree of energy.

Lewis also alters the overall harmonic and melodic form of “The ‘In’ Crowd.” The original harmonic form, as sung by Dobie Gray, is as follows:

Figure 2.1. Harmonic outline of original version of “The ‘In’ Crowd.”

I	I	I	I
I	I	I	I
IV	IV	IV	I
I	III	III	vi
vi	II	II	V
V-bVII	bVII	bVII	

Many listeners would not notice, but the original version of “The ‘In’ Crowd” contains a combination of two, three, and four-measure phrases. This is unusual in that most popular songs are based on symmetrical, four- and eight-measure phrases. In the case of “The ‘In’ Crowd,” the phrases mirror and support the flow of the text. The Ramsey Lewis Trio did not feature a vocalist, so they were not as dependent on lyrical

phrasing and imagery. As a result, Lewis simplified the form from the original (fig. 2.2). Lewis’s simplification of the form is unusual. Most jazz treatments of popular songs feature added complexity of harmonic, rhythmic, or formal characteristics. In this case, Lewis has deliberately made his version more symmetrical than the original. There are a few reasons that Lewis would make such modifications.

Figure 2.2 Harmonic outline of Ramsey Lewis’s “The ‘In’ Crowd.”

I	I	I	I
I	I	I	I
IV	IV	IV	IV
I	I	I	I
III	III	VI	VI
II	II	V	V-bVII
bVII	bVII		

To begin with, Lewis may have viewed the asymmetrical form of the original as a needless complication. The somewhat abrupt shifts of harmony could have disrupted the overall groove of the song, especially if the band had not spent an extended period of time rehearsing. In addition, changing the form would not have adversely affected the listener’s identification of the tune. Most importantly, the formal modification resulted in a musical interlude on the tonic (line four of Figure 3.2). This interlude is an open section of the tune. In this interlude, Lewis is free to improvise, set a repeating harmonic groove, or repeat the melody. Lewis chooses to play a repeating, gospel-tinged harmonic pattern that invites more clapping. With the aid the audience’s participation, Lewis solidifies his own “In” crowd within this section.

During the interlude, Lewis repeats his harmonic pattern and utilizes a series of crescendos and decrescendos. As the volume decreases, the audience listens more attentively to the music. While some would criticize Lewis for pandering to the crowd, I suggest that Lewis is maximizing the audience's attention and, at the same time, supporting his "In" crowd. As the band becomes quieter, the audience fills in the sonic gap by clapping, yelling, and stomping, which becomes more prominent than the music. The public approval of the music has forged a like-minded group of listeners. At this point, everyone is part of the music-making experience.

For the majority of listeners who were not at the original performance but have listened to the recording, the sense of community is experienced from a distance. At this distance, though, these listeners can step back and experience the performance from a privileged third-person perspective. They can view the communications between the musicians and the audience as two equal parts of a dialogic experience. Whether they are yelling and clapping or performing dynamic gospel figures, Lewis's trio and the audience are responding to each other's communicative gestures. This is a unique experience; in most mainstream jazz venues, there are limited ways for the audience and musicians to interact. During this singular recording, Lewis achieves a new level of communication with his audience. With this in mind, most listeners would agree that Lewis's own "In" crowd was as important to the success of the recording as Lewis himself.

Lewis refined his musical dialogues with the audience and remains very active as a performer and as a radio and television personality. Lewis is an early example of a mainstream jazz musician who used popular music elements to connect decisively with

his audience. Lewis used popular repertoire, pop-derived rhythms, and various musical methods to communicate with his audience. When this dialogue was fully realized, the audience became active participants in the performance. This philosophy of communication using popular communicative techniques led to the crossover style of the 1970s.

Bringing the People In: The Jazz Crusaders and the Synthesis of Jazz Sensibility with a Popular Repertoire

The history of the Jazz Crusaders is one of the least known, yet most compelling, stories in jazz. The Jazz Crusaders is the only group in jazz history to meet as teenagers, form a successful hard bop group, and, in the 1970s, achieve incredible popular success. Although the Jazz Crusaders are commonly known as pioneers of 1970s crossover jazz, with hits like “Street Life,” and “Keep That Same Old Feeling,” their experiments with popular repertoire began in the mid 1960s. Despite being critically maligned, the Jazz Crusaders combined their jazz sensibilities with a popular repertoire. This hybrid style forged new connections between the artists and their listeners. This style was not arbitrarily decided upon in the early 1970s; it was the result of many years of experimentation and refinement.

In the early 1950s, teenager Nesbert “Stix” Hooper founded Nesbert Hooper and the Swingsters. The Swingsters were made up of an unusual arrangement of three to five saxophones, a trumpet, and rhythm section. According to Hooper, “As I got more sophisticated, I realized that some of the guys couldn’t really cut the music, so I started doing research. I heard about Joe [Sample] and Wayne [Henderson], who lived in another part of Houston.”²⁸ By 1955, the Swingsters included pianist Joe Sample, saxophonist Wilton Felder, drummer Nesbert “Stix” Hooper, and trombonist Wayne Henderson. This group of musicians would later form the core of the Jazz Crusaders. Even as early as 1955, the members of the Swingsters were involved in popular music. Wilton Felder states:

²⁸ Bob Blumenthal, “The Jazz Crusaders,” *The Jazz Crusaders: The Pacific Jazz Quintet Studio Sessions*, Mosaic MD6-230, 2005.

The Swingsters were the hip dance band; you'd call us a cover band today. None of us could write more than our name then, and we only played a little of what you'd call jazz. We were immersed in rhythm and blues and the blues music of the South. Then we realized another kind of sophistication when JATP [Jazz at the Philharmonic] came to Houston. We couldn't believe what we heard, and from that point on jazz became the focal point. We'd go upstairs in Wilton's house and listen to Dizzy's records for hours. I'd be trying to play all of Max Roach's things. That's when we got into serious musicianship."²⁹

The influence of multiple musical styles and genres was an important element in the formative years of the Swingsters and the Houston area was a particularly rich musical environment. Wilton Felder states, "Music was everywhere. Down in Texas you heard all kinds of music, everything. Also, even though we were younger, we could get into the clubs where jam sessions were going on where you could really learn first-hand. It was a very fertile environment."³⁰ Even with the exposure to different musical styles, the most prominent members of the Swingsters decided to focus on jazz and promptly changed their name to the Modern Jazz Sextet. This sextet was comprised of Joe Sample, Wilton Felder, Wayne Henderson, Stix Hooper, bassist Henry Wilson, and flutist Hubert Laws. The group was modeled after the Modern Jazz Quartet and remained intact throughout their tenure at Texas Southern University and into their time in Los Angeles.

By 1958, the members all decided to leave college and move to Los Angeles. This bold move was predicated on the assumption that a record label was interested in their work. Hooper explains, "I wrote to four or five record labels before we left. Only one responded, and that was enough to get us on the road. But the audition never happened

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Denny Townsend, "The Crusaders: A Retrospective," *Jazz Times*, August 1988, 17.

and we were bewildered by the lack of response.”³¹ Indeed, the years in Los Angeles were lean enough to force the Modern Jazz Sextet to rely on their popular music experience. In an attempt to survive financially, The Modern Jazz Sextet became the Hollywood Night Hawks. Joe Sample describes this period: “At that point, we were surviving mainly by playing dances, and began to call ourselves the Hollywood Night Hawks. We chose that name because we had Stix’s initials, NH (Nesbert Hooper), on our music stands. Stix hated his given name, but we had the music stands. We ended up together as the Night Hawks in Las Vegas, as a show band, but we quickly saw that that was not our cup of tea.”³² Although the Modern Jazz Sextet was a purely jazz ensemble, its members were undoubtedly influenced by various elements of the pop music environment and were operating in both the jazz and popular music worlds.

In 1960, Henry Wilson and Hubert Laws left the Modern Jazz Sextet, prompting a new group name. Stix Hooper’s wife, Ramona, suggested the name Crusaders and it quickly evolved into the Jazz Crusaders. At this time, Richard Bock of Pacific Jazz Records showed great interest in recording the Jazz Crusaders. Pacific Jazz was founded by Bock and drummer Roy Harte in 1952 and is regarded as an important source of the West Coast jazz style as well as early recordings of Wes Montgomery, Art Pepper, Clare Fischer, Groove Holmes, and Les McCann. Pacific Jazz also recorded a wide range of music styles, including the works of Gerry Mulligan, The Kentucky Colonels, Ravi Shankar, Kimio Eto, Jean-Luc Ponty, and, of course, the Jazz Crusaders.³³

³¹ Bob Blumenthal, “The Jazz Crusaders,” *The Jazz Crusaders: The Pacific Jazz Quintet Studio Sessions*, Mosaic MD6-230, 2005.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The works of “world music” artists like Ravi Shankar were assigned to World Pacific Records, a division of Pacific Records.

Marginalized by the Mainstream Jazz Community

The Jazz Crusaders remained with Pacific Jazz for nearly ten years and recorded fifteen albums and released countless 45 rpm singles.³⁴ The repertoire of these albums is mostly in hard bop style, and includes performances and compositions that are comparable to any other jazz artist of the 1960s. Unfortunately, most of these recordings are overlooked by the jazz community. This is puzzling because works like “Freedom Sound” and “The Young Rabbits” demonstrate high levels of technical virtuosity and tasteful melodic treatments; they certainly rival any other artist’s work of the 1960s. They demonstrate exactly what jazz *should* sound like in the 1960s: Joe Sample displays a range of harmonic mastery, Felder is well within the John Coltrane aesthetic, and Stix Hooper provides a steady and swinging rhythmic foundation. Yet, even with the majority of their Pacific output as a model for 1960s hard bop, the Jazz Crusaders were criticized, mislabeled, or ignored by the jazz community. For instance, a 1965 review of their work indicates their music, while good, is not entirely jazz:

Whether or not their direction is that conscious, the Jazz Crusaders are definitely a rock-oriented group. Rock and roll gigs underwrote their leaner days, and the influences are still in evidence. Fresh and spirited, they are one of the best exponents of this musical phenomenon.³⁵

Other reviews contain particularly pointed jabs, “. . . the Crusaders’ souped-up arrangement of the pretty *Love is Blue* is tasteless and their quasi-hip version of *Hey Jude* is pretty much a drag from start to finish.”³⁶ A general survey of articles that

³⁴ Early on, Dick Bock decided to release a number of 45 rpm singles, which were edited versions of Jazz Crusaders LPs. These singles were successful and provided the group with their first taste of success with Pacific Jazz.

³⁵ Don Buday, “Caught in the Act: The Jazz Crusaders Madison Club, Baltimore, MD,” *Down Beat*, December 2, 1965, 31.

³⁶ Harvey Pekar, “Review of *Powerhouse*, by The Crusaders,” *Down Beat*, May 15, 1969, 26.

feature the Jazz Crusaders shows an undercurrent of contempt: “The Crusaders: Knights without Jazz,” “The Crusaders: The Sweet and Sour Smell of Success,” and “The Crusaders Lose the Groove.”³⁷ The members of the Jazz Crusaders are aware of their critical reception, or lack thereof. Joe Sample states:

We have always been accepted more by the jazz listener than by the jazz establishment, during the ‘60s, when we still called ourselves the Jazz Crusaders, we were among the *top* jazz groups as far as the public was concerned. In the public’s eye, we were up there with Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Dave Brubeck, and Art Blakey. But on a *critical* level, we were almost totally ignored by the people who set up the criteria by which jazz is evaluated.³⁸

Sample is arguing that the Jazz Crusaders were ignored because elements of their performances that did not fit the criteria for an authentic jazz performance, but at the same time the Jazz Crusaders were popular among the jazz listening audience. Wayne Henderson provides more detail: “Critical acceptance has never matched our wide popular acceptance. There always seemed to be a kind of underground conspiracy against what we were all about. The critics didn’t know where to put us, and that hurt us.”³⁹ What were the criteria that the Jazz Crusaders did not satisfy?

These general criteria were an outcome of decades of debate and were by no means universal.⁴⁰ Although there was no *absolute* set of musical standards for jazz, discussions in jazz magazines and journals consistently placed great emphasis on timbral individuality, the ability to personalize a melody, technical mastery, a

³⁷ See Lee Underwood, “The Crusaders: Knights Without Jazz,” *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976, 12-13, 40-41 and Herb Nolan, “The Crusaders: The Sweet and Sour Smell of Success,” *Down Beat*, May 4, 1978, 12-13 and Chip Stern, “The Crusaders Lose the Groove,” *The Village Voice*, July 30, 1980, 55-56.

³⁸ Lee Underwood, “The Crusaders: Knights Without Jazz,” *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Later in this study, I examine some of the methods that critics and scholars used to set these criteria. Setting these standards is a complex process and smooth jazz artists were frequently excluded from serious scholarly and critical discussions because they did not “measure up” to these standards.

connection to “jazz tradition” and, in most cases, compositional skill. In the mid 1960s, prominent jazz artists like John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Wayne Shorter, and Horace Silver certainly met these criteria set by the jazz community. Ironically, the bulk of the Jazz Crusaders’s Pacific Jazz-era recordings satisfy most of these general criteria as well.

The performances on the Pacific Jazz recordings (1961-1970) exhibit the influences of gospel, blues, and rhythm and blues but above all exemplify the jazz tradition. Considering these artists were only around twenty-five years old, it is remarkable that most of their solos demonstrate a very high degree of technical virtuosity, individuality, and maturity. On the 1962 recording of “The Young Rabbits,” Wilton Felder attacks the harmonic sequence, which is reminiscent of Hank Mobley’s work with Miles Davis in the mid 1960s. On Sample’s “Fancy Dance,” on 1968’s *Powerhouse*, Felder performs an assured and balanced solo that is deeply indebted to John Coltrane. Felder further demonstrates his knowledge and mastery of the tenor saxophone tradition in 1964’s “Robbins’ Nest.” Felder echoes Illinois Jacquet, while incorporating his own phrasing and improvisational style. Wayne Henderson displays technical virtuosity in “The Young Rabbits” and shows an equal mastery of melodic interpretation in his version of “Polkadots and Moonbeams.”⁴¹ On “Polkadots and Moonbeams,” Henderson combines the timbre of J.J. Johnson with the limited vibrato of Miles Davis or John Coltrane. Throughout the Pacific Jazz recordings Joe Sample is the consummate accompanist. Sample’s accompaniments never override the soloist and they provide compelling interaction. When Sample does solo, for example on “White

⁴¹ Henderson performs “Polkadots and Moonbeams” on *Stretchin’ Out* (1964).

Cobra” (1962), his style is light and rhythmic, reminiscent of Wynton Kelly or Sonny Clark. Without question, the performances of the Jazz Crusaders satisfied the criteria for what most in the jazz community would call “jazz.” So, if the performances could be considered “jazz,” then was the Jazz Crusader’s choice of repertoire the reason for criticism?

Approximately two thirds of the Pacific Jazz recordings feature compositions by Felder, Sample, Henderson, or Hooper. These compositions incorporate a range of gospel, blues, rhythm and blues, and jazz influences. Despite the variety of stylistic influences, nearly all of these compositions are well within the paradigms of jazz composition. Some of the compositions, like Felder’s “The Geek” (1961) and Hooper’s “Sinnin’ Sam” (1962), are in the mold of Bobby Timmons’s “Moanin’” or Cannonball Adderley’s “The Work Song.” Other compositions like Joe Sample’s “Freedom Sound” (1961) and “Blue Monday” (1967), are extended, multi-sectional works featuring complex harmonic sequences and small-group orchestration. The Jazz Crusaders even incorporated unusual time signatures and odd phrase lengths in their works. For example, Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Song Of India” (1962) is arranged incorporating a 7/4 meter. Odd phrase lengths are part of Henderson’s “Congolese Sermon” (1962), a 38-bar form, and Sample’s “White Cobra” (1962), an 18-bar form. The original compositions of the Jazz Crusaders display the complexity, depth, and range of jazz expression that is comparable to any other jazz repertoire. Once again, what was it that the critics did not approve of?

Mixing Jazz Sensibility with a Pop Repertoire

As has been discussed, the Jazz Crusaders had a long and meaningful connection to popular music. Their time as the Swingsters and the Night Hawks, at the very least, taught them that creating dialogues with the audience could be rewarding and profitable. As was the case with Ramsey Lewis, in the mid 1960s the Jazz Crusaders, using means considered unsuitable to the majority of those in the jazz community, attempted to communicate with their listeners. In 1964, the Jazz Crusaders released *Heat Wave*. This album was slightly different from their prior three albums. Of the ten tracks on *Heat Wave*, five are not original compositions and of these five tunes, “On Broadway,” “Mr. Sandman,” “Heat Wave,” “Green Back Dollar,” and “Sassy,” three are contemporary popular songs.

Adding existing commercial tunes to the band’s repertoire was a logical step. Dick Bock had released tunes like “Tough Talk” and “The Geek” as 45 rpm singles, which displayed the Jazz Crusaders’s ability to play in the soul jazz style (including even-eighth note feel and gospel cadences). Pieces like “Tough Talk” display some commercial elements, but the Jazz Crusaders composed and performed them with the jazz tradition in mind; they were not necessarily written as popular tunes. The inclusion of acknowledged contemporary popular tunes, like “On Broadway,” “Green Back Dollar,” and “Mr. Sandman” could forge different dialogues with listeners, beyond those formed by using the soul jazz repertoire and style. As in the case of Ramsey Lewis, the Jazz Crusaders saw that a popular repertoire could alter their dialogues with the audience, but they treated this popular material differently from the way Lewis did. Lewis was careful to remain “true” to the original version, making sure that the audience

recognized and appreciated his rendition throughout the length of the tune. The Jazz Crusaders took this popular repertoire and arranged it in innovative and original ways, thus making it “their own.”⁴²

The Jazz Crusaders did not arbitrarily choose their popular music repertoire. The quality of the arrangements indicates that the group was very particular in its choices.

Joe Sample explains:

If there was no spirituality in the music, the Crusaders were the worst band on the face of the earth, a record company would say, “Why don’t you play this or that song.” So we would sit in rehearsal and we would start playing it. And we would turn around and look at each other and say, “Man, don’t you feel like a damn fool right now.” It was so ridiculous and had no meaning. So why were we going to do version of something that had no spirituality or values that touched the origins of our musical souls?⁴³

Indeed, the arrangements of popular songs throughout the Pacific Jazz years were generally inspired and inventive. They never obscured the essence of the original and routinely added new musical depth. Their early arrangements from *Heat Wave* are no exception.

Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann originally wrote “On Broadway” for a girl-group, The Cookies. “On Broadway” was revised by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller and became a hit for The Drifters in 1963.⁴⁴ The perfect diction and laid-back phrasing of the Drifters’ Johnny Moore conjures a romantic, “Gershwin-esque” Broadway. The Jazz Crusaders version, by contrast, dispenses with these romantic pretensions. The Jazz Crusaders’ “On Broadway” begins with the rhythm section playing a double time introduction that

⁴² I realize that Lewis did not have the luxury of having three horns in his 1960s groups. In terms of musical arrangements, the presence of the horns provides a larger degree of flexibility.

⁴³ Chris J. Walker, “Next Crusade: The Crusaders & Joe Sample’s Sonic Renewal,” *Jazz Times*, May 33, 2003, 85.

⁴⁴ George Benson was very successful with his own version of “On Broadway” in 1977. This version was initially released on Benson’s *Weekend in L.A.*

recalls the high-energy life of New York City. Sample's dissonant repetitive accompanying figure creates a musical tension that is never fully released; the entire tune consists of a static harmonic tension that culminates in a modal section that concludes the tune. In fact, this introduction is so radically different from the original Drifters version that most listeners may not initially recognize it. In comparing the musical communications that Ramsey Lewis was forging with those of the Jazz Crusaders, Lewis's musical distance from the original versions was relatively small, while the Jazz Crusaders's interpretations are more distant.

This musical distance is vitally dependent on the listener's prior knowledge of the tune. If there is nothing with which to compare the existing tune, then the communication is no longer as powerful. In other words, if there had not been an original version of "On Broadway," then the Jazz Crusaders version would have been just another hard bop jazz tune. "On Broadway," however, is not just another hard bop jazz tune; it represents the early manifestation of a dialogue that the Jazz Crusaders were building with their listeners. As Stix Hooper states, this dialogue was part of the Jazz Crusaders's philosophy:

If a man uses his music to bring people *in*, then he can say, "Okay, now that you're in listen to this. Now hear this." It's like what happens in a clinic. This is a 4/4 beat; these are the eighth notes and on top of that is superimposed three. Now they can get the relationship, and you're communicating, and everybody feels good.⁴⁵

In 1963, most people would have known "On Broadway," as Hooper says; picking such a popular tune is part of bringing the people *in*. Once the people are interested and listening, then the Jazz Crusaders could offer their distinctive version of the tune. In the

⁴⁵ Lee Underwood, "The Crusaders: Knights without Jazz," *Down Beat* June 17, 1976, p. 40.

case of “On Broadway,” the Jazz Crusaders performed a slightly dissonant and highly energetic version of a song that was originally very sedate.

The practice of drawing people *into* the Jazz Crusaders’s music is further exemplified in “Green Back Dollar,” also included on 1963’s *Heat Wave*. “Green Back Dollar” was written by Hoyt Axton and Ken Ramsey and popularized by the Kingston Trio in 1963. Admittedly, “Green Back Dollar” is a very unusual choice for the Jazz Crusaders. The Kingston Trio was part of a folk revival of the 1960s that was nearly the antithesis of mainstream jazz. These folk artists generally downplayed rhythm, displayed limited or no amount of improvisational skill, relied heavily on lyrical meaning, and possessed little technical competence. All of these musical characteristics are in conflict with the common attributes of mainstream jazz in the 1960s. Even with this obvious disparity, the Jazz Crusaders chose “Green Back Dollar” as a viable communicative link with their audience. Ironically, the Jazz Crusaders significantly alter “Green Back Dollar” from both the Axton and Kingston Trio recordings, creating a sizable musical distance. The Jazz Crusaders’s treatment of “Green Back Dollar” is aggressive and dissonant, nothing at all like the original.⁴⁶ In fact, there are strong similarities to John Coltrane’s version of “My Favorite Things.” Felder’s timbre on the tenor saxophone is obviously indebted to Coltrane and Sample’s ostinato accompanying figure is very similar to McCoy Tyner’s. Once again, in choosing a popular tune the Jazz Crusaders sought to draw people into their musical environment but in this case, they provided a total reworking of the original. By the late 1960s, the Jazz Crusaders had

⁴⁶ Joe Sample plays a Fender Rhodes electric keyboard on “Green Back Dollar” (1963). This is one of the earliest instances of a jazz artist recording on a Fender Rhodes, pre-dating its use by Josef Zawinul and Herbie Hancock.

further strengthened their communicative methods by including at least one Beatles cover on each of the final three Pacific Jazz albums. These tunes reveal an even more effective communication between the Jazz Crusaders and their listeners.

The Beatles were a cultural phenomenon who radically altered American popular music; their popularity was unparalleled. During the week of April 4, 1964, The Beatles held the top five positions on the *Billboard* singles chart, the next week they held fourteen positions on the *Billboard* Top 100. These kinds of successes continued throughout the 1960s and early 1970s and made the Beatles arguably one of the most financially successful and most influential popular groups of all time. Jazz musicians were undoubtedly aware of the Beatles's achievements; consequently, there were a number of jazz musicians who performed Beatles covers in the 1960s. Artists such as Count Basie (*Basie's Beatle Bag*), Buddy Morrow (*Big Band Beatlemania*), and Roger Webb (*John, Paul and All that Jazz*) recorded albums that featured instrumental versions of Beatles tunes. These recordings are commonly considered opportunistic, ill conceived, and poorly executed but not all attempts at connecting jazz with contemporary popular music were deemed unsuccessful. For example, albums by Ramsey Lewis (*Mother Nature's Son*) and George Benson (*The Other Side of Abbey Road*) were financially successful and proved to be influential to many later crossover artists. In choosing the Beatles, the Jazz Crusaders were tapping into a powerful set of popular aesthetics. The undeniable popularity of the Beatles enabled the Jazz Crusaders to expand and strengthen their communicative methods. Everyone recognized these tunes so it was relatively easy to invite the audience *in* but the Jazz Crusaders excellent

performances and arrangements maintained the listener's interest. Precisely how the Jazz Crusaders maintained the audience's interest is revealed in the following examples.

The Jazz Crusaders recorded a number of Beatles tunes but "Eleanor Rigby" exemplifies how they arranged this repertoire to appeal to their listeners. "Eleanor Rigby" was originally released on the 1966 album *Revolver*. It is a collaboration between John Lennon and Paul McCartney but is widely believed to be primarily written by McCartney. The narrative of "Eleanor Rigby" describes the aging and loneliness of two characters, Eleanor Rigby and Father McKenzie.

These poignant lyrics are supported in unusual fashion for popular music, with a string octet of four violins, two cellos, and two violas. This orchestration provides a transparent background that further accentuates the power of the narrative. The austerity of the string section creates a somewhat bleak environment that does little to soften the seriousness of the lyrics. The somber topics of depression and loneliness were rarely subjects of popular songs, and "Eleanor Rigby" stands as an early example of the transformation of the Beatles from a pop group to a more experimental art-band.

The Jazz Crusaders recorded "Eleanor Rigby" live in November 1967 for the album *Lighthouse '68*. Considering the popularity of the Beatles and the seriousness of "Eleanor Rigby," the Jazz Crusaders's took care in mixing popular and jazz musical elements. The introduction is a rubato statement of "Ah look at all the lonely people" played by tenor saxophone, trombone, piano playing a tremolo, and Hooper playing cymbal crashes. The entire group is interpreting this introduction as a kind of theatrical opening by performing loudly, using no vibrato, and employing heavy cymbals and tremolo. The melody is instantly recognizable but is performed in such a broad and

uncompromising way that the listener is confronted with the question: “What kind of arrangement is this going to be?” As Hooper states, this introduction is an example of drawing the listener *in*. Immediately after the introduction, the bass (Buster Williams) introduces the tempo but the question of what kind of arrangement this will be remains unanswered. When Sample enters, along with a driving even-eighth note drum pattern, the groove is established and the audience acknowledges its familiarity and approval by clapping and yelling. The following verses and choruses are a straightforward rendition of the original melody, including a slight reharmonization of the original (especially the altered dominants in bars three and four of the verses). Even with the reharmonizations, “Eleanor Rigby” is largely treated as a modal piece. Sample extemporizes on this modal treatment during his piano solo and, at the same time, strengthens his communications with the audience.

Sample chooses to remain in an E-minor mode, established at the beginning of the tune. Sample could have added an unlimited number of harmonic cycles within this static foundation, instead, he relates to the audience utilizing dynamics and motivic-based improvisation. He begins his solo at a very low volume, but the overall energy of the tune remains high; this high-energy but low-volume section can be credited to Hooper’s driving and repetitive rhythms. Hooper’s accompaniment is essential to the success of the solo because Sample is drawing listeners in with just a few bluesy phrases as Hooper’s drum part supplies the intensity. Sample continues to build his solo by playing short, conversational phrases that beg for response, echoing the call-and-response jazz tradition. In Example 2.1, Sample provides a call but no response; the audience fills in the gap by providing the response.

Example 2.1 Excerpt from Joe Sample’s solo on “Eleanor Rigby” (2:35).



The audience responds to Sample’s call by yelling encouragement and confirmation. After an extended period of this call and response technique, Sample builds suspense, not by typical technical passages, but with a powerful harmonic ostinato. Sample uses a triadic harmonic voicing that clearly represents the climax of his solo (ex. 2.2).

Example 2.2 Excerpt from Joe Sample’s solo on “Eleanor Rigby” (4:00).



This ostinato is perfectly integrated into the existing accompaniment and creates such a high degree of tension that the audience, once again, cries out encouragement. This short passage is musically and emotionally powerful and is exactly what Hooper meant by bringing the people *in*.

As Hooper states, “Now that you are in, now listen to this.” This summarizes “Eleanor Rigby” and can also be considered part of the overall philosophy of early crossover music. Many crossover artists sought to bring listeners in by borrowing popular music elements; when this was accomplished, a new form of communication was formed. These communications were not homogenized. Each artist connected with the audience using specific and distinct musical techniques. Ramsey Lewis related to audiences by staying closer to the pop originals, while the Jazz Crusaders were more apt

to combine their jazz sensibilities with a popular repertoire. Wes Montgomery found still other means to relate to audiences.

Forging New Categories: Wes Montgomery

Wes Montgomery's musical career is characterized by his mastery of two musical styles: hard bop jazz and early crossover jazz. Montgomery is acknowledged as a brilliant and distinguished representative of the mainstream jazz guitar tradition. Lewis Porter states, "Critics generally consider Montgomery the most important and influential jazz guitarist after Charlie Christian. Like Christian, whose recorded solos he memorized in his youth, Montgomery invented perfectly shaped phrases with tremendous rhythmic drive."⁴⁷ Indeed, Montgomery's guitar style is characterized by perfect phrases, an almost joyous sense of rhythm, and a unique timbre. Montgomery's timbre is the result of playing the guitar without a pick, plucking and strumming the strings with his thumb. Montgomery also developed a mastery of playing octaves with a high degree of accuracy and rhythmic drive. These attributes, among others, helped Montgomery earn praise from thousands of jazz listeners and undoubtedly thousands of jazz guitarists. Pat Metheny affirms Montgomery's influence in his liner notes for the video, *Wes Montgomery Live in '65*: "Short of the signature sound of Miles Davis, and possibly later, bassist Jaco Pastorius, there has been no single instrumental voice that has emerged from the post-'50s-era jazz world that has had more general and ongoing sonic impact on the culture at large than the guitar of Wes Montgomery."⁴⁸ As important as Montgomery is to the history of mainstream jazz guitar, he may be even more important to the history of smooth jazz. Montgomery's albums *Goin' out of my Head* and *A Day in the Life* are pivotal to the crossover style of the 1970s and later

⁴⁷ Lewis Porter, "Wes [John Leslie] Montgomery," Grove Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed December 2, 2007).

⁴⁸ Pat Metheny, "Wes Montgomery 1965," *Wes Montgomery Live in '65*, DVD. Naxos, 2007. 9.

smooth jazz. The albums exemplify many of the communicative methods used even today by smooth jazz artists.

As with Ramsey Lewis and the Jazz Crusaders, Montgomery was the target of criticism. The mainstream jazz press frequently lamented the “loss” of such an important artist to a more popular musical style. Contrary to critical opinion, Montgomery did not defect to popular music simply to make more money. Montgomery performed popular tunes throughout his career, even during his supposed artistic peak.

Montgomery was a jazz artist who was equally adept in multiple styles. Montgomery’s flawless jazz improvisations equaled his expertise in interpreting popular melodies. Even with his considerable talents, much of Montgomery’s popularity is the result of a productive collaboration with Creed Taylor. Taylor identified Montgomery’s potential and provided him with repertoire, marketing, and studio expertise which included excellent backing musicians and arrangers. In response, Montgomery contributed consummate performances and willingly collaborated with Taylor’s plans. Together, they formed a team that helped forge a new musical style.

Beginnings of a Partnership: Wes Montgomery and Creed Taylor

Creed Taylor is one of the most important and controversial figures in jazz history. Taylor not only founded and managed important jazz record labels, but he helped guide the musical careers of legendary jazz artists such as Stan Getz, Freddie Hubbard, and George Benson. Taylor is best known for helping to create the crossover style in the late 1960s, an achievement that made him financially successful but critically maligned.

Creed Taylor was born in Lynchburg, Virginia on May 13, 1929. After earning a bachelor's degree in psychology at Duke University, Taylor moved to New York City and became a regular visitor to the legendary 52nd Street jazz scene. Taylor became associated with the struggling record company Bethlehem Records and, in 1954, became the head of artists and repertory. While at Bethlehem, he began producing albums for Oscar Pettiford, Charles Mingus, and Chris Connor. Taylor describes his early attempts at music producing: "I said, 'I think I'd like to produce a couple albums. I'll do a small group and see how it works out.' So I did Chris Connor, *Sings Lullabys [sic] of Birdland*, and it was a huge hit, considering the times. I don't know how many units it sold but it was quite a successful record."⁴⁹ Taylor's reputation as a young and successful music producer earned him a position at ABC-Paramount Records in 1956 and by 1960, the executives of ABC-Paramount trusted Taylor enough to give him the responsibility to launch a new jazz-oriented division, Impulse!. Taylor describes how he created the Impulse! Name: "I founded Impulse!. I look back on it and think, I didn't know that it was going to be around that long. At first, I wanted to call it 'pulse.' I tried to clear the name 'pulse' and it was already taken, somebody had 'pulse' in the entertainment business. So then I put in Impulse! and Impulse! went through."⁵⁰ Taylor's Impulse! label is generally recognized as the source of some of the greatest performances in jazz history. Taylor produced such important albums as Gil Evans's *Out of the Cool*, Oliver Nelson's *Blues and the Abstract Truth*, J.J. Johnson's *Great Kai and JJ*, and Ray

⁴⁹ Chris M. Slaweki. "Creed Taylor Incorporated: The All About Jazz Interview," Allaboutjazz.com, <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=21966> (accessed February 20, 2007).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Charles's *Genius + Soul = Jazz*.⁵¹ In 1961, Taylor joined Verve Records as chief executive and lead music producer.⁵² Taylor immediately altered Verve's artist lineup, its packaging, and its musical direction. He suspended all new releases and dismissed some older jazz artists, many of which were associated with Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic. Taylor retained Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Peterson, Charlie Byrd, and Stan Getz. Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd are particularly important to Taylor's future successes.

Taylor produced Byrd and Getz's *Jazz Samba* in 1962. *Jazz Samba* features the lyrical improvisations of Byrd and Getz, samba-derived bossa nova rhythms, and compositions by Antonio Carlos Jobim. This combination not only helped *Jazz Samba* become successful but helped bring about a new jazz style.⁵³ Taylor not only chose excellent repertoire and musicians, he packaged albums like *Jazz Samba*, *Jazz Samba Encore!*, and *Getz/Gilberto* with an eye toward a more commercial aesthetic. The old Verve packaging lacked bold color and was constructed with bleached paper. Taylor's new albums displayed glossy photographs and were frequently gate folded. These albums were no longer designed for just jazz aficionados, who were more interested in the music than the packaging, but were aimed at the wider public. Taylor's formula of combining disparate musical styles with professional packaging laid the groundwork for his future success with Montgomery.

⁵¹ Taylor combined the vocals of Ray Charles with the Count Basie Band and the arrangements of Quincy Jones in 1960. This provides evidence that Taylor was experimenting with combining jazz and popular music even in the early 1960s.

⁵² Norman Granz had recently sold Verve to MGM. Granz did not want to head a company that he had just sold, so Taylor conveniently took Granz's former position.

⁵³ The talents of João Gilberto and Luiz Bonfá were equally important to the success of bossa nova in the U.S.

While Taylor was refining his producing and marketing skills at Impluse! and Verve, Wes Montgomery was recording on Orrin Keepnews's Riverside label. Between 1959 and 1963, Riverside released many of the albums that are considered Montgomery's most artful and important.⁵⁴ Contrary to widespread belief that it was Creed Taylor who introduced Montgomery to a popular aesthetic (including strings and a popular repertoire), Keepnews recorded Montgomery in 1963 for an album entitled *Fusion!*, which features Montgomery with a large string and woodwind section.⁵⁵ This attempt at combining Montgomery's identifiable sound with an orchestral setting was not financially successful because the tune selection of such jazz standards as "My Romance," "Prelude to a Kiss," and "God Bless the Child" did not attract a non-jazz audience and the string arrangements further alienated jazz connoisseurs. Aside from *Fusion!*, Montgomery's work with Riverside was critically hailed but commercially unsuccessful. Taylor comments on Montgomery's work with Riverside:

I think his recordings for Riverside had been, to say the least, loosely produced. The producer would call the artists, the artists would put a rhythm section together and then they would play for a while. But there comes a point with those jamming albums, with interminable solos, when you have to acknowledge that they are not reaching many people, and they would never get the artist played on radio stations . . .⁵⁶

In 1964, Montgomery was persuaded to leave Riverside and join Verve. Taylor immediately placed Montgomery within large instrumental settings, culminating in

⁵⁴ During this period Montgomery recorded *Movin' Along* (1960), *So Much Guitar!* (1961), *Full House* (1962), and *Boss Guitar* (1963). All of these albums demonstrate Montgomery's mastery of the hard bop jazz style.

⁵⁵ The use of strings and woodwinds is a defining part of music in the 1960s. In country music, the "Nashville Sound," helped make artists such as Patsy Cline, Eddy Arnold, and Jim Reeves very popular. Likewise, producers such as Phil Spector used strings with the Beatles and The Righteous Brothers. The use of strings in popular genres is a phenomenon that deserves scholarly attention.

⁵⁶ Mike Hennessey, "Crossover Crusader," *Jazz Journal International*, November 1979, 20.

Montgomery's first two recordings for the Verve label, *Movin' Wes* (1964) and *Bumpin'* (1965).⁵⁷ These albums follow the formula of Taylor's bossa nova recordings, combining impeccable musicianship with compelling packaging. The repertoire of both albums is a mix of jazz standards ("Caravan" and "Here's that Rainy Day"), songs from Broadway musicals ("Matchmaker" and "A Quiet Thing"), and Montgomery's own originals like "Movin' Wes" and "West Coast Blues." *Movin' Wes* and *Bumpin'* are packaged with the attractive and high-quality photos by Charles Stewart. On both covers, Montgomery is photographed as a cigarette smoking "jazzman," guitar in hand. Furthermore, the albums are constructed of glossy paper, feature a gate folded design, include excellent liner notes, and evoke an overall feeling of quality.

The performances and packaging of *Movin' Wes* and *Bumpin'* stand on their own merits but one can also view them as stepping-stones to *Goin' out of my Head* (1965) as well. During the mid 1960s, Taylor decided that he had to forge a new musical path with Montgomery. Taylor states: "I decided that if people were going to hear Wes Montgomery, I would have to record him in a culturally acceptable context. Now I wasn't particularly enamored of the idea of surrounding Wes with strings, but if that was a way of getting him known to more people, then that was the way it had to be."⁵⁸ Taylor's targeting of a "cultural context" proved to be an immediate success; Montgomery won a Grammy for *Goin out of my Head* in 1966. This success attracted various criticisms as well.

⁵⁷ *Smokin' at the Half Note* (1965) is also part of Montgomery's early Verve recordings and is representative of Montgomery's hard bop guitar style. Throughout his short career, Montgomery generally recorded popular tunes with large ensembles but performed "live" with a more typical jazz small group.

⁵⁸ Mike Hennessey, "Crossover Crusader," *Jazz Journal International*, November 1979, 20.

Some critics despised Montgomery's new style. Harvey Pekar, in an infamous review of *California Dreaming*, offers a scathing indictment of Montgomery's recent work:

Now that Montgomery has attained some measure of commercial success, I wonder if he'll ever make another good album . . . this LP is the worst I've heard by him. Compared with his best improvisation, his playing here is childishly simple and monotonous. The single-note lines that have been the most interesting aspect of his work are all but absent here. . . At least he's consistent, though. There's not a good track on the LP. I can't blame Montgomery for wanting to make money, but I hope we haven't heard the last of him as a great jazz artist. Maybe he'll record serious music again under a pseudonym.⁵⁹

In the liner notes of a compilation of Montgomery's work, J.R. Taylor argues that Montgomery's talents were lost:

Still, we must regret that Montgomery's gifts were turned so completely toward the radio industry's idea of what a good record was, for that idea allowed little room for large areas of his talent. And when stricken by a fatal heart attack at the age of 43 in June of 1968, Montgomery had left behind little first-rate recorded evidence to show for a quarter of a century of brilliant musicianship . . . Nearly all of what will eventually answer for Montgomery's creative reputation was recorded for Riverside.⁶⁰

Not everyone considered Montgomery's crossover work an artistic failure.

In a surprisingly open-minded record review, Dan Morgenstern not only interprets Montgomery's popular works, but he justifies the entire crossover style:

This splendid album is, I guess, what the purists would call 'commercial.' That means, in the present case, that the selection of tunes is varied and tasteful, that the tracks are not overly long, that arrangements have been thoughtfully crafted, that excellent musicians have been provided to interpret them and back the featured artist, that the music has been carefully recorded and mastered, and the packaging is handsome. (Take the opposite of almost all these ingredients and you'll have a pretty good description of what some people consider honest,

⁵⁹ Harvey Pekar, Record Review of *California Dreaming* by Wes Montgomery, *Down Beat*, May 18, 1967, 29.

⁶⁰ J.R. Taylor, Liner notes to *Pretty Blue*, Milestone M-47030, 1975. J.R. Taylor was a former curator for the Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies.

untainted ‘art.’) At the risk of being labeled a middle-brow philistine, I’ll take the commercial concept. You see I believe in communication.⁶¹

Indeed, communication is the key. Taylor used tested communicative approaches in connecting with his audience. As Morgenstern points out, these approaches resulted in tasteful tunes, well-crafted arrangements, excellent musicianship, and handsome packaging. All of these musical approaches resulted in a new jazz style. Montgomery addressed this new style: “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 artist or a pop artist. I think I originated a new category, something like ‘Jazz-Pop’ artist.”⁶² Montgomery states that these critics were “missing the point,” by judging his work using incorrect or incomplete parameters.

I suggest that the Taylor-Montgomery collaborations of the 1960s forged even more powerful connections with the public than the works of Ramsey Lewis or the Jazz Crusaders did. As Morgenstern states, Creed Taylor believed in communication. Taylor’s communicative skills were rooted in a refined musical and business model that had been polished over time. I further argue that Montgomery’s performances demonstrate an economical improvisational style that offers a significant variation from the original versions. These performances are not simply “mood” music.

“Goin’ out of my Head”

In 1967, Creed Taylor was hired by Herb Albert and Jerry Moss (A&M Records) to help re-energize A&M’s jazz division. In response, Taylor formed CTI as a jazz

⁶¹ Dan Morgenstern, Record Review of *Down Here on the Ground, Down Beat*, June 27, 1968, 28.

⁶² Bill Quinn, “The Thumb’s Up or What the View is like from the Top,” *Down Beat*, June 27, 1968, 18.

division of A&M Records. Taylor had musical and artistic control, while A&M managed distribution, promotion, and, of course, the publishing and reproduction rights. While at A&M, Taylor created a distinct graphic design for CTI that was obviously indebted to his earlier designs for Verve. Graphic designer Sam Antupit created album covers that favored simplicity. The artist's name and the album title were usually presented in an austere typeface. This lack of flashy character helped focus attention on the stark photos of Pete Turner. Turner's photography rarely featured musical subjects; a close up of cigarettes, a sunset, or a picket fence were all featured on CTI albums. Taylor even categorized his albums by background color. Jazz releases had white backgrounds while pop releases had gray backgrounds. This artful concept for album covers influenced other record labels such as ECM. Taylor devised album designs that enticed listeners by inviting them to open the album, read about the artists, and possibly purchase it. In comparing the album designs of Ramsey Lewis's *The 'In' Crowd* or the Jazz Crusaders's *Lighthouse '68* with *Goin' out of my Head*, one finds that there is far less attention to detail, the photos are faded, and the paper is of low quality. Taylor attempted to attract listeners by any means possible. *Goin' out of my Head* (1965) was the first big hit of Wes Montgomery's career. The album reached number seven on *Billboard's* "Black Album" category in 1966, Montgomery won a Grammy award for it in 1966 (Best Instrumental Jazz Performance, Individual, or Group), and the single, "Goin' out of my Head" became a mainstay of AM radio. Why was this album, particularly the single, so popular? Its popularity is the result of multiple factors: the repertoire, the packaging, and, most importantly, the arranging and performances.

Taylor's statement that Montgomery should be heard in a "culturally acceptable context" reveals how he picked much of Montgomery's repertoire. Montgomery's most successful albums contain renditions of popular songs. In fact, the album titles usually are a duplication of a popular song from the album; for example, *Tequila* (1966), *California Dreaming* (1966), and *A Day in the Life* (1967). Admittedly, these albums contain Montgomery's original compositions and jazz standards, but it is the popular-song based singles that received the most attention. Montgomery's versatility enabled Taylor to pick songs from nearly any genre, but Taylor chose tunes that were most familiar to the widest audience. An overwhelming number of Taylor's choices, including "Goin' out of my Head," "Tequila," "Wives and Lovers," "Sunny," "When a Man Loves a Woman," and "Eleanor Rigby," have become classics. This is a tribute to Taylor's musical instincts. He consistently picked tunes that featured a memorable melody and "Goin' out of my Head" is no exception.

The melody of "Goin' out of my Head" features a steady increase of musical and lyrical energy that climaxes two-thirds into the tune and then slowly dissipates at the end of the composition. "Goin' out of my Head" is divided into two large parts. Part one is constructed as two sections (sections A & B). Section A, an 8-measure phrase, begins with a harmonic alternation between C minor and C major. (ex. 2.3)⁶³

⁶³ The original version of "Goin' out of my Head," by Little Anthony and the Imperials, is in E major. Wes Montgomery recorded it in C major.

Example 2.3 Excerpt of “Goin out of my Head.”



This kind of alternation is unusual for a popular tune and Montgomery uses it as the foundation for his improvisations. The second phrase, (Section B) (ex. 2.4) begins with two measures, each containing an appoggiatura.

Example 2.4 Excerpt of “Goin’ out of my Head.”



The remainder of the phrase halves the note values of the two appoggiaturas, creating energy and drama before going back to the beginning of the tune (ex. 2.5).

Example 2.5 Excerpt of “Goin’ out of my Head.”



This drama is reinforced by the lyrics: “I want you to want me, I need you so badly, I can’t think of anything but you.” Part one consists of a smooth escalation of melodic tension that rises from the relative calm of the beginning through the appoggiaturas.

Part two of “Goin’ out of my Head” is also in two sections (Sections C & D).

Section C is the climax of the song, containing the largest amount of musical energy (ex. 2.6).

Example 2.6 Excerpt of “Goin’ out of my Head.”



Musical notation for Example 2.6, showing a melody in treble clef with a syncopated rhythm and triplets. Chords above the staff are Cmaj7, F, Cmaj7, F, Cmaj7, F, Cmaj7, F, Cmaj7.

This energy is the result of the melody reaching E, the highest note of the tune, and remaining there for the entire eight bars. Not only does the melody reach its apex in this section, but the rhythm is equally important. The syncopated rhythm is perfectly synchronized with the lyrics, and both culminate in a cascading series of triplets. Section D slowly disperses this energy through a descending melodic structure: D-C-B-A-G (ex. 2.7).

Example 2.7 Excerpt of “Goin’ out of my Head.”



Musical notation for Example 2.7, showing a descending melodic structure in treble clef with triplets and various chords. Chords above the staff are D, Fm6, C, Ebdim, G7, F#dim, G11.

Taylor chose a tune that demonstrates a wide range of musical energy and lyrical drama. “Goin’ out of my Head” is an expertly crafted composition, not just a disposable pop tune. Many historians criticize Montgomery’s “Goin’ out of my Head,” but on closer examination, its form and lyrics create a complex dramatic flow; it is no wonder that this tune was so successful.

Like all of Verve's releases under Taylor, *Goin' out of my Head* was professionally packaged, with an eye toward modern tastes and trends. For instance, the cover is an amalgamation of images of cigarette smoke, intense lighting, a hollow-body guitar, an amplifier, and a well-dressed musician, all framed by a bright stage light that creates a shadowy outline of Montgomery.⁶⁴ All of these images typify the public's perception of a jazz musician. Taylor clearly wanted to show that this album featured a jazz guitarist.⁶⁵ Inside the gate-folded album, there is a statement printed in a large typeface: "Wes Montgomery, Goin' Out Of My Head," repeated five times. This statement is clearly meant to remind the buyer of the connection between the jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery and the popular repertoire of "Goin' out of my Head." The liner notes by Orrin Keepnews are the standard fare, reiterating descriptions of Montgomery as a "back-country legend" and a "self taught guitarist who scarcely ever left his home town." The packaging of *Goin' out of my Head* exemplifies a commercial product, with perfectly engineered typefaces, stylish logos, and complete listings of musicians. This emphasis on packaging became even more pronounced in Creed Taylor's later productions.

Little Anthony and the Imperials first performed the single "Goin' out of my Head" in 1964. Little Anthony and the Imperials conveyed a sense of calm and slightly detached romanticism in their version. Their clear falsetto voices and excellent diction creates a serene concept of unrequited love. Contrary to popular notions, Montgomery's version, this so-called mood music, is *more* aggressive and sophisticated than the

⁶⁴ The cover photos for *Goin' out of my Head* and *Bumpin'* are most likely from the same photo shoot. The shirt, lighting, and cigarettes are the same in both covers.

⁶⁵ In 1966, Taylor *did* obscure Montgomery's jazz origins. The cover of *California Dreaming* depicts an attractive woman sitting alongside a mountain stream. A photo of Montgomery is only found on the inside cover.

original. Oliver Nelson’s horn and string arrangement includes driving punctuations supporting the melody. These punctuations occur at times when musical tension is rising. Montgomery comments on these rhythms: “Then the album began to sell, and I asked myself, what can it be? The public hears a commercial sound here. The answer was, the band put in little rhythm figures that helped to keep things moving; it drove things into the listener’s ear where a combo couldn’t have made it. And there was a certain beat – I don’t know quite how to explain it.”⁶⁶ Indeed, the “little rhythm figures” propel the arrangement forward. Example 2.8 demonstrates that at the end of some verses, where tension is slowly increasing, Nelson inserts an accented series of orchestral lines that significantly raise the musical tension.

Example 2.8 Orchestral accompaniment to “Goin’ out of my Head” (:30).

Strings/Winds

The musical score is for strings and winds in 4/4 time, C major. The treble clef staff contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, starting with a quarter rest followed by eighth notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and then a quarter rest. This pattern repeats three times before ending with a quarter rest. The bass clef staff contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes starting with a quarter rest followed by eighth notes G2, A2, B2, C3, and then a quarter rest. This pattern repeats three times before ending with a quarter rest. The key signature is C major, indicated by a 'C' above the treble clef.

This musical energy is carried back to the beginning of the tune by brass punctuations that answer the melody (ex. 2.9).

⁶⁶ Leonard Feather, “Wes Montgomery: America’s In-Group Genius,” *Melody Maker*, 42, April 29, 1967, 6.

Example 2.9 Orchestral accompaniment to “Goin’ out of my Head” (:40).



The climax of the tune, Section C, is arranged with brass accents and harmonized using the entire orchestra (ex. 2.10).

Example 2.10 Orchestral accompaniment to “Goin’ out of my Head” (1:09).

Brass/Winds

8^{va} Uni.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled "Brass/Winds", is a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. It contains four measures of music, featuring chords and eighth notes. The second system, labeled "8^{va} Uni.", is also a grand staff. The upper staff contains chords and eighth notes, with a "3" (triple) marking under the final two notes. The lower staff contains a simple bass line with quarter notes. The piece ends with a double bar line.

By the end of the chorus, the listener has been directed from the sedate opening to the end by a masterful series of orchestral punctuations. Nelson’s arrangement has significantly expanded the original compositional flow of the tune.

Of course, Montgomery’s assured rendition of the melody is juxtaposed against Nelson’s arrangement. Montgomery’s guitar sound is perfectly suited for this setting. He plays with a clear tone, no distortion, and he demonstrates a comfortable and relaxed knowledge of the melody. Montgomery does not attempt to compete with Nelson’s busy arrangement; instead, he plays the melody straight, letting the arrangement do the

work. Montgomery goes along with the natural ebb and flow of the tune, contributing his sound and his distinctive sense of phrasing along the way. Montgomery’s solo is only eight bars long, so it must be concise and economical. Even in these short eight bars, Montgomery plays some of his most identifiable improvisational themes (ex. 2.11).

Example 2.11 Wes Montgomery’s solo on “Goin’ out of my Head” (1:40).

Pat Metheny comments on Montgomery’s work: “As he entered a more produced and arranged sonic environment (the results of which wound up showcasing some of his most lyrical and focused improvisation—critics of that direction and those subsequent Verve and A&M records be damned), his day-to-day life as a gigging musician continued . . .”⁶⁷ Metheny’s astutely uses the terms “lyrical” and “focused” to describe Montgomery’s improvisations during his Verve and A&M years and Montgomery’s solo on “Goin’ out of my Head” demonstrates Metheny’s focused lyricism. Although Montgomery’s solo is only 8 measures in length, it exemplifies many of the attributes of his solo style. For instance, Montgomery’s lyricism is apparent in the antecedent and consequence phrases in mm. 1-4. In the antecedent phrase in measure 1, Montgomery emphasizes the E-flat, which is the most important differentiating note between C minor and C major. In measure 3, the consequent phrase begins with Montgomery outlining

⁶⁷ Pat Metheny, “Wes Montgomery 1965,” *Wes Montgomery Live in '65*, DVD. Naxos, 2007. 5.

the C minor harmony with the well-known “Cry Me A River” jazz pattern.⁶⁸ The consequent phrase continues until the E-flat is returned to at the end of measure four. In mm. 5-8, Montgomery focuses on the E-flat even more than he did in the phrase four measures. In mm. 5-8, Montgomery maintains a third relationship between E/E-flat and G but pivots between E and E-flat as the harmony dictates. This short solo demonstrates the focused lyricism that Metheny credits Montgomery with. Although this solo is very short, he takes special care in creating a conversational and lyrical solo while delineating the harmonic progression.

Goin' out of my Head demonstrates that Montgomery's work with Taylor was aimed at communication within a cultural context. This does not mean that the music was necessarily “watered down.” What *does* mean is that Taylor worked to forge communicative links between jazz musicians and the public. “Goin' out of my Head” proves that despite being “popular,” the repertoire was sophisticated and arguably more musically complex than many mainstream jazz tunes. Furthermore, Taylor picked this repertoire to appeal to the masses, but chose brilliant musicians and arrangers to produce very high quality music that, in some ways, surpassed the original versions. By the beginning of the 1970s, Taylor's formula of blending jazz improvisation with a popular repertoire and professional marketing was beginning to find more acceptance from the public. Furthermore, this formula was creating a new style of jazz that was developed by performers such as Grover Washington, Jr.

⁶⁸ Montgomery uses this pattern in his solos on “Yesterdays” (*Wes Montgomery Trio*) (1959), “O.G.D.” (*Ultimate Wes Montgomery*) (1966), and “Tear it Down” (*Bumpin'*) (1965).

CHAPTER 3

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FAR OUT AND THE FAR IN: CHRONOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES IN SMOOTH JAZZ (1970s)

Grover Washington, Jr.: Methods of Improvisation

Grover Washington, Jr. helped establish many musical and social paradigms of crossover and smooth jazz. His importance to crossover and smooth jazz cannot be overstated. Washington's music combines his subtle timbre with a soul-oriented repertoire that is a mix of covers and original compositions. This repertoire was arranged to exemplify Washington's melodic interpretations, which included a distinctive timbre and rhythmic inventiveness. Washington's albums, *Inner City Blues* (1971), *Mister Magic* (1975), and *Winelight* (1980), typify the crossover music of the 1970s and set the musical and cultural paradigms for smooth jazz of the 1980s. They feature memorable versions of popular and original tunes, sophisticated arrangements, and a long list of legendary jazz artists. The diversity of Washington's personal improvisational style is embodied in these three albums.

Inner City Blues, Washington's first album as a solo artist, features tunes that reflect the popularity of rhythm and blues and soul. Unlike the tune choices of his predecessors, Washington's repertoire extends into popular tunes written and performed by culturally relevant performers and feature charged topics. Because of recent cultural and aesthetic shifts, Washington could include songs that spoke against the injustices that were addressed by African Americans during the late 1960s. This new repertoire made Washington's albums more culturally relevant and provided more latitude for later musical performances. The repertoire, the arrangements and

production, and Washington's unique interpretive abilities all account for his music's continued relevance and popularity.

As is the case with many professional musicians, Grover Washington, Jr. was raised in a musical environment. His father played saxophone and his mother was a church chorister.⁶⁹ His parents encouraged Washington to begin saxophone lessons at the age of eight. As a teenager, Washington toured with a rhythm and blues group called the Four Clefs, and during this period he was drafted into the United States Army. While in the Army, Washington met the prominent jazz drummer Billy Cobham. After being discharged, Cobham introduced him to the New York City jazz community and Washington began working as a professional sideman. In 1967, Washington moved to Philadelphia, a city that remained Washington's home for his entire career.⁷⁰ During the late 1960s, Washington recorded and performed with hard bop organists Charles Earland and Johnny "Hammond" Smith.⁷¹ These organists were prolific and provided Washington with opportunities to arrange original and popular tunes. Washington states, "Johnny Hammond was going to change labels—he was going to have the first album on Kudu and he asked me to write an arrangement for him. I wrote up the Carole King tune 'It's Too Late,' and that was the cut they pulled off the album as a single. The album was a smash, and I started doing things for Creed Taylor's label."⁷²

⁶⁹ Grover Washington, Jr. died on December 17, 1999 of a heart attack in the green room of *The Early Show* on CBS.

⁷⁰ Washington was beloved in Philadelphia. He was frequently asked to perform the national anthem at Philadelphia 76ers basketball games.

⁷¹ After 1974, Johnny "Hammond" Smith was known as Johnny Hammond.

⁷² Howard Mandel, "Grover Washington, Jr. No Tricks to Mister Magic's Music," *Down Beat*, July 17, 1975, 15.

In May 1970, Creed Taylor broke away from A&M records and established CTI (Creed Taylor International) as an independent record label. Taylor persuaded George Benson, Freddie Hubbard, and Stanley Turrentine, who were on CTI/A&M, to leave A&M Records but remain with CTI. After his break with A&M, Taylor began creating other genre-derived divisions. For example, in 1972 Taylor created the Salvation label, a subsidiary of CTI that initially featured gospel artists, and the Three Brothers label, which was the popular music division.⁷³ More importantly, Taylor formed the Kudu label in July, 1971. Kudu featured more commercially oriented jazz artists, many of whom are now considered soul jazz artists. Kudu was also a blatant attempt to reach out to African-American listeners. The kudu, a horned antelope found in eastern and southern Africa, was meant to connote African-American pride. In regard to packaging, Taylor's artistic ambitions are not as apparent with Kudu records as they were with other CTI releases. Pete Turner's photographs are not used. Instead, Kudu albums feature a simple color photo of the artist. In addition, the luxurious gate-folded design of CTI was displaced by a simple single-pocket sleeve. Largely because of the popularity of Grover Washington, Jr., Kudu was one of the most successful CTI labels. Unfortunately, Kudu was dismantled in 1978; nevertheless, the label is the source of some of the finest soul jazz of the 1970s. Artists such as Hank Crawford, Joe Beck, Hubert Laws, and Idris Muhammad were featured on Kudu releases and the most prominent of these artists was Grover Washington, Jr.

⁷³ Little is written about CTI, but an excellent source of information is www.dougpayne.com. Payne has exhaustively chronicled the history of CTI. His website includes the important cover art as well.

The beginning of Washington's solo career is a story that exemplifies the "right place at the right time" motto. In 1971, Washington was hired to play tenor saxophone in the horn section for a Hank Crawford recording session:

That was supposed to be Hank Crawford's album and I was called to do some tenor work in the background horn section. Everybody was there except Hank. Nobody knew it, but he was in Europe and wasn't going to be back for two months. They had some stuff that was commercially out then, and they asked me if I'd played much alto. I said, well, truthfully, no—just like some sporadic dance band stuff while I was in the service.⁷⁴

Washington's inexperience with the alto saxophone did not prove to be an impediment to the success of *Inner City Blues*. This album launched Washington's career and stands as one of the best examples of early crossover music. Of course, there are many factors that contributed to the success and eventual influence of *Inner City Blues*. The repertoire, arrangements, and Washington's performances are all equally important to *Inner City Blues*.

Inner City Blues and Its Influence

The title of *Inner City Blues* originates from the Marvin Gaye tune of the same name. "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)" was the third single from Gaye's album *What's Going On*. Written by Gaye and James Nyx, the lyrics of "Inner City Blues" convey some of the frustrations of urban life.

The lyrics describe urban issues of economic ruin, wrongful death, and police corruption and express a general frustration with American urban life. With lyrics such

⁷⁴ Howard Mandel, "Grover Washington, Jr. No Tricks to Mister Magic's Music," *Down Beat*, July 17, 1975, 15.

as “panic is spreading” and “God knows where we’re heading,” this text describes the tension and stress of an urban population that is reaching a breaking point. Considering the content, one might expect equally tension-filled music to accompany such lyrics, but this is not the case. The musical accompaniment to the lyrics of “Inner City Blues” features Gaye on piano, performing a calm, melodic, and somewhat benign musical background. This musical accompaniment is in direct contrast to the tension expressed by the lyrics. In fact, the music setting of these tense lyrics is so consonant and melodic that the listener may not realize the true meaning of the lyrics. Of course, this may have been the intent of Gaye, who may have realized that middle-class, white America would not widely accept an angry song about the plight of urban America; he delivered an embedded message within a palatable musical background.⁷⁵ The challenge for Grover Washington, Jr., and more specifically his arranger and producer, was how to convey the urban character and meaning of the text without actually performing the lyrics.

Considering that *Inner City Blues* was the first solo album of Washington’s career, and accounting for the circumstances, it can be assumed that Washington had little control over repertoire and musical arrangements. Instead, these duties were taken on by Creed Taylor and Bob James. Bob James is another important artist who collaborated with Creed Taylor.

Before the early 1970s, Bob James was part of the mainstream jazz community. In the 1960s, he released two avant-garde jazz albums, *Bold Conceptions* (1962) and *Explosions* (1965), and was the musical director for Sarah Vaughan. James described his

⁷⁵ Marvin Gaye was not the only artist who was cloaking controversial lyrics within non-threatening musical accompaniment. For example, “Big Brother” from Stevie Wonder’s *Talking Book* (1972) features very aggressive lyrics accompanied by sweetly consonant music.

introduction to Creed Taylor in 1969: “I actually met Creed when I was doing a session on Quincy’s *Walking In Space* album as pianist and arranger; he was a producer at A&M at that time. He was just beginning to get into his own kind of thing, and I guess he liked what I did.”⁷⁶ James’s relationship with Taylor, which lasted through the mid 1970s, provided him with a unique perspective on this era:

One of the main goals he had was to put more production values on jazz recordings. Get the best jazz musicians he could find, and that he really loved, but surround them with more production. Which would include strings and the kinds of things, the kinds of sounds, that were mainly used on pop albums at that time. He wanted to compete and to reach a broader audience. Not just the dyed-in-the-wool jazz fans, but he wanted the music to reach out. He felt by using similar production techniques with larger budgets and more musicians involved, that he could broaden the range of the audience. He certainly accomplished it. It changed the field in many ways.⁷⁷

James’s arrangement of “Inner City Blues” epitomizes Creed Taylor’s objectives.

James’s version of “Inner City Blues” combines urban subjects (without the words) with high production values and prominent jazz musicians. In regards to these musicians, the roster of artists who performed on *Inner City Blues* is impressive. *Inner City Blues* features prominent mainstream jazz artists: Ron Carter, Idris Muhammad, Eric Gale, Airta Moreira, Eugene Young, and Thad Jones. The impeccable musicianship of these performers, alongside excellent production and marketing, contributed to the commercial and artistic success of *Inner City Blues*. In fact, James’s version stands alongside the famous original as a viable statement on a burgeoning musical style.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Bob Doerschuk, “Bob James: Some Like It Hot,” *Down Beat*, January 1982, 57.

⁷⁷ John Beaudin, “Bob James Interview,” <http://www.smoothjazznow.com/interviewbobjames.htm> (accessed November 9, 2007). Transcribed by Aaron West.

⁷⁸ Bob James’s work as a solo artist is important to smooth jazz and deserves attention. His albums *One* (1974), *Touchdown* (1978), and *Double Vision* (1986) epitomize the aesthetics of smooth jazz and contain many smooth jazz standards.

Marvin Gaye’s “Inner City Blues” begins with a gradual introduction of bass, percussion, and voice. As Gaye’s vocals enter, all other instruments become secondary and accompanimental. In Gaye’s version, the voice is the primary source of melodic and textual content. As mentioned, Gaye’s smooth voice, along with the accompaniment, masks the intent of the text, creating a dichotomy between the peaceful music and aggressive text. Without the vocals, Bob James had to reorganize the musical priorities. In Washington’s version, the electric bass is highlighted at the beginning of the tune. The bass, played by Ron Carter, provides an ostinato that not only outlines the harmony but also provides a counterpoint (ex. 3.1) to Washington’s melody.

Example 3.1 Opening bass ostinato to “Inner City Blues.”



In addition to Carter’s melodic bass line, Eric Gale intersperses guitar accompaniment using a wah-wah pedal.⁷⁹ Gale’s comping pattern is aggressive and angular, which adds a contemporary sound to the introduction. Even before Washington enters, the bass counterpoint and the guitar accompaniment have created a compelling and high-energy pattern; there is no need for text. In addition to the bass countermelody and the jagged guitar comping, a simulated fire truck siren sounds. This siren, which returns towards the end of the tune, is an obvious attempt to convey some of the same urban grittiness conveyed in Gaye’s lyrics. In hindsight, there is no need for a sound effect; the cultural

⁷⁹ The wah- wah, sometimes referred to as “wah,” is a common type of guitar effects pedal. This pedal contains a sound filter that can mimic the human voice and was particularly popular in the 1970s.

origins of the original version, the contemporary instrumentation, and Washington's inspired performance are all in line with the contemporary urban aesthetic of the 1970s.

Washington's timbre is reminiscent of Gaye's voice. Like Gaye, Washington's alto saxophone timbre is light and airy and he prefers to be in the upper register. Unlike Gaye, Washington treats the melody in an aggressive manner. Gaye may be offering a plea for understanding, but Washington uses the melody as the foundation for extensive improvisations. The jazz community proclaims that crossover and smooth jazz rely too much on arrangements and not enough on improvisation, leading to a lack of energy and spontaneity, but nearly half of "Inner City Blues" is made up of Washington's alto saxophone solo. Moreover, Washington maintains musical interest without using an overly technical vocabulary. Without relying on technical virtuosity, how does Washington maintain listener interest throughout a relatively extensive improvisational section?

Washington's solo style can be described within two musical contexts. In the first context, Washington improvises over a repeating two-chord harmonic sequence that requires him to guide the overall musical direction with extensive improvisations. In the second context, Washington performs a lengthy composition that leaves little room for solos but requires a particular sensitivity to melodic improvisation. These two musical contexts are exemplified in "Mister Magic," and "In The Name of Love." These tunes show that Washington was able to use different kinds of improvisational techniques in accordance with his musical environment.

Washington's Use of Call and Response in "Mister Magic"

When jazz musicians critique smooth jazz (and crossover), it is frequently because of the dreaded "two-chord vamp." In mainstream jazz, harmony is a vital element of improvisation, fueling interaction between the soloist and the pianist, guitarist, or bassist. The more sophisticated the harmonic palette, the more options the soloist has. Harmonic complexity and sophistication are hallmarks of mainstream jazz. For example, the reharmonizations of Art Tatum, the lush harmonies of Duke Ellington, and the pianistic harmonic substitutions of Bill Evans are a rightfully vital and historic part of mainstream jazz. On the other hand, crossover jazz artists sometimes perform extended improvisations on just one or two harmonies. The harmonic foundation of a tune like "Inner City Blues" pales in complexity to a Bill Evans piano arrangement. In crossover jazz, though, Grover Washington, Jr. helped codify a new set of musical priorities.

The two-chord vamp, though simplistic by mainstream jazz standards, is an important element in a different kind of approach to jazz improvisation. Although having only two chords on which to improvise may appear to be redundant or boring, the lack of constantly shifting harmonies offers the accompanist and soloist a particular freedom. A complex harmonic progression can actually restrict a soloist, possibly confining him or her to a rigid set of patterns. A simpler harmonic foundation can provide more options for the soloist. For instance, this concept was explored in the late 1950s, on albums like Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*. On the tune "So What," which only uses two harmonies, the listener is presented with a variety of approaches to a simple two-chord harmonic progression. The harmonic simplicity of "So What" enabled and

inspired Davis and his sidemen to craft their own distinct improvisations. Crossover artists also discovered the flexibility of harmonic simplicity. In fact, one of Washington’s most popular tunes, “Mister Magic,” is largely based on only two chords.

The album *Mister Magic* was released in 1975 and was an immediate sales success. Much of this success can be attributed to the single, “Mister Magic.” There are only three other pieces on the LP: an orchestrated version of “Passion Flower” and two originals, “Black Frost” and “Earth Tones.” While these other pieces are worth exploring, “Mister Magic” is the tune that captured the interest of the public, and continues to do so today. “Mister Magic” provides an example of Washington’s improvisations on a two-chord tune.

“Mister Magic” begins with the rhythm section performing a 12-bar alternation between Cmin7 and F7 (ex. 3.2).

Example 3.2 Introduction to “Mister Magic.”

The image shows musical notation for the introduction to "Mister Magic." It consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled "Gtr." and contains a single melodic line in 4/4 time, starting with a double bar line and repeat sign. The middle and bottom staves are part of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and show a 12-bar alternation between Cmin7 and F7 chords. The bass line features a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes, while the treble line features a similar pattern of chords and single notes. The key signature is one flat (Bb).

This introduction, while simple, is immediately identifiable. In live performances, the audience recognizes this piece within seconds; this recognition is a powerful communicative link that is frequently found in popular music. An identifiable introduction sets an entire series of expectations for the audience, preparing it for a performance that may or may not meet those expectations. It also places the audience in

a position of interaction. After the first few moments of this particular introduction, many audience members might voice their recognition of “Mister Magic” by screaming in pleasure, thereby actively participating in the performance.

“Mister Magic” is constructed as an 8-mm. section and a 6-mm. section.⁸⁰ The first section (A) is based on the C minor/F7 alternation and the second section (B) moves to Eb major. The melody, written by Washington’s percussionist Ralph MacDonald, has all the features of texted music, but does not include text. This sense of “question and answer” is largely why “Mister Magic” is so tuneful and also why it would be simple, theoretically, to add text.

Mm. 1–4 (ex. 3.3) contain three melodic statements that are separated by prominent pauses.

Example 3.3 Opening phrase of “Mister Magic” (:25).

The musical notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (C minor). The melody is divided into four measures, each containing a melodic statement separated by a pause. Above the staff, the chords are indicated: Cm7add4 for measures 1 and 4, F7 for measure 2, and Ab/Bb for measure 3. The notes are: m. 1: C4, D4, E4, F4; m. 2: G4, A4, Bb4, C5; m. 3: Bb4, Ab4, G4, F4; m. 4: E4, D4, C4, Bb3. The measures are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 below the staff.

In fact, the entire tune is constructed of short, conversational melodic statements that are separated by pauses. In Example 3.3, this passage consists of two quick statements in mm. 1–2, followed by the response in mm. 3–4. This same kind of conversational writing style occurs in mm. 5–8 as well (ex. 3.4).

⁸⁰ The melody is played twice; the second time, the B section is 7 mm. long.

Example 3.4 Excerpt from “Mister Magic” (:35).

The musical notation for Example 3.4 is a single staff in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The melody begins in measure 5 with a dotted quarter note on B-flat. Measure 6 contains eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D. Measure 7 contains eighth notes: C, B, A, G, F, E. Measure 8 contains eighth notes: D, C, B, A, G, F, ending with a dotted quarter note on E. Chords are indicated above the staff: Bbm7 (measures 5-6), Eb9 (measure 6), Abmaj7 (measures 6-7), G7#5 (measure 7), Cm7add4 (measures 7-8), and F7 (measure 8). Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are written below the staff.

In mm. 5–6, the primary call is made and the response occurs in mm. 7–8. The B section is also conversational but this time it is more symmetrical (ex. 3.5).

Example 3.5 Excerpt from “Mister Magic” (:40).

The musical notation for Example 3.5 is a single staff in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The melody consists of two measures. The first measure starts with a quarter note on B-flat, followed by eighth notes: A, G, F, E, D. The second measure starts with a quarter note on C, followed by eighth notes: B, A, G, F, E, D. Chords Ebmaj7 and Abmaj7 are indicated above the staff for the first and second measures, respectively.

The response to m. 9 occurs immediately in m. 10 and this symmetry repeats throughout the B section. The improvisations, by guitar and saxophone, are based on the harmonies and rhythms of the introduction. Washington does not choose to bombard the listener with scalar passages or harmonic superimpositions; after all, there are only two harmonies and it would be tempting to add complexity. Instead, he mimics the conversational style of the composition, creating a compelling and memorable solo.

Washington’s solo on “Mr. Magic” features brief musical statements followed by longer responses. As with the melody, Washington’s improvisations imply a conversation, but in this case, he is conversing with himself, not with other musicians.⁸¹ Most of his solo is comprised of brief music statements, usually made up of an

⁸¹ It may have been difficult or impossible for Washington to interact with other musicians. It is probable that the rhythm section recorded their parts first and Washington overlaid his improvisations.

identifiable intervallic leap, and a response to that initial statement, usually a blues-based scalar passage.

In m. 1 of Example 3.6 Washington outlines the C min7 harmony with intervallic leaps, using sixteenth and eighth-note rhythmic patterns.

Example 3.6 Grover Washington's use of call and response (4:45).

The musical score consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first staff contains measures 1 through 4. Measure 1 is labeled 'Call' and features a C m7 chord. Measure 2 is labeled 'Response' and features an F9 chord. Measure 3 is labeled 'Call' and features a C m7 chord. Measure 4 is labeled 'Response' and features an F9 chord. The second staff contains measures 5 through 7. Measure 5 is labeled 'Call' and features a C m7 chord. Measure 6 is labeled 'Response' and features an F9 chord. Measure 7 is labeled 'Call' and features a C m7 chord. The score includes various rhythmic notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplet markings. A '8va' marking with a dashed line is present at the end of measure 7.

This motive is followed by a pause. This pause accentuates the impact of the opening motive and prepares the listener for the following phrase. In m. 2, Washington responds to the initial motive with a descending scalar pattern. The melodic content of this pattern is not directly related to the F7 harmony because it is held over from the C min7. The highest note, C, is followed by a blues scale that ends on C. This blues scale is clearly based on C and not F. These two measures are the first call and response. The second set of call and response patterns occurs in m. 3. Measure 3 repeats the general harmonic and rhythmic outline of the motive in bar one. Just as in m. 2, Washington follows this short motive with a descending scalar passage, but this time the content is based on the F7 harmony. In m. 5, once again, Washington mostly repeats his initial motive and follows it with descending scalar material. Instead of repeating the process one more time, to finish the eight bars, Washington extends his scalar response into the following measure. This extension goes from a high G to a C using blues scales.

This is a highly effective style of improvisation. Washington is essentially his own horn section. The “horns” play the short, rhythmic motive and Washington responds with longer scale passages. This style is akin to the call-and-response tradition that is a part of the African-American music tradition. The call is short and punctuated, as if it were a curt question; the response is a more “wordy” answer to the question. It is puzzling that, to the best of my knowledge, no scholarly works have focused on the call and response aspect of Grover Washington’s style.⁸²

Although Washington uses this call and response process throughout his solo, he alters his patterns to maintain spontaneity and interest. In Example 3.7, Washington’s initial motive or “call” is an ascending triplet pattern beginning on E-flat ascending to G.

Example 3.7 Grover Washington’s use of call and response (5:14).



This passage is followed by a pause and a response based on a blues pattern that concludes with a leap from C to E-flat. The call is made again, this time descending from E-flat to G. Washington responds with the same kind of extended blues passage that also ends on a leap from C to E-flat. In this case, the short question is followed by an equally short answer.

Call and response culminates in the coda of “Mister Magic.” After the final statement of the tune, a horn section plays the harmonies and rhythm of the

⁸² Charles Carson is one scholar who has begun researching Washington. Carson has a forthcoming article in *Black Music Research Journal* exploring Washington’s ties to the Philadelphia jazz tradition.

introduction and Washington responds to these punctuations. Washington essentially rests while the horns play, then slides in his own responses to the horn punctuations.

Call and response is an essential characteristic of Washington's performances. His music was often aimed toward public acceptance and many people could relate to Washington's conversational style. Some mainstream jazz musicians would be tempted to superimpose extended harmonies and scales over the simple harmonies of "Mister Magic." While this approach has its merits, Washington chose a style that was more appropriate for the melody of the tune and was more recognizable to his audience. The simplicity of "Mister Magic" caused Washington to carry much of the intellectual and creative weight through his extensive improvisations. There are other contexts in which Washington chose repertoire that was more conducive to melodic interpretation.

Washington's Use of Melodic Guide Tones in "In the Name of Love"

Washington's repertoire was comprised of more than two-chord vamp tunes; he also performed complex harmonic compositions. "In the Name of Love" is part of the album *Winelight* (1980), Washington's most popular and influential album. Washington earned a Grammy Award for Best Rhythm and Blues Song for "Just the Two of Us" and another Grammy for Best Jazz Fusion Performance, Vocal or Instrumental for "Winelight." *Winelight* was also nominated for Record of the Year and "Just the Two of Us" as Song of the Year. By 1981, over one million copies of *Winelight* have been sold.

Although "Just the Two of Us" was the popular single that helped make *Winelight* successful, other tunes on the album are more indicative of Washington's improvisational style. "In the Name of Love" is a remarkably memorable medium tempo

tune that emphasizes Washington's lyrical improvisations. The harmonic and melodic complexities posed by "In the Name of Love" cause him to perform in a different style than in "Mister Magic." "In the Name of Love," one of his most identifiable compositions, is made up of a number of sophisticated harmonic and rhythmic elements.

Unlike "Inner City Blues" or "Mister Magic," "In the Name of Love" is made up of complex harmonies, multiple sections, and harmonic modulations. Section one is in F major, section two moves to D minor but closes in F major. There is an eight-measure interlude that modulates from F major to G-flat major and sets up another modulation for the solo, which is in G major. There is a modulatory section after the solo that concludes with a repeat of the first half of the interlude and back to the beginning of the tune. The solo section is comprised of the 4 mm. pattern that moves from G | B7(#5) | C maj7 | A min7 G/B C D sus|.

Throughout his entire solo, Washington plays brief phrases followed by extensive pauses, letting the accompaniment and harmonic progression carry the energy of the tune. Although his statements are short, Washington ties them together with specific note choices. These "goal notes" provide an overarching structure that help connect his short musical statements. In mm. 1-2 of Example 3.8, Washington accentuates the note B by approaching it with an ascending pattern.

Example 3.8 Grover Washington's use of melodic guide tones (2:35).

The musical notation for Example 3.8 consists of two staves in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff shows measures 1-3. Measure 1 has a G chord and a melodic line starting on G4. Measure 2 has a B7#5 chord and a melodic line starting on B4. Measure 3 has a Cmaj7 chord and a melodic line starting on C5. The second staff shows measures 4-7. Measure 4 has an Am7 chord and a melodic line starting on A4. Measure 5 has a G/B chord and a melodic line starting on G4. Measure 6 has a B7#5 chord and a melodic line starting on B4. Measure 7 has a Cmaj7 chord and a melodic line starting on C5. Measure numbers 1-7 are indicated below the notes.

Washington further accentuates B by pausing between statements of the pattern. In m. 3, Washington makes B the pivot point of his scalar passage. The note B returns as the focal point of mm. 5–6. The note B is a good choice by Washington; it is one of the few notes that all the chords of the solo progression share. It is the third of G, the tonic of B, the major seventh of C, and works well in the ascending progress: A minor—G—C—Dsus.

At the beginning the modulatory section leading back to the interlude, Washington once again constructs an overarching goal note structure. This time he does not focus on just one note but on a descending scale. In Example 3.9, Washington's pattern hangs on a descending scale starting on B and ending on D.

Example 3.9 Grover Washington's use of melodic guide tones (3:00).

The musical notation for Example 3.9 consists of a single staff in G major, 4/4 time. Measure 1 has an Em7 chord and a melodic line starting on E4. Measure 2 has an Eb9#11 chord and a melodic line starting on Eb4. Measure 3 has a Dm7 chord and a melodic line starting on D4. Measure 4 has a Db7 chord and a melodic line starting on Db4. The staff continues with a Cmaj7 chord and an F9 chord. Measure numbers 1-4 are indicated below the notes.

This demonstrates that there is an underlying structure in Washington's solos. This structure contributes to the lyricism and logic of Washington's improvisational style. This kind of "goal note" performing is precisely the kind of improvisation for which mainstream jazz artists are credited. Unfortunately, Washington's popularity and repertoire have prevented jazz historians from taking an objective view of his music.

This kind of analysis helps reveal the lyrical attributes of Washington's improvisations. He does not follow the typical parameters of a jazz soloist but his improvisations are remarkably palatable and enjoyable. These tunes never fail to elicit toe-tapping. If one of the traditional axioms of a good jazz solo is "telling a story," then Washington should be held in high regard. Washington's improvisations, whether within a traditional two-chord vamp tune or within a sophisticated melodic tune, always convey a sense of conversation and lyricism. Washington's solos may not contain high levels of technical mastery but they *do* possess their own charm and logic.

George Benson: Combining Pop, Jazz, and Blues

George Benson is one of those rare artists who have had success in multiple styles. Although Benson has been criticized for his more commercial endeavors, he has credibility as a mainstream jazz artist, a smooth jazz guitarist, and an R & B vocalist. His albums *The New Boss Guitar* (1964) and *Cookbook* (1966) are definitive statements in the hard bop style. Likewise, Benson's "Affirmation" (1976) and "Breezin'" (1976) were huge crossover hits and have become smooth jazz classics. Once more, Benson reached superstardom with his vocal interpretations of "This Masquerade" (1976), "On Broadway" (1978), and "Give Me the Night" (1980).

Although Benson has placed himself in multiple musical contexts, he has maintained a consistent level of instrumental virtuosity, creating a guitar style that has been remarkably influential on smooth jazz. More specifically, his style is based on distinctive alternations between blues-derived phrases and bebop-derived phrases. These alternations occur in every style that Benson performs and have helped him achieve a large amount of popularity. As in the case of Marvin Gaye masking socially conscious lyrics within easily palatable accompaniment, Benson's solos tend to "hide" high levels of virtuosity within a context of popular song. A tune like "On Broadway" may appear simple but analysis demonstrates that Benson employs a novel and technically sophisticated style of improvisation, even in this seemingly simple pop tune. As a mainstream jazz artist, crossover pioneer, and R&B superstar, Benson holds a contested place in jazz history but his technical innovations should not be overlooked.

Success in Mainstream Jazz, Crossover Jazz, and Rhythm and Blues

George Benson's professional career began in 1954. At the age of 10, he recorded a vocal version of Ray Charles's "It Should Have Been Me" for RCA's "X" label. Benson was no child star but his exposure to the music business, at such a young age, was important to his later career as a popular performer. Although Benson's early success was predicated on his vocal abilities, he was also a talented guitarist. In 1962, Jack McDuff, the soul jazz organist, hired Benson. Benson stayed with McDuff through 1965 and during his tenure Benson recorded *The New Boss Guitar* (1964), his first solo album for the Prestige label. During this period, Timmy Roger, a Harlem comedian, introduced Benson to John Hammond and he was granted a contract with Columbia Records. Benson's two recordings for Columbia, *It's Uptown with the George Benson Quartet* (1965) and *Cookbook* (1966), feature Benson with organist Lonnie Smith and baritone saxophonist Ronnie Cuber. According to Benson, the organ combo groups hold a special place in his own career as well as in jazz history, "I think the organ gave the guitar a form you know. It featured the guitar so much. Guys could really test themselves, and night after night they had to come with some interesting solos, so it was a good format for guitar players."⁸³ These albums feature tunes like "All of Me" and "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid" and are performed in a hard bop style. His recording of "Paraphernalia" on Miles Davis's album *Miles in the Sky* (1967) further strengthened Benson's mainstream jazz credentials in the 1960s.

In 1969, Benson joined CTI/A&M and began a long relationship with Creed Taylor. Benson's affiliation with Taylor is the formal beginning of his connection with

⁸³ Ben Sidran, *Talking Jazz: An Oral History* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 324.

popular music. Taylor, as he did with most of his artists, attempted to introduce his performers to a mass audience through a variety of musical techniques. In Benson's case, he produced albums that featured a popular music repertoire. In 1970, Benson recorded *The Other Side of Abbey Road*, an album of Beatles cover versions and, in 1972; he recorded *White Rabbit*, titled after a tune by Jefferson Airplane. Both albums were clearly aimed at popular success. Considering the similarities between Montgomery and Benson's guitar styles and Taylor's popular music aspirations, many believed that Benson had been positioned as Montgomery's successor. Benson was particularly sensitive to comparisons between himself and Montgomery.

People who love jazz musicians, love us when we play what we want to play, and we're starving. But then, as soon as you commercialize your sound, as Wes did, the jazz fans and critics are down on you! Wes told me about this a week before he died. He was very unhappy and disturbed by this attitude. He died a very sad man. The minute you are able to make money and live normally by commercializing your sound, the fans and critics hate you. The critics hate my records. They never think of me, or other similar musicians, as being told what to play and how to play it. Critics don't know the circumstances of recording, nor do they go to the sources to find out. And furthermore, they're not musicians.⁸⁴

Benson's observations are supportable; by the mid 1960s some critics *did* hate his CTI albums. For example, in 1969, Benson was negatively reviewed in *Down Beat*:

. . . he came along at a time when many record producers are steering their jazz artists toward a pop market by wrapping them in more commercially acceptable packages. The result is often frustrating to the true jazz fan who, in order to hear certain artists, must suffer the modern parallel to enduring a Paul Whiteman arrangement to hear Bix Beiderbecke."

For what I consider this to be, a middle-of-the-road pop album, it deserves a high rating. After all, it certainly beats listening to Peter Nero or Al Hirt.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Robert Yelin, "George Benson: Playing White Man's Music, But Playing it Black," *Guitar Player*, January 1974, 23.

⁸⁵ Chris Albertson, "Record Review of *Goodies* by George Benson," *Down Beat*, June 26, 1969, 23.

The writer insults Horace Ott (arranger), Paul Whiteman, Peter Nero, and Al Hirt, all in one review. On the other hand, not all critics believed that Benson's CTI recordings were "frustrating." Dan Morgenstern comments on the merits of Benson's *White Rabbit*, "There are a lot of nice things on this smooth pop album: Benson's fine guitar and pleasant singing; the craftsmanship of the studio ensembles; some first-rate Beatles songs. As is customary when Creed Taylor produces, the album is conceived as a whole and every detail is well planned and executed. There are no cheap recording tricks; the thing is tastefully done."⁸⁶ Morgenstern was one of the few critics who acknowledged that, indeed, most of Creed Taylor's productions were tastefully done and well executed.

During Benson's tenure with CTI (during and after its affiliation with A&M) there were more than fifteen albums released under his name. The best known of them are *The Other Side of Abbey Road* (1970), *White Rabbit* (1971), *Body Talk* (1973), and *Good King Bad* (1975). Unlike Benson's earlier albums with Columbia, his CTI releases tended to reach a broader audience and were financially successful. Unfortunately, he was conflicted between financial success and the relinquishment of control over artistic decisions. As Benson states, Creed Taylor had control over nearly all elements of CTI's recordings:

We'd record the material as small band units, and then Creed Taylor would add the strings and woodwind parts later. He'd do all the mixing on his own and put out the finished product. There were some guys who fought for what they wanted, but I just wasn't a fighter at the time. I believed "Hey, this guy has a track record for success, and who am I to say?" And he was successful in making jazz

⁸⁶ See Dan Morgenstern, Record Review: George Benson *The Other Side of Abbey Road*, *Down Beat*, June 11, 1970, 20. Morgenstern also comments that *The Other Side of Abbey Road* was of interest because of Benson's singing. Creed Taylor did little to exploit Benson's vocal talents but Benson does sing on most of the tracks on *The Other Side of Abbey Road*.

accessible again by putting elements into the music that people understand, like strings.⁸⁷

Benson readily admits that he was not entirely satisfied with the musical directions prompted by Creed Taylor. On the other hand, Benson was pleased at his financial and popular success and believed that his talent was “showing through” no matter what the material:

I was told to record “White Rabbit” on my album of that name, because Jefferson Airplane had sold thousands of copies of it. To my surprise and delight, my album was nominated for a Grammy, which points out that even though I wasn’t playing what I wanted to, my talent showed through just as it did when Wes commercialized his sound. I’ve found that the most unbeatable recording combination is black musicians recording white people’s music, but playing it black. Wes and the Fifth Dimension are perfect examples of that. A black man playing black music will not sell as well.⁸⁸

Benson points out that he was finding a middle ground between commercial success and artistic fulfillment, and admitting that he was not playing exactly what he wanted but finding room for his talent anyway. This philosophy contributed to Benson’s ability to provide musical quality within the supposedly commercial style or genre.

In the mid 1970s, Benson switched record labels and moved to Warner Bros. After leaving CTI, Benson discovered that Warner Bros. gave him slightly more control over his own albums. In 1976, *Breezin’*, Benson’s first album with Warner Bros., was released and he had his first major commercial hit. *Breezin’* reached number one on the *Billboard* pop, R&B, and jazz charts, a feat almost unheard of for a jazz musician. *Breezin’* was voted number one jazz album by *Billboard* and *Cashbox* magazines and

⁸⁷ Jon Sievert, “George Benson: Platinum Jazz,” *Guitar Player*, July 1979, 92.

⁸⁸ Robert Yelin, “George Benson: ‘Playing White Man’s Music, But Playing it Black,’” *Guitar Player*, January 1974, 23.

Down Beat readers voted Benson number one in guitarist category and number four in the male vocalist category. Benson won a Grammy award for Best Pop Instrumental Performance for “Breezin” in 1976.

Breezin’ was a collaborative effort of some of the finest artists in the music business. First, the legendary Tommy LiPuma was the producer and Claus Ogerman arranged most of the pieces. Secondly, the backing musicians were Ralph MacDonald (from Grover Washington’s band), Harvey Mason, Stanley Banks, Phil Upchurch, and Ronnie Scott; all these musicians were of the highest caliber. The efforts of these artists culminated in an album that features smooth jazz and R&B standards like “This Masquerade,” “Affirmation,” and “Breezin.”

The single tune that many believe is the most important to the success of *Breezin*’ is “This Masquerade,” the only vocal track on *Breezin*.’ Benson describes the tenuous circumstances surrounding its recording, “The problem was when we got ready to do the album, the instrumentals sounded so good that Tommy [LiPuma] said, ‘I don’t think we should put a vocal on the album.’ I said, ‘Wow! I went to all this trouble to learn [the words to] the song. Let’s do it one time.’ So we did, just one take.”⁸⁹ Benson states that “This Masquerade” was an important step in his career:

Back in the mid ‘70s, I was selling a decent amount of records and had accomplished just about everything you could accomplish during that time. We were playing all the top jazz clubs in the country, and we were filling them up and getting paid the highest dollar amount you could get. But in order to break through to the next level, I needed to do something different. People were selling millions of records, but I just wasn’t in that category. I needed something that would relate to a wider audience. So I did that one vocal on *Breezin*,’ and it made a real difference.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Gene Kalbacher, “George Benson: The Road to Fame,” *JazzTimes*, March 1984, 10.

⁹⁰ Art Thompson, “Soul Man: George Benson on Balancing the Demands of Being a Pop-Jazz-Vocalist-Guitar Icon,” *Guitar Player*, April 2004, 60.

With the vocal tune, “This Masquerade,” Benson achieved a new kind of dialogue with his audience. Benson describes his vocal tunes as a result of him needing to “relate to a wider audience.” In performing vocal tunes, he was using his voice as a different kind of communicative device. The voice in popular music is very effective because it conveys a text-based portrait of emotion or narrative. This is not to say the vocal communications are one-dimensional or simple. Vocal communication, at least in popular music, offers the listener a variety of interpretive listening choices. The listener can focus on timbre, surface textual meaning, metaphorical meaning, vocal range, vocal volume or many other elements. Considering the long tradition of vocal communication in popular music, most listeners are accustomed to handle such a variety of interpretive choices.

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that a vocal performance is going to sell a million albums. “This Masquerade” was a success because of a combination of factors. First, “This Masquerade” adds variety to the overall repertoire of the album. “This Masquerade” is the only vocal track on the album; the rest of the tunes are perfectly performed and produced instrumental tracks. Second, Benson’s “scatting,” singing along with his soloing, was novel in the mid 1970s, giving “This Masquerade” a memorable element. Third, “This Masquerade” is well suited to Benson’s voice. It has few intervallic leaps or difficult vocal passages that could have challenged Benson. Lastly, “This Masquerade,” written by Leon Russell, is well suited for Benson’s improvisations. There is enough room and harmonic content for improvisation on the

opening introduction and throughout the tune, especially the unusual chord progression that goes to the key of flat-sixth on the bridge.

With the success of *Breezin'* came a wave of criticism from the mainstream jazz community. Many critics suggested that Benson could be forgiven for his CTI releases but the success of *Breezin'* was beyond redemption. John McDonough states in his review of *Breezin'*:

Hearing George Benson on this album is like watching Marlon Brando in a Three Stooges movie. Such is the relationship between the artist and the “art” . . . It’s not that Benson is bad; a musician of his caliber is never bad. He can always get by on craftsmanship. But disco music is not a form designed to bring out a talent of Benson’s dimensions, he could have telephoned in this one. He’s like the invincible gunfighter who between the big showdowns, passes his time by picking off beer cans at a hundred paces from the hip. The skill is impressive, but misspent . . . Generally the mood is soft, even tempered and workmanlike. Production is sloppy. When five of six titles lack legitimate musical endings (and are just faded), one has to wonder about the amount of thought given this project.⁹¹

McDonough is disturbed by a number of elements of *Breezin'*. First, Benson is accused of mishandling his craftsmanship. This is a common complaint not only in the case of Benson but also with many other crossover artists. Many critics bemoan the “loss” of talent to a commercialized style like crossover. Secondly, Benson’s performances are criticized as a “sideline” for a gifted guitarist. Of course, Benson’s work on *Breezin'* was not the quick product of a great jazz guitarist simply playing a few instrumental tunes and making millions of dollars. If the process were that easy, i.e. “telephoning it in,” then many jazz artists would be as successful as Benson. This is obviously not the case. *Breezin'* is the result of a lifetime of musical experience. In a response to these kinds of criticisms, Benson indicates few personal concerns with his

⁹¹ John McDonough, Record Review of *Breezin'* by George Benson, *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976, 20.

success: “I’ve never felt any conflict between my status as a jazz player and my appeal as a pop artist. I started out as a singer who happened to have some guitar abilities, and I was working in nightclubs where people wanted to be entertained. So I’m drawn to the concept of making lots of people happy.”⁹²

After *Breezin’*, Benson achieved even more success with *In Flight* (1977), *Weekend in L.A.* (1978), and *Give Me The Night* (1980). Each of these albums features hit vocal singles that propelled them to the top of the pop and jazz charts.⁹³ These singles include, “Everything Must Change” (*In Flight*), “On Broadway” (*Weekend in L.A.*), and the title track of *Give Me The Night*, which is possibly Benson’s best known vocal tune. Benson clearly learned that the most effective way to communicate with his listeners was through vocal interpretations.

By the early 1980s, the mainstream jazz community had all but given up on Benson “living up” to his jazz pedigree. In an interesting side note, there was a peculiar tendency by jazz journalists to fixate on Benson’s wealth. Stanley Mieses began his interview with Benson with this description: “I’m listening to George Benson talk about his teenage experience with Jack McDuff’s band, and I can’t help noticing this wad of bills creeping out of his trouser pocket. He’s completely unaware of it, because he’s dutifully recalling his history for me . . . It’s no secret that George Benson is doing remarkably well these days, and will never have to play a jazz basement again.”⁹⁴ Helen Fitzgerald comments about Benson’s home: “George Benson at home—and what a

⁹² Adam Levy, “George Benson: Roots Revisited,” *Guitar Player*, July 2000, 49.

⁹³ The following is a list of the *Billboard* chart numbers (each number is the highest point that each album reached): *In Flight*: #9 Top 100 Albums, # 2 R&B, #1 Jazz / *Weekend in L.A.* #5 Top 100 Albums, #1 R&B , #1 Jazz / *Give Me The Night* #3 Top 100 Albums, #1 R&B, #1 Jazz.

⁹⁴ Stanley Mieses, “High-Flying Benson,” *Melody Maker*, May 21, 1977, 41.

home. Though probably modest by the standards of this posh New Jersey suburb, this hack's lower mandible had to be restrained from hitting the deck when exposed to the splendours within."⁹⁵ Even Leonard Feather, no stranger to interviewing successful artists, included commentary on Benson's financial success:

Superstardom is a condition that rarely affects great musicians. In the current sense of the term and all it implies, even Charlie Parker never achieved that stature; neither did John Coltrane. During the past two years George Benson, an excellent musician though scarcely in a class with those giants, has enjoyed record sales, honours and material rewards on a staggering level that would have seemed totally beyond reach to most of his predecessors.⁹⁶

It is reasonable to conclude that some of the criticism that Benson has endured is based on jealousy. Instead of focusing on Benson's financial wealth, maybe critics should have examined what Benson did to attain that wealth. Journalists who criticized Benson for not "living up" to his potential may never have paid close attention to his performing style. Throughout Benson's long career as a jazz and pop star, he developed a unique and compelling solo style that alternates blues-stylings with bebop-derived phrases.

George Benson's Improvisational Style: Combining Blues with Jazz

Benson's guitar style was created from years of performing in multiple styles. He credits many fellow musicians as influences. In an interview with Ben Sidran, Benson explains the influence that organist Jack McDuff had on his own performing style:

He was a blues man. He wanted everything to have a blues touch to it. I don't care if it was a ballad, it should be a bluesy ballad. So I learned that from him, and you know, it works, because blues, being so universally understood, it's easier to get across than any other music. It works everywhere. Not in a big way, but it works, Wes Montgomery taught me something else. A pretty woman, everybody loves her, even other women who envy her, respect her beauty. And so beautiful music is also something that people give credence to. They don't necessarily run to the

⁹⁵ Helen Fitzgerald, "The Lion's Den," *Melody Maker*, August 27, 1983, 27.

⁹⁶ Leonard Feather, "The Good Life," *Melody Maker*, February 11, 1978, 17.

store and buy it, but they have to acknowledge it. And so I try to combine those methods. But that was a value I learned in Jack McDuff's band, the value of playing everything with a little blues touch. You know, adding a bended note here and there, a little cry over there, a little glissando here. It really helped to give me a concept, something to build on.⁹⁷

These statements summarize the two most important aspects of Benson's solo style. First, Benson acknowledges that a "little blues touch" is universally understood. Benson was exposed to Jack McDuff's bluesy style early in his career and Benson was shown, first hand, the communicative aspects of the blues. Benson plainly states that the blues "works everywhere," and is "universally understood." The communicative aspects of blues phrases and patterns are a concept that Benson clearly understood and utilized. The blues are an integral part of much of Benson's improvisations. The popularity of the blues also fits nicely into Benson's attempts to connect with as many people as possible. Secondly, Benson argues that "beautiful" music is also something that people give credence to. This statement can be interpreted several different ways. First, of course, "This Masquerade" and "Affirmation" are aesthetically pleasing songs and Benson plays them very well. More precisely, though, Benson's definition of "beautiful" could extend to his mastery of jazz vocabulary. Benson states that he combines the blues with beautiful music, which could mean that Benson is combining the popularity of the blues with the beauty of improvisational mastery. This combination is the core of Benson's solo style.⁹⁸

Benson's alternations of blues phrases with jazz patterns are found in both his crossover jazz and popular/R&B genres. "Body Talk," a typical crossover tune recorded

⁹⁷ Ben Sidran, *Talking Jazz: An Oral History* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1995), 327.

⁹⁸ Charlie Parker may have shared Benson's philosophies about beautiful music. In 1949, Parker states: "It's just music, it's trying to play clean and looking for the pretty notes." See Michael Levin and John S. Wilson, "No Bop Roots in Jazz: Parker," *Down Beat*, September 9, 1949, 1.

in 1973, is mostly a one-chord composition that provides Benson plenty of solo space. In mm. 1–5 of Example 3.10, Benson emphasizes the E blues scale, creating a 5-mm. phrase that is indebted to a blues aesthetic.

Example 3.10 Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “Body Talk” (1:40).

The image shows a musical score for a guitar solo. It is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and E9 chord. The score consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, and the second staff contains measures 5 through 7. The music features a blues-influenced melodic line with various rhythmic patterns and articulations. Measure 1 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, and D5. Measure 2 has a quarter note D5, followed by eighth notes C5, B4, A4, and G4. Measure 3 has a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, and D5. Measure 4 has a quarter note D5, followed by eighth notes C5, B4, A4, and G4. Measure 5 has a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, and D5. Measure 6 has a quarter note D5, followed by eighth notes C5, B4, A4, and G4. Measure 7 has a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, and D5. The notation includes various articulations such as slurs, accents, and a wavy line over the first measure.

Following these blues-derived phrases, Benson plays a virtuosic descending jazz pattern. This short example demonstrates that, even in his early recordings, Benson tended to “hide” virtuosic jazz passages among blues phrasings.

Later in “Body Talk,” Benson provides a more extensive example of this kind of alternation. In Example 3.11, mm. 1–5 contain many typical blues clichés such as bent notes, glissandos, and emphasis on the flatted third scale degree.

Example 3.11 Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “Body Talk” (2:56).

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1, 2, and 3. Measure 1 starts with an E9 chord and a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4. Measure 2 has a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. Measure 3 has a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, and a quarter note F5. The second staff contains measures 4, 5, and 6. Measure 4 has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Measure 5 has a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. Measure 6 has a quarter note F5, a quarter note G5, and a quarter note A5. The third staff contains measures 7, 8, and 9. Measure 7 has a quarter note B5, a quarter note C6, and a quarter note D6. Measure 8 has a quarter note E6, a quarter note F6, and a quarter note G6. Measure 9 has a quarter note A6, a quarter note B6, and a quarter note C7.

In mm. 5–8, Benson plays a furious sixteenth-note jazz pattern; this technical pattern would be worthy of any solo of a mainstream jazz artist. It features superimpositions, alternations between triad and scalar passages, and is proof of an unquestionable mastery of mainstream jazz vocabulary. In the case of “Body Talk,” Benson is clearly alternating his “crowd pleasing” blues clichés with “jazz aficionado pleasing” jazz patterns.

Benson used this same style in his smooth jazz recordings. “C-Smooth,” part of *Standing Together* (1998), is a blues in A minor. In mm. 1–5 of Example 3.12, Benson is clearly exploiting the blues-derived patterns that a composition such as this requires, once again, performing glissandos and bent notes.

Example 3.12 Excerpt from George Benson's solo on "C-Smooth" (2:43).

In m. 6, Benson begins an impressive jazz pattern that concludes on A minor. The reason that this particular passage is impressive (beyond the obvious technical mastery) is that Benson places his jazz pattern at the end of the section, seemingly slipping the jazz pattern in at the very last moment. Benson delivers this virtuosic pattern with such rhythmic inventiveness and precision that the average listener might not realize what has just happened.

Benson uses this technique in his most famous R&B performances as well. "On Broadway," one of Benson's most famous vocal tunes, was released on *Weekend in L.A.*

Most listeners, including most musicians, view “On Broadway” as a relatively simple two-chord tune, on which Benson provides an unremarkable guitar solo. On closer listening, Benson is continuing to alternate blues patterns with jazz patterns, just as he has in other genres. In Example 3.13, Benson starts with a jazz pattern and finishes the section with blues phrases. Once again, Benson’s virtuosity is undeniable. He uses a mixture of arpeggios and scalar patterns to superimpose and outline the harmony. Even more impressive is that he sings along with this formidable passage. In bar six, Benson returns to his more recognizable blues phrases.

The contents of mm. 1–6 of Example 3.13 are so virtuosic that one wonders how Benson could interpolate such a virtuosic passage within such a benign popular tune.

Example 3.13 Excerpt from George Benson’s solo on “On Broadway” (3:39).

The musical score consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1 through 3, the second staff contains measures 4 through 6, the third staff contains measures 7 through 9, and the fourth staff contains measures 10 through 12. Above the staff, chord changes are indicated: B^b, A^b, B^b, A^b, B^b, A^b, B^b, A^b, B^b, A^b, B^b, A^b. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth-note runs, triplets, and arpeggiated figures. Measure 6 shows a return to a more blues-influenced phrasing with a triplet of eighth notes.

Benson “tricks” the public by incorporating singing, a clear and singing guitar tone, and, most importantly, surrounding passages, such as this, with accessible blues phrases. These examples provide evidence that Benson maintained this consistent solo style throughout crossover and R&B genres.

George Benson’s guitar style exemplifies his entire career. He achieved immense success within multiple musical styles, and his guitar style incorporates multiple styles as well. Although Benson has been the target of undue criticism from the mainstream jazz community, he has succeeded in interpolating brilliant musicianship within critically derided genres. Benson’s formidable ability to shift from bluesy and lyrical phrases to potent scalar passages, all in an instant, has been largely overlooked by critics. Benson’s success can be attributed to his vocal talents, his work ethic, and his business savvy and his guitar virtuosity should be viewed as another reason for his success.

CHAPTER 4

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FAR OUT AND THE FAR IN: CHRONOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES IN SMOOTH JAZZ (1980s & 1990s)

Sound and Style: The Hybridic Nature of David Sanborn

David Sanborn's artistry is difficult to categorize. Is he an R&B instrumentalist? A mainstream jazz stylist? A smooth jazz artist? A fusion performer? Most music critics and scholars have not successfully created a single category that fully encapsulates Sanborn's style. This has usually worked to the detriment of the non-mainstream jazz artists, but Sanborn has occupied an unusual place within the mainstream jazz community. Unlike many commercially successful instrumentalists, Sanborn has not attracted universal disdain. Many of Sanborn's critics confess admiration for his innovative sound but, at the same time, condemn him for a lack of creativity. In other words, many love his sound but hate the way he uses it. I argue that Sanborn's sound and improvisational style cannot be separated. A false dichotomy has been created by journalists who are conflicted over Sanborn's hybridity of musical styles. This dichotomy is somewhat rare in journalistic critiques of crossover artists. Most journalistic comments of crossover or smooth jazz artists are either completely negative or completely positive; there is usually very little middle ground.

Sanborn has reached this rare middle ground by developing an intense saxophone timbre. His sound is so distinctive, and influential, that it is difficult to criticize. Although his sound is admired, Sanborn frustrates many in the mainstream jazz community by avoiding traditional jazz melodic patterns and rarely incorporating swing-based rhythms in his performances. Instead, Sanborn's improvisational

vocabulary integrates blues-derived patterns with an R&B rhythmic background. Using these techniques and attributes, Sanborn freely crosses the borders of R&B, crossover, smooth jazz, and mainstream jazz. He combines the visceral emotions of R&B and the production values of smooth jazz with the improvisational nature of mainstream jazz. Although many admire his sound and criticize his musical choices, both of these elements define Sanborn as a musician. Sanborn's sound and his improvisational vocabulary cannot be separated. Sanborn's unique combination of sound and R&B vocabulary has resulted in a hybrid style that he has been reluctant to define. Sanborn states:

I would never call myself a jazz player in the strict sense though—I don't have enough command of the vocabulary—but I think I fall in there somewhere if you have a broader definition, because there are elements of jazz in what I do. I came up in St. Louis and I got to play with people like Little Milton and Albert King, but also Lester Bowie and Julius Hemphill—and the thing that I loved about those last guys was their willingness to play anything. They'd play R&B, so-called “out” jazz, circus music—and I'm in favor of living life, not just music, in a way that is inclusive rather than exclusive. These days there's a lot of laying down the law about what jazz is—or more to the point what it isn't.⁹⁹

Sanborn not only proclaims that he is not a jazz musician; he further rejects the notion of categories altogether:

I don't know why anybody would want to call themselves *anything*. The implication is exclusionary. I'm a jazz musician—so that means I'm *not* a rock & roll musician, not a rhythm & blues musician? If somebody describes themselves as a jazz musician—I'm interested in what that means to other people and why somebody *would* describe themselves as a jazz musician.¹⁰⁰

Sanborn's overall hybrid style may be difficult to precisely categorize but his sound and solo style are so intertwined that they cannot be separated. In fact, Sanborn's

⁹⁹ Brian Glasser, “Crossing the Line,” *Jazzwise*, May 1999, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Howard Mandel, “Sanborn Swings Back,” *Down Beat*, February 1993, 17.

early exposure to different styles and genres of music has contributed equally to his sound and solo style. Although Sanborn has recorded hundreds of compositions as a solo artist, his unity of sound and solo can be best exemplified in one composition, “Straight to the Heart.” This tune, recorded before a live studio audience, displays all the attributes of Sanborn’s sound and solo style, and shows that these two musical elements should not be separated.

Critical Appraisals of Sanborn’s Sound and Style

Jazz scholars and journalists have been unusually complimentary of Sanborn’s sound. Mark Gridley, in *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, offers a brief but laudatory summary: “Influenced in part by Maceo Parker and Hank Crawford, his alto sax presence was popular with a broad base of listeners for its very hot brand of funky playing. Almost untouched by bop, his style was fluent, bursting with energy, and densely packed with soulful phrases.”¹⁰¹ Jazz critics like Richard Cook also heaped praise on Sanborn’s sound, positioning it as a unique bridge spanning various musical genres:

Saxophonists like to have a signature sound, but not many are as instantly recognizable as Sanborn. His alto tone is piercing, squeezed, needle-sharp: if you search for an “emotional” delivery, you’ll find none more graphic than this. He sounds as if he’s scuffing every note, twisting phrase ends as though trying to push them through a pinhole. Drama is a touchstone in Sanborn’s art. He is a storyteller-player, as volatile as Cannonball, as quick and greasy as King Curtis. If he loves the scalding sound of post-bop masters like Phil Woods and Jackie McLean, he’s equally in hock to R&B pugs such as Gil Berne and Junior Walker. In the end, it always sounds like Sanborn.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 9th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006), 336.

¹⁰² Richard Cook, “David Sanborn: Pushing to the Limit,” *Wire*, September 1988, 32.

Cook's comments illustrate the depth of influences that make up Sanborn's timbre. Cook is correct in pointing out that Cannonball Adderley and Phil Woods, as well as Gil Berne and Junior Walker, are equal influences on Sanborn's sound. Mark Gilbert, author of the entry "Smooth Jazz" in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, states that the influence of Sanborn's sound cannot be overlooked: "There are some unfortunate people who refuse to recognize that David Sanborn is a significant and influential alto stylist. Such people are likely to be suspicious of Sanborn's use of popular dance rhythms and horrified by his commercial success. Yet any number of younger jazz followers and musicians rate Sanborn's playing and any number of today's altoists have been inspired by what Gil Evans called 'that great cry.'"¹⁰³

Although Sanborn's sound is positively received, his improvisations are usually criticized, sometimes even in the same critique. Mikal Gilmore, in an early review of Sanborn's work, shows equal amounts of admiration and disdain for Sanborn's sound and improvisational style, respectively:

And that epitomizes the major weakness of Sanborn's solo work thus far: a reluctance to pursue, either emotionally or thematically, his more novel instincts. *Sanborn* is engaging stuff, and its namesake certainly has one of the classiest, most distinctive alto tones around. But it doesn't say anything we haven't heard before.¹⁰⁴

Lars Gabel offers a similar review of Sanborn's *Hideaway* album: "On one hand, Sanborn's penetrating, yet satiny sensuous and romantically evocative alto sax comes through in all its glory stating and caressing."¹⁰⁵ Gabel continues, "On the other hand,

¹⁰³ Mark Gilbert, Record Review of *Backstreet* by David Sanborn, *Jazz Journal International*, May 1984, 31. The Gil Evans description of Sanborn's "great cry" is particularly apt. Between 1973 and 1986, Sanborn was part of Evans's big band, thus, Evans was personally aware of Sanborn's soulful timbre.

¹⁰⁴ Mikal Gilmore, Record Review of *David Sanborn, Down Beat*, February 10, 1977, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Lars Gabel, Record Review of *Hideaway* by David Sanborn, *Down Beat*, July 1980, 46.

once Sanborn is done presenting the theme of each of the seven tracks, he loses all momentum and plunges ahead down one artistic blind street after another . . . his improvisations amount to a string of repetitive licks.”¹⁰⁶ In 1987, Mark Gilbert also comments on Sanborn’s style and sound:

Sanborn has hardly extended the alto’s vocabulary, nor is he a progressive player; he hit on a successful amalgam of the gospel and r’n’b strains he heard from Hank Crawford and Ray Charles, and he’s sticking with it. What is distinctive, and very much his own, is his sound: he’s no virtuoso, but his pitiful tone has inspired a generation of altoists.”¹⁰⁷

It is apparent that critical reception of Sanborn had separated Sanborn’s sound from his improvisational style. This inaccuracy is puzzling because Sanborn’s musical history clearly links the two of them; they evolved at the same time.

David Sanborn was diagnosed with polio at the age of three and spent nearly three years bedridden. His doctor suggested that he try a wind instrument to improve his lung strength: “I spent time in an iron lung and the whole thing. It was my doctor’s suggestion that I take up playing a wind instrument as physical therapy, to strengthen my lungs.”¹⁰⁸ In his early teens, Sanborn performed blues and R&B music, not jazz. Sanborn listened to local (St. Louis) performers like Little Milton and eventually was asked to join them onstage: “The band used to play dances near where I lived and my drummer friend and I would hear them play. At one point the piano player asked if we’d like to come and sit in with the band, so we got up there and played.”¹⁰⁹ Sanborn’s early

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Gilbert, Record Review of *A Change of Heart* by David Sanborn, *Jazz Journal International*, March 1987, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Chuck Berg, “David Sanborn’s Alto Spectrum” *Down Beat*, January 29, 1976, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Stuart Nicholson, “The Sound,” *Jazzwise*, July 2003, 22.

experience was mostly outside of mainstream jazz. He did not begin listening until he entered Northwestern University and later the University of Iowa:¹¹⁰

I didn't really get into jazz until I went to college. You know, I always dug it, but I wasn't really exposed to a lot of jazz when I was growing up in high school. I started to listen to records of Gene Ammons, Jimmy Forrest, Willis Jackson, Arnette Cobb—some of the Texas tenor players—I related to that kind of real big-bodied, lush approach. I loved the way they would articulate notes; it was in between a staccato and legato-like, tha-tha-th-th-thee thee-thee-thee-thee. And I really consciously tried to pick up on that; then I forgot about it, and then it kinda crept back into my playing.¹¹¹

At this point, Sanborn had been active in blues, R&B, and jazz. In 1967, Sanborn, along with his wife and child, moved to San Francisco. On a recommendation from his friend Philip Wilson, Sanborn was hired as saxophonist for the Paul Butterfield Blues Band.¹¹² Considering that the Paul Butterfield Blues Band performed a mostly blues-influenced repertoire, it is reasonable to conclude that Sanborn was already forming his own blues-based solo vocabulary. While with Butterfield Blues, Sanborn not only refined his musical style but made valuable professional connections with other musicians, leading to a very successful career as a sideman.

Sanborn's bluesy solo style, codified with Butterfield, was popular with commercial artists. Throughout the 1970s Sanborn toured and recorded with some of the most popular and influential pop artists of the era including Stevie Wonder's *Talking Book* (1972), James Taylor's *Gorilla* (1975), David Bowie's *Young Americans*

¹¹⁰ Sanborn was introduced to the collegiate experience through the National Stage Band Camp programs at Indiana University and Michigan State University. While at Northwest University, Sanborn studied with the well known jazz educator, George Wiskirchen.

¹¹¹ Les Tomkins, "After the Concert with the Alto Stylist Dave Sanborn," *Crescendo International*, April 1978, 24.

¹¹² Paul Butterfield was a blues singer and harmonica player and was one of the first white musicians to become commercially successful performing the electric blues style of Chicago. The Paul Butterfield Blues Band was important in exposing white, middle-class America to the electric blues in the late 1960s. Sanborn was part of Butterfield's *Resurrection of Pigboy Crabshaw* (1967).

(1975), and Bruce Springsteen's *Born To Run* (1975), and Steely Dan's *Gaucha* (1980).

Sanborn's phenomenal success as a sideman was due not only to his bluesy improvisations but also to his intense sound. As Sanborn states, his sound was an outcome of his environment:

[use of high registers] Well, I started out doing that as a result of playing with other electric instruments. Sometimes that's the only thing that cuts through. You can't really play if everybody's jammed, and you're building a solo, and all of a sudden you get WHOOF! swamped by all this electric volume. You go up to your upper register to cut through, because it'll match the level of intensity of the other instruments. Anyway, I hear things up there. The alto sax can be like a violin.¹¹³

During performances with loud blues or rock groups, Sanborn was forced to develop a sound that could match the volume and intensity of amplified instruments. As Sanborn performed with these commercial bands, he was compelled to develop a piercing timbre that supported an equally intense and commercially viable solo style. Sanborn's early work with amplified blues and rock bands created an environment that simultaneously influenced his timbre and his solo style. Contrary to critical views, these two elements of Sanborn's style cannot be separated because they are integral to each other and are completely the result of his musical environment.

The Inseparable Elements of Sound and Style: "Straight to the Heart"

"Straight to the Heart" is the perfect amalgamation of Sanborn's sound and solo style. The album *Straight to the Heart* was released by Warner Bros. Records in 1984. It is generally regarded as one of Sanborn's finest recordings, partially because he is surrounded with experienced jazz musicians, most of whom were in his touring band,

¹¹³ Richard Cook, "David Sanborn: Pushing to the Limit," *Wire*, September 1988, 35.

and because *Straight to the Heart* was recorded in front of a live audience in SIR Studios, in New York City. *Straight to the Heart* features Don Grolnick (keyboards), Hiram Bullock (guitar), Marcus Miller (bass), and Buddy Williams (drums). These musicians provided Sanborn with diversity; each one was equally well versed in mainstream jazz and R&B styles.

The form of “Straight to the Heart” is unusual. It begins with a 3-mm. phrase that contains a 3/4 bar preceding a 4/4 bar. This 3-mm. phrase leads to a four-bar phrase. This is repeated and then the three-bar phrase returns, before the solos begin. Sanborn’s interpretation of the melody incorporates a series of unique blues-like inflections, which are perfectly suited to his tone. In Example 4.1, Sanborn ornaments nearly every measure.

Example 4.1 Opening phrase of David Sanborn’s “Straight to the Heart.”

Sanborn uses many different kinds of inflections to evoke emotion. In mm. 2–3, Sanborn is embellishing the melody with short, melodic grace notes. In mm. 6–7, Sanborn uses punctuated blues patterns that stylize and invigorate the somewhat static melody. In m. 8 of Example 4.1, Sanborn shows his timbral control by quickly scooping up from G to B-flat at the beginning of the measure. All of these melodic and timbral

embellishments are typical of Sanborn’s melodic interpretations and reinforce

Sanborn’s intense timbre. Sanborn describes his embellishments:

I got a lot of my phrasing mannerisms, I think, from Stevie Wonder. When I was working with Stevie from ’70 to ’72, I picked up a lot of his little turns, and mordents, and appoggiaturas, and all that—things that he did on harmonica. And I think probably Stevie more than anybody else influenced some of the little grace notes—the mannerisms of my playing that I hear a lot of other people imitation when they’re trying to sound like me . . . I didn’t make it up, nor did Stevie perhaps, but Stevie kind of codified it, and then I just kind of lifted a lot of it from him, because it’s very effective.¹¹⁴

At the beginning of his solo (ex. 4.2), Sanborn begins a series of rapid-fire blues patterns that exemplify his mastery of high registers.

Example 4.2 Excerpt from David Sanborn’s solo on “Straight to the Heart” (:55).

The image shows two staves of musical notation for a solo excerpt. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, and the second staff contains measures 5 through 8. Above the first staff, the following chords are indicated: Cm7/G, A♭7, Fm7, B♭7sus, Cm7/G, A♭7, Fm7, and B♭7sus. Above the second staff, the following chords are indicated: Cm7/G, A♭7, Fm7, B♭7, Cm7/G, A♭7, F7, and B♭7 B°. The notation features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including triplets, slurs, and accents, characteristic of Sanborn's style.

Sanborn reaches a high C in m. 7 and then cascades down to E-natural. All of these registral acrobatics are performed with nearly perfect timbral control and every note has the precise amount of inflection. Of course, Sanborn has spent considerable time considering the practical aspects of his tone:

It’s the natural upper partials, the overtones, that I look for, to follow a melodic pattern when improvising, to be sensitive to the *sound* of the note being played. A lot of my sound is playing with overtones . . . dynamics are the key for me here, rather than just hard-edged soloing through changes, and this is the way I’ve always felt about playing. I’ll use different vowel sounds for notes, or different

¹¹⁴ Robin Tolleason, “David Sanborn Interview: The Voice of Emotion,” *Down Beat*, March 1983: 17.

kinds of tonguing. I just love the texture and color of a sound—I even like the overtones of a bus exhaust.¹¹⁵

Later in his solo (ex. 4.3), Sanborn creates short and rapid blues patterns.

Example 4.3 Excerpt from David Sanborn’s solo on “Straight to the Heart” (1:50).

The image displays two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, and the second staff contains measures 5 through 9. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: C m/G, A^b7, F m7, B^b7sus, C m/G, A^b7, F m7, B^b7sus, C m7/G, A^b7, F m7, B^b7sus, and C m/G. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and some notes are marked with accents (>). Measure numbers 1 through 9 are indicated below the staves.

Sanborn’s critics are correct; his style is not predicated on long, scalar patterns that link together. Instead, Sanborn creates a visceral energy by constantly adding an increasing level of emotion to his solo. In “Straight to the Heart,” Sanborn never lets the emotion dissipate. He constantly adds to it by using bluesy phrases, high registers, and light embellishments. This example shows that Sanborn uses his timbral control to accentuate his emotional phrasings. His sound and improvisational vocabulary cannot be separated. Sanborn clearly uses range, timbre, ornaments, and blues phrases to provide a range of emotions.

Sanborn describes his own improvisational style in deferential terms:

You know, there’s really not much to my playing. I’m a fairly rudimentary player. I’m not putting myself down: I have a certain way of phrasing, I have a certain sound, I have a certain way of attacking notes, but what I play is pretty easy to figure out. And I think that because I was playing in a lot of pop and R&B contexts, and I was playing alto—which was unusual because the saxophone solos, if they were at all, were by tenors—it was just something different.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Crispin Cioe, “Pop-Jazz Instrumentalists,” *Musician, Player and Listener*, March 1981, 50.

¹¹⁶ Lee Jeske, “The Genuine Article,” *Jazziz*, July 1999, 48.

Sanborn may graciously state that his own sound and phrasing may be “rudimentary,” but both of these qualities have influenced a generation of smooth jazz saxophonists. Sanborn’s sound is so expressive and brilliant that many saxophonists imitate his embellishments and high registral style but few achieve his combination of sound and improvisatory style. The reason that Sanborn remains distinct is that there is more to his art than what is on recordings; his personal experiences simply cannot be duplicated. Of course, this is a characteristic that most great jazz artists share. Indeed, using sound and style as criteria, Sanborn should be considered one of the twentieth century’s most distinctive instrumentalists.

Thriving Outside of Jazz History: Spyro Gyra and Fourplay

Musical groups have an inconsistent place in mainstream jazz history. Most histories rightfully promote the importance of jazz groups like Louis Armstrong's Hot Fives and Sevens, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, the various Miles Davis groups, the Jazz Messengers, and Weather Report. Considering the importance of these jazz bands, it is ironic that most histories feature very few bands after 1975. Of course, there are exceptions; many texts mention long-lived groups like the Keith Jarrett trios, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and the World Saxophone Quartet. But most jazz histories abandon post-1975 groups and focus on individuals.¹¹⁷ There are two possible reasons for this shift of historical emphasis.

First, many histories attribute the decline of established jazz bands to the stagnant economic state of jazz in the 1970s. I believe, though, that it has *always* been difficult for jazz bands to stay together. Maintaining a core membership requires an economic assurance that each job will be financially stable. If this assurance cannot be met, then the members can be forced to look for employment elsewhere. Of course, the economic viability of jazz (even smooth jazz) is rarely assured, so most jazz artists move from group to group, reducing the longevity of most bands. This has been a reality of the

¹¹⁷ The marginalization of jazz groups is exemplified in Alyn Shipton's *A New History of Jazz*. Shipton's final two chapters, "Jazz as World Music" and "Postmodern Jazz," consist of listings of important post-1975 performers; very few established groups are mentioned. Shipton attributes the listings in these chapters to the disintegration of the jazz narrative in the 1970s. Shipton argues that established groups helped foster a "clear sense of development" within the standard jazz narrative and that without them, this development has changed. Shipton states: "The days when musicians learned at the knees of older players, served their apprenticeships in big bands, participated in after-hours jam sessions, congregated in dressing rooms for impromptu opportunities to play, have all largely gone. The decade in which this transition took place was the 1970s." Shipton later cites the Miles Davis groups as one of the "last coteries of musicians to be part of the continuous tradition of development." Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2007), 714.

entire music business since the beginning of the twentieth century. For instance, Duke Ellington's struggles with maintaining a consistent membership throughout the 1960s are well documented. If it were not for his publishing revenues and financial investments, even Ellington's legendary orchestra would have disbanded. This economic reality may result in fewer established jazz bands, but, contrary to most jazz histories, there *are* thriving contemporary jazz bands. Groups like Medeski Martin & Wood, Sphere, and the Brad Mehldau trios sustain a largely consistent membership and remain artistically relevant. It is misleading to claim that established jazz groups are no longer a viable historical entity.

Second, jazz history is commonly a narrative of stories of great men, and this focus on individualism has run contrary to the group dynamic. For instance, although his sidemen are given limited credit, Miles Davis's style eras are usually attributed to his inner creative instinct, not to a collaborative effort. Even when there is ample evidence indicating that many of Davis's musicians contributed to new styles, there is an overriding tendency to label Davis as a lone artistic genius. This tendency is understandable. The "lone artistic genius" is a far more compelling story than that of defining the complex musical interrelationships that occur between musicians in a group setting.

Although economics and traditional narratives have contributed to the neglect of jazz groups in historical writings, this neglect is not apparent in all types of musical histories. For instance, the music group is a vital element in rock and roll histories. Economic issues do not necessarily work against the establishment of rock groups, so bands like the Rolling Stones and The Eagles have remained popular for over thirty-five

years. In rock-and roll-narratives, the individual has not overtaken the group. In response, popular music scholars such as Simon Frith and Robert Walser focus on various group and individual dynamics in popular music.¹¹⁸ In fact, the recent resurgence of long-lived bands like the Police, Van Halen, The Eagles, and Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band may inspire more studies on group dynamics and longevity in popular music.

Clearly, economics and an individualistic narrative do not pose the same type of issues in popular music studies as they do in jazz studies. Certainly in jazz, economics make maintaining a band difficult (but not impossible) and, in response, jazz narratives have ceased featuring them, thus historically marginalizing them. Alyn Shipton's comment summarizes the current belief that jazz bands are no longer a viable economic or historical entity:

Furthermore, the 1970s saw the end of the era when a musician could think about belonging to "a band," a single musical organization, to the exclusion of other groups. From that decade onwards, a jazz musician's life became increasingly fragmented, often working with several groups at around the same time, wherever the work came from, or taking (as the Brecker Brothers did) copious amounts of studio work.¹¹⁹

If Shipton is correct, this is an unfortunate occurrence. In a practical sense, there is no substitute for the musical instincts formed between bandmates over an extended period. The compositional and performing processes can become so complex that there is simply no other experience like it. Fortunately, Shipton is a bit too pessimistic. There are thriving mainstream jazz bands, but they are generally recorded on smaller record

¹¹⁸ See Simon Frith's *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Harvard University Press, 1996) and Robert Walser's *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (University Press of New England, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (London: Continuum), 874.

labels and are no longer part of the larger popular consciousness. In the past, jazz groups led by Miles Davis and Duke Ellington held a degree of relevance in popular culture, but there are fewer groups with this level of popular awareness today.¹²⁰ This lack of popular awareness leads writers to conclude that long-lived jazz groups simply do not exist any longer. This is an unfortunate conclusion because the evolution of bands is a rare and under-researched aspect of jazz scholarship. For example, Weather Report, which existed in various forms between 1970 and 1986, provides examples of evolving compositional, recording, and performing processes that deserve thorough research. This sort of examination would be valuable because it could shed light on various long-term musical relationships, which are unquestionably unique to jazz. Unfortunately, long-lived bands like Weather Report are typically understudied in jazz.

Recent jazz histories may portray a bleak picture of the jazz band but the contemporary jazz group remains a vital entity and deserves more research. Just as contemporary jazz groups like Medeski Martin & Wood and Sphere represent different styles, smooth jazz groups can also provide unique subjects for analysis. Although long-lived jazz bands are rare, some smooth jazz groups, like Spyro Gyra and Fourplay, have remained together for over thirty years and have maintained their artistic and economic viability. Spyro Gyra, formed in the mid 1970s, remains one of today's most popular smooth jazz groups and Fourplay, formed in 1990, has sustained a high degree of success. Both bands have achieved longevity and popularity by perfecting communicative connections with their audiences. Although both bands are labeled under the homogenous title "smooth jazz," they achieve these communicative

¹²⁰ One exception is Wynton Marsalis. Marsalis appears to be the unchallenged representative for jazz in most mainstream journalism. He is arguably today's most recognizable mainstream jazz musician.

connections in very different ways. After the 1970s, an era that many historians believe killed jazz bands; these smooth jazz groups have found ways to sustain public and artistic viability.

Origins of Spyro Gyra

In terms of longevity, Spyro Gyra has few peers. Spyro Gyra has retained a consistent membership, while being a remarkably popular touring band, for over thirty years. Saxophonist Jay Beckenstein and keyboardist Jeremy Wall, who met during high school, participated in various musical activities throughout the late 1960s. They maintained their relationship throughout their own college careers and reunited in Buffalo in the early 1970s. Among many other musical ventures, Beckenstein and Wall formed a jazz group, Spyro Gyra, in the mid 1970s. Wall describes their early years:

We were playing together in a CETA-funded jazz group, the Buffalo Jazz Ensemble. And we played a lot of R&B blues, and disco jobs, just playing in bars and stuff. We never did vocals ourselves, but we played in a lot of bands backing vocalists, doing what we thought would be commercial stuff . . . We were running around with these tapes of vocal things trying to sell them, and nobody was interested. So finally, because there was nothing else happening, we thought we'd just put out this jazz album locally, figuring that even if it wasn't a commercial success, at least we would have made a statement.¹²¹

The group spent their early years creating a mixture of R&B sensibility, extensive improvisations, and Caribbean rhythm. In 1977, the album *Spyro Gyra* was released locally and, with help from a savvy local distributor, became successful. Soon thereafter, Lenny Silver, owner of Transcontinental Records, a Buffalo based distribution company, purchased the master of *Spyro Gyra* for his company, Amherst Records. Jay Beckenstein comments on this early period in Spyro Gyra's history: "At that stage, we

¹²¹ Jim Aikin, "Tom Schuman and Jeremy Wall: Synthesizers and Smokebombs with Spyro Gyra," *Keyboard*, August 1981, 17.

started selling a lot more records locally than we thought. Thousands of them . . . we were distributing through a local company, which was owned by Lenny Silver. Lenny saw the possibilities in the records and signed us to a recording contract. Through Lenny, that record sold almost 200,000 copies.”¹²²

Silver soon sold the rights to the band to Infinity Records, a division of MCA. The album *Spyro Gyra* was re-packaged and nationally distributed in 1978.¹²³ Through the help of national distribution, *Spyro Gyra* hit number 14 on the *Billboard* jazz charts and became one of the most popular jazz albums of 1978. Much of this success can be attributed to the single “Shaker Song,” which remains one of Spyro Gyra’s most identifiable tunes. In 1979, *Morning Dance* was released and was an even larger hit than the album *Spyro Gyra. Morning Dance*, which eventually achieved platinum status, reached *Billboard*’s top 40 pop albums and number 2 in jazz albums. Once again, much of this success can be attributed to a catchy single, “Morning Dance.” Beckenstein comments on the song’s success: “We were on a new label, and they really focused their resources on promoting us. Radio was open-minded at the time, but we never could have imagined that success. For whatever reason, ‘Morning Dance’ for all its happy, bright and tropical sweetness, became a classic, and touched a public nerve.”¹²⁴ Both of these albums were recorded by permanent members of the band and studio professionals. At this point, Gerardo Velez (percussion), David Wolford (bass), Eli Konikoff (drums), Chet Catallo (guitar), Tom Schuman (keyboard), and Jay Beckenstein

¹²² Peter Rothbart, “Spyro Gyra: Relaxin’ at 30,000 Volts,” *Down Beat*, October 1981, 15.

¹²³ The spelling of Spyro Gyra is attributed to a mistake. A club owner asked Jay Beckenstein what his group’s name was and Beckenstein told him “Spirogyra,” which is a green algae. The club owner misspelled it as “Spyro Gyra” and this spelling remained.

¹²⁴ Quote taken from Spyro Gyra’s official website “General History of Spyro Gyra,” <http://www.spyrogyra.com/generalinfo.php?type=history> (accessed May 2, 2008).

were permanent members of Spyro Gyra.¹²⁵ The albums *Spyro Gyra* and *Morning Dance* also feature prominent studio musicians: Will Lee, Randy Brecker, Steve Jordan, and Hiram Bullock.

The initial success of *Spyro Gyra* and *Morning Dance* laid the financial groundwork that has contributed to the longevity of Spyro Gyra. Beckenstein believed that business acumen was as important as musical talent. From the beginning, Beckenstein was concerned with retaining financial control. During the initial negotiations for *Spyro Gyra*, Beckenstein created Crosseyed Bear Productions Inc., a corporation dedicated to managing the publishing and touring profits of Spyro Gyra. Incorporating the publishing rights for Spyro Gyra has proven to be a wise choice; many of Spyro Gyra's tunes have been re-recorded by other artists. A recent example is the song "Paradise" from the popular singer Fergie's 2006 album, *The Dutchess*. "Paradise" is a contrafact of "Morning Dance" that uses a substantial part of the tune. Beckenstein's business sense has surely helped him profit from such usages.

In the early 1980s, Beckenstein and Richard Caldara invested in the construction of Bear Tracks Studio. This state-of-the-art studio provided Beckenstein more control over the compositional and recording processes. Although the financial commitment was substantial, Bear Tracks Studio has saved Spyro Gyra money in recording studio fees and has enabled them to produce a new album nearly every year since the band was formed. As Beckenstein states, he is part of nearly every part of the business of Spyro Gyra:

Spyro Gyra has a number of entities within it: one is the live band; one is the production staff that makes the records; one is the writing crew, the people that

¹²⁵ Tom Schuman and Jay Beckenstein remain with the band today.

write the songs; and one is the business. In any one of those categories, I'm not necessarily the premier person, although perhaps in the business I am. But in all those individual categories, there are people in the band that might be stronger than me. But I'm the one person who's *involved* in all those categories. I sort of bridge all of them.¹²⁶

Beckenstein's shrewd business choices helped Spyro Gyra record twenty nine albums. Considering that the band performs over one-hundred live shows a year, this is an extraordinary feat. The demand for new material remains strong because the quality of Spyro Gyra recordings has been so consistent. When Infinity (the initial label that distributed the band's recordings) went bankrupt, MCA Records took control and had the finances to package and promote the band. Throughout the 1980s, Spyro Gyra's recordings with MCA were perfectly recorded and packaged. Although criticized by mainstream jazz listeners, Spyro Gyra's dependence on synthesizers, electric bass, and electric guitar, enabled recording engineers to record directly from the instruments themselves, thereby avoiding the complexities of microphones. Packaging was equally important to Spyro Gyra's success. Many of the album covers throughout the 1980s feature a sunny/tropical image: an attractive woman listening to headphones, a tropical bird, or a distant image of a tropical storm. These kinds of images signaled to the consumer that the music was going to be equally sunny and upbeat. This consistency reassured purchasers that Spyro Gyra's recordings would be a pleasing balance of "Caribbean" rhythms and memorable tunes, all flawlessly recorded and professionally packaged.

In 1990, MCA bought GRP Records and MCA's jazz artists were signed to GRP. GRP Records is as important to smooth jazz in the 1990s as CTI was to crossover in the

¹²⁶ Peter Rothbart, "Spyro Gyra: Relaxin' at 30,000 Volts," *Down Beat* 48, October 1981, 17.

1970s. David Grusin and Larry Rosen founded GRP Records in 1982.¹²⁷ The early GRP roster included such diverse jazz artists as David Benoit, Kevin Eubanks, Gerry Mulligan, and Dizzy Gillespie. The production and packaging of these artists helped make GRP instantly successful. In terms of production, GRP became one of the first record labels to emphasize digital recording, which also allowed them to release all of their recordings on compact disc. This digital format was more advantageous to smooth jazz artists than to mainstream artists. The clarity of digital recordings enabled all instruments to be heard clearly; pianos were now bright and bass was compressed and controlled. On the other hand, the recordings of mainstream jazz artists may have suffered. The fuzzy ambiance of analog recordings, a part of mainstream jazz from the earliest recordings, was not available to GRP artists. The iconic cavernous reverberations of *Kind of Blue*, for example, could never occur on a GRP release. As the 1980s progressed, fewer mainstream jazz artists were retained and more smooth jazz artists were signed. The music was digitally crystalline, and that carried over to the graphic design. Most releases featured modern typesetting, a professional photo of the artist, and the ubiquitous “GRP” logo.

In 1990, GRP’s distributor, MCA, bought the company.¹²⁸ All of MCA’s jazz artists either were not retained or assigned, as Spyro Gyra was, to GRP.¹²⁹ Spyro Gyra’s new label, GRP, was even more adept in marketing than MCA. GRP followed modern trends

¹²⁷ “GRP” stands for Grusin Rosen Productions. David Grusin is an Academy Award winning film composer as well as a prominent jazz pianist. Larry Rosen is a musician and music producer. He has produced over 350 albums. They first worked together in the mid 1960s on Grusin’s album, *Kaleidoscope*.

¹²⁸ MCA is now the Universal Music Group.

¹²⁹ Grusin and Rosen remained as CEOs of GRP until 1995. After Grusin and Rosen left the company, Tommy LiPuma took control. After MCA’s merger with PolyGram, GRP was absorbed into the Verve Music Group, which includes Verve, GRP, Blue Thumb, and Verve Forecast.

of graphic design and promotion. This attention to detail contributed to Spyro Gyra's, and GRP's, success throughout the 1990s.

Along with their furious touring schedule, Spyro Gyra has maintained their "one album a year" recording philosophy. In 2001, Spyro Gyra left GRP and signed with Heads Up International. Heads Up features a diverse artist lineup that is reminiscent of the early days of GRP, including Michael Brecker, Mike Stern, Maceo Parker, Yellowjackets, and Joe McBride. The popularity of Spyro Gyra's recordings and live shows has provided opportunities for them to retain long relationships with prominent record labels. These relationships have resulted in high quality recording, marketing, and packaging, throughout their thirty-five year existence.

Origins of Fourplay

The origins of Fourplay are entirely different from those of Spyro Gyra. While Spyro Gyra's was founded by a fledgling group of young musicians from Buffalo, Fourplay is the result of an all-star band of four legendary musicians: Bob James, Harvey Mason, Nathan East, and Lee Ritenour. Harvey Mason recalls how he was introduced to the idea of forming Fourplay:

I began working with Bob[James] in the '70s, and we became great friends. We have a great time together musically and socially on the golf course. He's a great musician, and we've played in a bunch of situations. We began doing the Earl Klugh/Bob James collaboration record, and at that time Bob said, "Wouldn't it be great to have a band like this?" We'd talk about it from time to time, and then again on Bob's most recent album, *Grand Piano Canyon*, a year and half ago, he asked me to do a band thing. We were playing with Nathan [East] and Lee [Ritenour], and Bob said, "You know this should be a band. What do you think?" I said I thought it was great.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Robyn Flans, "Harvey Mason: Drummer, Percussionist, Solo Artist, Session King and now, Band Member?" *Modern Drummer*, March 1992, 24.

Although Fourplay is the outcome of a somewhat spur-of-the-moment decision, several of its members performed together for years. Lee Ritenour concurred that Bob James created the idea of Fourplay in 1990, but they had known each other for many years:

Although it's a new group, there's a lot of history with the four of us. Harvey and I have known each other since I was 20, Harvey and Bob go back 15 or 20 years, Nathan worked with one of my first bands, and Bob guested on my album *Festival*. Later, Bob invited me to write a song and play on *Grand Piano Canyon*. Harvey and Nathan were also on that session. It was such an automatic combination that Bob said we should do a quartet record. To his surprise everyone said, "Yeah."¹³¹

The formation of Fourplay in 1991, along with its longevity, is an event nearly unheard of in smooth jazz or mainstream jazz history. Fourplay is the unlikely combination of four extraordinarily prominent studio musicians, who achieved remarkable musical success long before Fourplay formed. Bassist Nathan East began his recording career in 1981, recording "Lady" with Kenny Rogers. By the late 1980s, East toured with Kenny Loggins and Eric Clapton, co-written tunes like "Easy Lover" with Philip Bailey, and recorded Michael Jackson's *Bad* and Whitney Houston's *Whitney*.¹³² Harvey Mason is as prolific as East. Mason recorded with Nancy Wilson, Terence Trent D'Arby, Gerald Albright, Barry Manilow, and Earl Klugh. Mason is also a highly regarded film musician; he has performed on film scores for *Curly Sue*, *Hook*, *Naked Gun 2 1/2*, and *Sister Act*.¹³³ Lee Ritenour is a renowned guitarist who has recorded over thirty solo and collaborative albums. Lastly, Bob James was a prolific arranger and

¹³¹ Chris Gill, "Lee Ritenour," *Guitar Player*, May 1992, 25.

¹³² Nathan East's affiliation with singer and producer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds has positioned him be in the forefront of current music trends. He has performed with modern pop artists like N'Sync and TLC.

¹³³ Harvey Mason is also an important performer of crossover jazz in the 1970s. Mason performed on George Benson's *Breezin'* and *Weekend in L.A.*, Grover Washington's *Mister Magic*, and Bob James's *Three*.

performer throughout the 1970s. His albums *One* (1974), *BJ 4* (1977), and *Touchdown* (1978) are landmark crossover jazz albums. James attained widespread recognition by composing “Angela,” the theme to television series *Taxi*, and by winning two Grammys for *One on One* (1980) and *Double Vision* (1986) respectively. Since 1991, the membership of Fourplay has remained remarkably stable. The sole exception is the replacement of Lee Ritenour with Larry Carlton in 1994. Carlton, who is the current guitarist for Fourplay, recorded thirteen albums with the Crusaders. He recorded also with John Lennon, Dolly Parton, and Joni Mitchell and is best known for his work with Steely Dan.¹³⁴

As with Spyro Gyra, Fourplay has been affiliated with large record companies who are able to provide the band with impressive marketing and packaging resources. Fourplay has released ten albums; the first seven were with Warner Bros. The affiliation with such a powerful marketing and packaging conglomerate has certainly been a factor in Fourplay’s success. Their first album, *Fourplay*, remained number one on *Billboard’s* Contemporary Jazz Chart for thirty-three weeks and reached platinum status. Each of the following albums has been certified gold and has reached number one on *Billboard’s* Contemporary Jazz Chart as well. In 2002, Fourplay signed to Bluebird Records, a division of the RCA Victor Group. In 2008, Fourplay joined Spyro Gyra, by signing with Heads Up International. Unlike Spyro Gyra, which achieved success through self-promotion and live performances, Fourplay had immediate standing in the record business community. Fourplay’s affiliation with Warner Bros., RCA, and Heads Up has guaranteed a high quality product and promotion system.

¹³⁴ Steve Carlton’s solo on Steely Dan’s “Kid Charlemagne” is possibly his most famous recording.

To many observers, access to such formidable marketing, recording, and packaging resources would assure success. On the contrary, these affiliations could have easily broken either band apart. When dealing with sizable monetary rewards, and the possibility of equally sizable egos, more bands split apart than stay together. Furthermore, these bands have not only stayed together but their core membership has remained very stable. In the last seventeen years, Lee Ritenour is the only member to leave Fourplay. The founding core of Spyro Gyra, Tom Schuman and Jay Beckenstein, remain in the band and current members, including Julio Fernandez, who joined in 1984, and Scott Ambush, who joined in 1992, have remained with the band for an extended time.¹³⁵ These bands have achieved long-term success, not entirely because of their corporate connections, but because of the inner workings of each band. The members of Spyro Gyra and Fourplay created a unique group dynamic that enables each musician to participate equally in the compositional process. Although there are sizable differences between the origins of both bands, they do share a remarkably similar strategy in compositional participation. All members contribute to the compositional process, resulting in a personal investment of their band members.

Compositional Processes

Although Jay Beckenstein is the leader of Spyro Gyra, he accepts compositional contributions from all band members. Beckenstein comments on Spyro Gyra's compositional process: "In terms of operating as a unit, the philosophy involves a lot of mutual respect and generosity, as well as a willingness to have everyone have their

¹³⁵ Julio Fernandez left Spyro Gyra in 1989 but returned in 1991. Other musicians like Dave Samuels, Oscar Cartaya, and Joel Rosenblatt have been members of Spyro Gyra for extended periods as well.

creative contribution. Beyond that, nobody is ever encouraged to be anything beyond what they are and everybody brings a different set of musical backgrounds to the table.”¹³⁶ The results of Spyro Gyra’s “mutual respect and generosity” are represented by the list of composers on their greatest hits album, *Collection* (1991). Of the fourteen tracks on *Collection*, only five are written by Beckenstein. The remaining nine are authored by Tom Schuman, Oscar Cartaya, Julio Fernandez, Dave Samuels, Jeremy Wall, and Manolo Badrena. This collective compositional process remains in place today. Spyro Gyra’s most recent album, *Good to Go-Go* (2007), features an equal balance of compositional contributions. In fact, every member of the group contributes at least one tune. This method of collective creativity has surely contributed to Spyro Gyra’s longevity. Each member is rewarded, artistically and financially, for contributing to the group. This sort of communal contribution provides an outlet for individual expression and possibly curtails dissent.

Fourplay shares this communal philosophy. In Fourplay’s case, though, equal contributions are even more important. There is no de facto leader of Fourplay, but each member is equally prominent and successful. One of the primary reasons that a band which features all-stars can remain together for so long is that each member is artistically satisfied. Larry Carlton describes the compositional duties involved with Fourplay:

This isn’t four guys wailing away. Fourplay is a band in the purest sense, and that’s a challenge for me because, by now, I’m used to being the decision maker. Everyone has input, and the person who composes the tune has the final say. But the sensitivity of those three guys is such that when it’s time for one of us to make

¹³⁶ Thomas Erdmann, “Jay Beckenstein,” *Saxophone Journal*, March, 2002, 27.

a statement, the support is there, and when it's time for an ensemble thing, it's truly an ensemble.¹³⁷

Carlton emphasizes that he is “used to being the decision maker.” This is a prevailing issue within a band that is entirely made up of decision makers. Nathan East concurs that it can be difficult operating in such a powerful musical environment: “We all come from different backgrounds and 25 years of experience apiece playing things our own way, so, naturally, it's not rosy all the time, and we have our share of disagreements. The way we overcome these is by respecting that experience and not being overly stubborn, articulating the differences and working with them to help us improve our craft.”¹³⁸ East is certainly downplaying the arguments and focusing on the professionalism of the group. On the other hand, Harvey Mason, along with sharing his appreciation of his band mates, mildly disagrees with Carlton:

With Fourplay, we all wrote songs and we were trying to please the composer, but at the same time, everyone in the group was coming up with ideas. There was so much interplay and give and take that it really became a group. It was definitely a group effort. Everyone gave criticism, took criticism, gave ideas—and there was no fighting. It was great. Everybody's really cool. And it sounds different than Bob's records. We ended up finding a group sound.¹³⁹

Of course, “fighting” can be a relative term and what one musician may view as a fight, another may view as sharing ideas.

The communal compositional experience is not just spoken of; it is definitively represented on their albums. On Fourplay's most recent work, *X* (2006), all members of

¹³⁷ Rusty Russell, “The Return of Mr. 335: Larry Carlton's Sojourn Through Sessions, Smooth Jazz, and Solo Work,” *Guitar Player*, October 1999, 66.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Widran, “The New Math,” *Jazziz*, November 1998, 42.

¹³⁹ Robyn Flans, “Harvey Mason: Drummer, Percussionist, Solo Artist, Session King and now, Band Member?” *Modern Drummer*, March 1992, 25.

the band contributed at least one tune. In fact, on each of Fourplay's ten albums, every member has contributed at least one composition.

Communicative Methods: Lead "Vocals," Style, and Covers

Spyro Gyra and Fourplay have a shared belief in equal representation, which contributes to their longevity. This belief is not the only reason for their long-lived success. Both bands connect with their audience through direct and specific means. For example, Spyro Gyra utilizes Jay Beckenstein's saxophone as the primary "voice" of the band. Beckenstein's tone is bright and pierces the electronic background. The listener is instantly drawn to it. Fourplay does not employ a horn player, so they rely on guest vocalists to contribute a lead "voice" to the band.

Jay Beckenstein contributes more than compositions; his saxophone links Spyro Gyra to a popular music aesthetic. An important factor in popular music is the single, commanding, "voice." Most popular music is communal. All the musicians are performing simultaneously, but there is nearly always a single focal point, which is usually a vocalist. Even vocal groups like the Beach Boys, the Ink Spots, or Boyz II Men feature a lone singer who leads each tune. A single vocalist provides audiences a single focal point, a lone character who can attract adoration or scrutiny. Mainstream jazz generally suffers from the lack of a single voice. Of course, there can be a single soloist in jazz, but in most situations the lone soloist stands aside as another takes center stage, creating a parade of soloists, which can divert the audience's attention. Admittedly, Spyro Gyra usually does feature more than one soloist, but the overriding melodic voice in the band is Beckenstein's saxophone.

Spyro Gyra rarely employs a vocalist; Beckenstein is usually the melodic interpreter.¹⁴⁰ This consistency, and Beckenstein's unique lyrical interpretations, provides listeners with a readily identifiable Spyro Gyra "sound." As with long-lived popular music bands, Spyro Gyra has a lead "vocalist" who consistently provides a carefully characterized rendition of familiar melodies. Of course, these songs without words make specific demands on listeners and performers.¹⁴¹ Text is vitally important in connecting with the audience. Without text, even with an excellent melodist like Beckenstein, the audience's attention can diminish very quickly. Spyro Gyra compensates for the lack of text by creating very lyrical and readily identifiable tunes. From its earliest days, Spyro Gyra not only created memorable melodies but they incorporated these melodies into a Caribbean/Latin musical environment. The combination of strong melodies and Caribbean/Latin instrumentation and rhythms forms a powerful combination. A memorable melody, one that could easily have text applied to, is combined with a general Caribbean aesthetic that evokes happy and playful emotions.

The founders of Spyro Gyra recognized the power of this combination early in their careers. Their first hit, "Shaker Song," was part of the album *Spyro Gyra* (1978). "Shaker Song" song features a symmetrical, consonant, and tuneful melody, lots of percussion, and Dave Samuels's marimba, doubling the melody. This creates an undeniably tropical aesthetic. Their next hit, "Morning Dance," duplicates this aesthetic.

¹⁴⁰ Spyro Gyra has recorded hundreds of tunes but only three feature vocals, "Send Me One Line" from *Dreams Beyond Control* (1993) and "Fine Time to Explain" and "Let's Say Goodbye" from *Love & Other Obsessions* (1995). Their experiments with vocals only lasted a couple of years.

¹⁴¹ In the title of their album *Stories Without Words* (1987), Spyro Gyra cleverly addressed the lack of text in their works.

“Morning Dance” begins with a legendary introduction featuring a lone steel drum playing a rhythmic and melodic pattern, which sets the tone for the entire piece. After 30 years of success, Spyro Gyra has not ventured too far from the Caribbean aesthetic. In their most recent album, *Good to Go-Go* (2007), tunes like “Jam Up,” “Along for the Ride,” and “Island Time” continue this Caribbean tradition.¹⁴²

These Caribbean influences give the impression that Spyro Gyra plays happy music that is easily understood and appreciated. Jay Beckenstein does little to dispel this impression:

It’s not intellectually intensive music. For me, it’s music from the heart. We dance around and smile. We feel good. We’re not pensive black men who have suffered. We’re happy white kids. We don’t have a heavy cosmic message that we’re trying to get across or it’s not, “I am a musician, therefore I am God.” It’s not any of those things. I have a lot of fun doing this, just dancing around and playing my ass off.¹⁴³

Many of Spyro Gyra’s tunes have a joyous, tropical flare that avoids pensiveness and overt complexity. The combination of lyrical melodies and a pleasant Caribbean aesthetic has proved to be a powerful communicative connection with their audience. Certainly during live performances, those who are not familiar with their music easily understand Spyro Gyra’s sunny aesthetic.¹⁴⁴

Fourplay communicates with their audience in a different manner. There is no saxophone or lead “voice” in Fourplay’s roster, so they use guest vocalists. This strategy is an attempt to connect with the audience in multiple ways. To begin with, Fourplay

¹⁴² To further demonstrate Spyro Gyra’s dedication of Caribbean and Latin styles, the Trinidadian drummer Bonny Bonaparte is now a permanent member of the band.

¹⁴³ Steve Bloom, “Second Generation of Fusion,” *Down Beat*, August 9, 1979, 23.

¹⁴⁴ This is not to say the all of Spyro Gyra’s music is Caribbean or Latin inspired. Although their most well known tunes happen to be in a Caribbean or Latin style and this style is certainly emphasized during their live performances, in my estimation, roughly half of their repertoire could be classified as Caribbean/Latin influenced, the other half is a mixture of R&B and jazz fusion.

utilizes mostly well-known vocalists. On *Fourplay* (1991), their first album, El DeBarge sings a version of “After the Dance.” This is not a “jazzy” version; it is a model of 1990s R&B style. El DeBarge is a well-known pop and R&B vocalist and not affiliated with the jazz community, so listeners expect, and receive, an R&B treatment of the tune.

Fourplay has continued to use well-known vocalists throughout their ten-album career. Fourplay has used vocalists such as: Chaka Khan (“Between the Sheets”), Phil Collins (“Why Can’t It Wait Till Morning”), Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds (“Someone to Love”), Chante Moore (“Save Some Love for Me”), and Michael McDonald (“My Love’s Leavin’”). These artists connect Fourplay with its own audience, along with the audience of the featured vocalists. None of these vocal-features is necessarily “jazzy”; they follow the mold of contemporary R&B.

Using these particular artists also allies Fourplay with their own core audience. El DeBarge, Chaka Khan, and Michael McDonald appeal to a precise demographic that consists of an even mix of middle-aged, affluent African-American and white men and women. This is also the demographic to which Fourplay’s instrumental music appeals. Fourplay uses the popularity of these R&B artists as a link to reach a wider audience for their instrumental music. Linking a popular aesthetic to jazz, in order to reach a broader audience, is a thread that connects most of the artists in this section. While it is true that Fourplay has tapped into the R&B aesthetic, the vast majority of their music is instrumental. Generally, only one tune per album features a vocalist.

Performing covers is yet another way Fourplay connects with its audiences. As with using vocalists, Fourplay uses covers sparingly. In fact, most of the covers Fourplay

performs are associated with their guest vocalists.¹⁴⁵ Fourplay performed Marvin Gaye's "After the Dance" and "Sexual Healing," Phil Collins's "Why Can't It Wait Till Morning," and Steve Winwood's "My Love's Leavin.'" Once again, these are conscious choices made by the members of Fourplay. These tunes have become part of an acceptable repertoire for their demographic and conjure a host of nostalgic emotions.

Spyro Gyra, on the other hand, performs no covers. The nostalgic elements of their performances reside solely in their live shows. The band has been in existence for so long that many of the earlier tunes, even those from the early 1980s, have become classics. Spyro Gyra *does* trade in nostalgia, but within a repertoire that they have created.

These bands are just two examples of long-lived smooth jazz groups.¹⁴⁶ This analysis demonstrates that bands in the same style can have different methods of communication or composition. This can be true in mainstream jazz as well. Contrary to recent jazz histories, work *can* be done on long-lived contemporary bands. For example, a sociological and/or musical analysis of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra could be a valuable addition to contemporary big band scholarship.¹⁴⁷

As has been shown, these smooth jazz bands do not perform homogenized music that audiences blindly support. They have particular strategies in connecting with their

¹⁴⁵ An exception to this is on *Journey* (2004). Fourplay performs an instrumental version of Sting's "Fields of Gold."

¹⁴⁶ Other examples of long-lived bands are the Rippingtons, Yellowjackets, Hiroshima, Acoustic Alchemy, and Special EFX.

¹⁴⁷ Alex Stewart is one of the few scholars who have explored contemporary big bands. See Alex Stewart, *Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

audiences. These communicative strategies have developed over time and have reached a high level of complexity and sophistication.

Ears that Work: Classifying the Critical Discourse Surrounding Kenny G

Kenny G is one of the most successful instrumentalists of all time. According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), Kenny G (Kenneth Gorelick) has sold forty eight million albums, more albums than popular music icons Alabama, Prince, Guns N' Roses, or Britney Spears.¹⁴⁸ These sales were achieved without the aid of mysterious personas, flashy stage shows, or public controversies, all of which can contribute to record sales. On the contrary, Kenny G has achieved success by performing a music which is subtle, largely instrumental, and, undeniably, linked to jazz. These links are difficult to deny. He is best known for his performances on soprano saxophone, an instrument synonymous with jazz. Furthermore, he performs mostly instrumental music, which is characterized by lyricism and improvisation; both of these attributes, at least in the public's eye, are linked to jazz. These real or perceived links to jazz have led to particularly intense debates and criticisms both inside and outside of the mainstream jazz community. These criticisms, aimed at whether Kenny G is a legitimate jazz musician, have come from critics, scholars, musicians, and the public. These criticisms are commonly personal and vicious.

In jazz scholarship and journalism, arguments demonstrating that Kenny G is connected to the mainstream jazz tradition rarely fully materialize. Any worthwhile discussions usually dissolve into brutal criticism or marginalization. An example of harsh scholarly criticism is found in Alyn Shipton's *A New History of Jazz*. Shipton sharply criticizes Kenny G by offering the following description: “[Kenny G] whose

¹⁴⁸ See <http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?table=tblTopArt>. According to Kenny G's website, he has sold nearly 75 million records worldwide. See kennyg.com.

simple, melodic alto and soprano playing, underpinned by predictable rock rhythms, is the antithesis of improvisation, collective interaction, swing, soul, or heart.”¹⁴⁹

Marginalization is apparent by the exclusion of Kenny G from the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Artists, such as Michael Jackson, Dionne Warwick, and Phil Collins are included, but the best selling instrumentalist of all time, namely Kenny G, is not. This potent mixture of harsh criticism and blatant marginalization has done little to engage thoughtful musical scholarship on the work of this remarkably successful instrumentalist.

As journalists and scholars hit new lows in criticism, the phenomenal popularity of Kenny G generates debate among the public. This debate centers on the question of whether Kenny G is a jazz musician and is characterized by two philosophical positions, with little middle ground. Although heated definitional arguments have always been a part of public discourse, for the first time, these arguments can be viewed on the internet by anyone. Publically accessible reviews of Kenny G’s recordings provide evidence of the debate over his music. Many focus on whether Kenny G deserves to be a part of the standard jazz narrative. In fact, these critiques provide a practical example of Jerome Harris’s “canon versus process approach to jazz,” with one side defending the canon and the other defending the process.¹⁵⁰ As journalists and scholars have discovered new and creative ways to criticize Kenny G, the public has participated in healthy debate. This debate, I argue, provides a unique perspective into contemporary public discussions over what *is* and what is *not* jazz.

¹⁴⁹ Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 2007), 625.

¹⁵⁰ Jerome Harris, “Jazz on the Global Stage,” in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 120.

Kenny G's Popularity and its Ramifications

The reason for journalistic, scholarly, and public interest in Kenny G lies in his ascendance as a public figure in the mid 1980s. This ascendancy began when Kenny G became a sideman in Jeff Lorber's Fusion in 1979. Jeff Lorber, a respected crossover keyboardist and composer, was affiliated with the Arista record label. This relationship eventually enabled Kenny G to meet Clive Davis, the founder and president of Arista Records. Davis is legendary for "discovering" artists such as Whitney Houston and helping revitalize the careers of Miles Davis and Carlos Santana. Clive Davis's knowledge of marketing and promotion, as well as Arista's finances, were pivotal to Kenny G's success.¹⁵¹ In 1982, *Kenny G* was released with meager sales, but Arista's financial backing permitted Davis to be patient with Gorelick's career. Davis's patience paid off; *G Force* (1983), the follow up to *Kenny G*, reached platinum status and positioned Gorelick for future success. That success arrived in 1986 with *Duotones*. *Duotone* was supported by two popular singles, "Don't Make Me Wait for Love," and "Songbird." An early performance of "Songbird," possibly his G's best known tune, is part of Kenny G lore. In 1986, Gorelick was scheduled to perform on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. Although two performances were scheduled, there was only time for one tune. He was advised to perform the vocal tune, "Don't Make Me Wait for Love," but decided against it at the last moment. Kenny G describes this moment:

¹⁵¹ After a twenty-year partnership, Kenny G decided to leave Arista in 2007. Kenny G attributes this change to his desire to write more original compositions: "I was with Arista forever, and Clive (Davis) was like family to me. But I wanted to do an album of original material, and that wasn't what they wanted me to do. I personally wanted to get back to my roots and explore doing creative things." Cortney Harding, "Kenny G Explores Latin 'Rhythm,'" <http://kennyg.com/news.php> (accessed May 2, 2008).

The curtain comes up, and the band starts playing “Songbird,” I could see some faces behind the camera looking like, what the heck is going on—and, of course, it’s live TV. And I kicked ass on that song, I was on and I was so happy—until, of course, the guy comes back and starts yelling at me, “You’re never going to be on this show again. Blah blah blah.” I didn’t care, I did what I wanted to do.¹⁵²

Like so many mainstream jazz artists, Gorelick narrates his achievements in mythical terms. He portrays himself as a hero, who resists authority and eventually finds success on his own terms. He positions himself as a hero in other stories as well.

The story of Kenny G’s career usually begins with his early affinity for saxophonists, particularly Grover Washington, Jr. He describes his early influences:

I mean, I wanted to be the white Grover Washington, Jr., and I think I became the white Grover Washington, Jr. Then, when I started to hear other saxophone players, like Sonny Rollins or Coltrane, I heard this different way of playing that I had not really had a lot of access to, I thought, “Well, I’ve got to learn these licks.” So I started to learn all that stuff. And pretty soon, after years of practicing this and practicing that, at some point I decided that my own style emerged, and I play the way that I play. It’s cool. Because any time, I know that if I wanted to, I could play the fast Coltrane licks, and if I need to play soulfully, I can always play in a certain kind of style. I’ve got a lot of different ways that I could play the saxophone, and I know that.¹⁵³

Gorelick is making two heroic claims and both echo those made by musicians for generations. To begin with, Kenny G states that he is a “white Grover Washington, Jr.” At first glance, this is a bold statement. Washington is revered among the listeners and musicians of smooth jazz and to position oneself as an equivalent musician or personality could be controversial. On closer examination, Kenny G, a lifelong fan of Grover Washington, Jr., may have been simply stating that he is currently the most prominent instrumentalist of the day, not necessarily part of a heroic “changing of the

¹⁵² Catherine Applefeld, Olson, “Kenny G: The Billboard Interview,” *Billboard*, September 14, 2002, 48.

¹⁵³ Ted Panken, “G WHIZ: Kenny G Is Still the Smooth Jazz King,” <http://music.barnesandnoble.com/features/interview.asp?NID=598266&z=y> (accessed May 1, 2008).

guard.” Later, Kenny G connects himself to smooth jazz as well as to mainstream jazz; this can be a complex and potentially controversial decision as well. On one hand, many listeners believe that Kenny G is not connected to mainstream jazz but do believe that he is a viable part of smooth jazz. Considering Kenny G’s commercial success, his affinity for Grover Washington, Jr., and his style of music, it is easy to view Kenny G as part of the long evolution of smooth jazz. On the other hand, many proponents of mainstream jazz could be angered that Kenny G affiliates himself with canonical greats such as Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. Gorelick adds to the controversy by flippantly stating that he “started to learn all that stuff,” implying that he is firmly grounded in the complexities of John Coltrane’s musical language. Kenny G may be exaggerating his technical expertise in an attempt to connect to the smooth jazz and mainstream jazz communities. Although there is no recorded evidence of Gorelick’s musical debt to either Sonny Rollins or John Coltrane, Gorelick attempts to affiliate himself with these technical masters. Why would he need to affiliate himself with these jazz greats? Gorelick’s connection is likely meant to demonstrate that studying the jazz masters has been a part of his musical evolution. Gorelick is proclaiming that he heroically studied a complex musical vocabulary, assimilated that vocabulary, but bravely went on to perform a different vocabulary that led to individual success. Kenny G may be participating in a long tradition of mythmaking, just as blues, rock and roll, and mainstream jazz musicians have been doing for over a century. Of course, his “heroics” contributed to five million copies of *Duotones* being sold.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ These album totals can be found at <http://riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?table=SEARCH>.

Gorelick followed the success of *Duotones* with *Silhouette* (1988). Arista, recognizing the popularity of the instrumental “Songbird,” released the instrumental “Silhouette” to much acclaim. Boosted by the success of the single “Silhouette,” the album *Silhouette* sold four million copies. Even with this astonishing success, there was more to come. In 1992, *Breathless* sold twelve million copies in the United States; it remains the best selling instrumental album of all time.¹⁵⁵ *Breathless* was followed by *Miracles: The Holiday Album* (1994), a compilation of holiday tunes. *Miracles* reached number one on *Billboard’s* Contemporary Jazz Chart, number one on *Billboard’s* R&B/Hip Hop albums, and number one on *Billboard’s* Top 200. *Miracles*, with thirteen million copies sold, remains the best selling holiday album of all time.¹⁵⁶

This unprecedented popularity made Kenny G a public figure. Although musicians like David Sanborn and Grover Washington, Jr. were popular, their public exposure was still somewhat limited to a relatively small market of smooth jazz and R&B listeners. Kenny G was another matter. By 1995, Kenny G’s popularity had reached beyond R&B and jazz audiences and into the mainstream public and Kenny G was now a household name. This wide recognition created millions of amateur critics who were now “authorities” on Kenny G. This kind of amateur critic is common in popular music. Millions of fans have opinions about popular music figures like Mick Jagger or Bruce Springsteen, but Kenny G represented more than just another popular music icon. Kenny G is publicly associated with jazz, so opinions about Gorelick were more complex. Beyond mere personal judgments, these opinions were sometimes incorporated within arguments on jazz tradition. In jazz journalism and scholarship, Kenny G’s popularity

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.kennyg.com/bio.php>

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

made him nearly universally unpalatable. The value of his music, or lack thereof, was not considered. Most scholars blatantly ignored or maligned Gorelick, and the only effort critics gave in analyzing his music was how creative they could be in criticizing him.

Scholarly Criticism

Scholarly discussions of Kenny G are rare. Considering his unprecedented success, it is puzzling that most jazz histories do not mention him. There are a few exceptions. Mark Gridley, in *Jazz Styles*, does an admirable job in summarizing Gorelick's success and cultural relevance:

The music does not swing in the manner of 1930s jazz or the bop patterns of subsequent styles, but Kenny G does improvise . . . No matter how they are classified by most jazz musicians or purist jazz fans, his CDs remain in the jazz racks of music stores, not in the rock, pop, or classical racks. Furthermore his music is heard primarily on “jazz” radio, not on “classical” or “rock” radio . . . A pervasive part of the auditory landscape for about twenty years, his music is so common that millions of people hear it all the time, recognize that it is familiar, but don't know that is Kenny G making the sound.¹⁵⁷

In this brief sketch, Gridley addresses the most important issue surrounding Kenny G: his relationship to mainstream jazz. Gridley indicates that a large component of Gorelick's music is improvisational. The act of improvisation, especially on saxophone, is generally linked to jazz, at least in the public's view. He also points out that this assumption is further reinforced by the fact that Gorelick's music is marketed as jazz in terms of CD distribution and radio airplay. Although the public may consider Kenny G a jazz musician, jazz purists do not. Gridley alludes to this debate but offers few details, but makes an admirable attempt at describing the cultural and musical issues

¹⁵⁷ Mark C Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 9th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006): 335-336.

that surround Kenny G. Aside from Gridley, Robert Walser is one of the few scholars to approach Kenny G as a subject.

In “Ten Apothegms and Four Instances,” Walser briefly addresses Gorelick’s critical reception. Walser argues that critical commentary about Kenny G is often influenced by discomfort with sensitivity or beauty. Walser elaborates:

In a larger context, Kenny G raises the question of whether we can respect people who respect beauty . . . Violent reactions to Kenny G’s music, as well as graphic fantasies about his demise, surely betray a widespread cultural discomfort with, even contempt for, sensitivity. For many people, to admit to being moved by this music would seem to betray manipulation and emasculation . . .¹⁵⁸

Walser touches on the concept of sensitivity, a notion that is beyond the scope of this section but should be briefly addressed. As Walser states, there is an underlying feeling of contempt for sensitivity in criticisms of Kenny G. This contempt is sometimes the result of a personal reaction to Kenny G’s music but also can be a reaction to his physical appearance or ethnic background. To many, Kenny G’s slight stature, curly hair, and unusual playing posture, conjures an effeminate nature.¹⁵⁹ His physical presence is the antithesis of the masculine rock vocalist or the brooding jazz figure, and can be viewed as weakness or femininity. A particularly bitter public comment of Gorelick demonstrates this underlying anger:

kenny g = kenny gay. he's the most boring man on the planet. my friend jon loves kenny g and i don't know why. he gets mad when i talk about his girlfriend. but

¹⁵⁸ Robert Walser, “Ten Apothegms and Four Instances,” in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Allan F. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36-37.

¹⁵⁹ Kenny G is known for holding his mouthpiece off-center, creating an unusual playing posture. Kenny G addresses his posture: “I’ve looked in the mirror and said ‘Okay I’m going to forget about this side playing. I’m going to play straight out of the front of my mouth.’ And I look at myself and I’m playing and subconsciously, it just goes right back there.” In Hank Bordowitz, “Songbird Syndrome: The Triple Platinum Dilemma of Kenny G,” *Jazziz* December/January 1988/1989, 85.

listening to kenny g calms him down. this is his favorite all time album. if he could he would marry kenny g.¹⁶⁰

This poorly written critique unabashedly states that Kenny G's music is "gay." In this case, "gay" is a blanket term for boredom, subtlety, and/or femininity. This critique exemplifies Walser's concept of "contempt for sensitivity." This brand of contempt may also extend to Gorelick's ethnicity. Kenny G's birth name Gorelick, which is cited in most articles about him, commonly identifies him with Jewish ancestry. When a listener accuses Kenny G of being "gay," does that term include anti-Jewish sentiments as well? In journalism, comments on Gorelick's Jewish origins are sometimes cloaked in humor. In "The Kenny G Experiment," Michael Roberts slyly comments on Kenny G's ethnicity: "Kenny's Jewish, of course, but that didn't stop Neil Diamond from banking on Christmas, did it?" and regarding "Eternal Light (A Chanukah Song)", "It's his way of saying, 'Hang in there, gentiles; I'll get back to you shortly.'"¹⁶¹ These kinds of slanted ethnic comments may hide larger cultural biases that deserve more scholarly attention. Unfortunately, most jazz scholars have avoided any kind of analysis that targets Kenny G's music, his ethnicity, or the social context in which he engages.

¹⁶⁰http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B000002VLD/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints December 5, 1999 (Accessed May 15, 2008). The quotes taken from online reviews have been reproduced exactly as they are posted. All grammatical or spelling errors are original.

¹⁶¹ Michael Roberts, "The Kenny G Experiment," *Jazziz*, May 2001, 44.

Journalistic Criticism

Scholars like Mark Gridley and Robert Walser have approached issues regarding Kenny G and smooth jazz but few others have.¹⁶² Kenny G's cultural and musical relevance has been denigrated by its omission from scholarly discussion. This is not the case in journalistic criticism. As is the case in jazz scholarship, most jazz critics have avoided any meaningful discussion of Kenny G, but their disdain does not result in omission. There is plenty of commentary on Kenny G, but much of it is the most creatively vicious criticism within jazz journalism.

In 2001, *Jazziz* magazine featured Kenny G on its cover. This was not a typical interview or biography as indicated by the sub-title that read: "Locked in an office with the entire G discography, one brave writer grapples with the recorded legacy of a cultural phenomenon."¹⁶³ The writer, Michael Roberts, wonders why Kenny G attracts so much criticism:

I'd heard his music a time or two through the years and had reflexively dismissed it as treacle despite its enormous popularity. But I also had the creeping suspicion that the nastiness of the attacks on him was way out of proportion with his supposed sins. I wondered: How long has it been since a critic gave Kenny G a fair shake? And if one did, is it possible that he or she might come to the startling conclusion that – gasp!—his music isn't that bad?¹⁶⁴

This article does not give Gorelick "a fair shake." On the contrary, Roberts presents an annotated timeline illustrating the agony of listening to Gorelick's music. His comments are particularly critical: "I walk around the office shaking my limbs like

¹⁶² Another scholar who has done research on Kenny G is Christopher Washburne. In his pioneering article, "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?," Washburne advocates the study of musical phenomena, such as Kenny G, in order to create a more complete picture of contemporary musical society.

¹⁶³ Michael Roberts, "The Kenny G Experiment," *Jazziz*, May 2001, 40.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

someone cowering in a snow cave in sub-zero temperatures waiting for a rescue team. Don't go to sleep, I tell myself, or it could be all over."¹⁶⁵ Roberts concludes his article with these thoughts:

In the time that's passed since I completed this trial, I've nearly recovered from the trauma. It's been weeks since I've found myself on street corners yelling at passersby, "The end is near!" . . . He's played, it seems to me, for people who want to switch off their brains for a few minutes or hours or maybe the rest of their lives, and he does it very well. That doesn't appeal to Pat Metheny, and it doesn't appeal to me. But for those of you who are tired of thinking, Kenny G's your man.¹⁶⁶

This kind of criticism is a bit shocking; Roberts not only condemns Kenny G but his millions of fans as well. That Gorelick's music may not appeal to the majority of mainstream jazz listeners, is a given, but do differences in taste give journalists the right to attack him? Can one imagine a journalist locking himself in his office and describing the imagined agony of listening to 1970s-era Miles Davis? Although the music of this period is quite dissonant and would surely elicit personal distaste from most listeners, Davis is an unassailable part of the jazz canon and such an article could not be written today. Kenny G, on the other hand, is not only an outcast, but also someone to be despised.

Michael Zwerin wrote a particularly vicious critique of not only Gorelick's music, but also his personality. In "Kenny G," a chapter in Michael Zwerin's *The Parisian Jazz Chronicles*, Zwerin characterizes Gorelick as an infantile creature with little musical

¹⁶⁵ Michael Roberts, "The Kenny G Experiment," *Jazziz*, May 2001, 44.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

sense.¹⁶⁷ Using simple and short sentence structure, Zwerin creates a parodied Gorelick biography:

Sometimes he gets calls to do music that isn't his own. He has to say no. Music is easy for him or he just can't do it. The big hit he had, "Songbird"; it wasn't written to be a hit. That's just the kind of music he writes and it became popular anyway. That's the way it has to be. Easy.¹⁶⁸

If you gave him a page of paper with chords on it, he wouldn't be able to play a note. He watches all those other guys reading those complicated chord symbols and he can't imagine how they do it.¹⁶⁹

Admittedly, Zwerin devised a clever way to criticize someone; he took Gorelick's quotes out of context and created a mini-biographical essay. The impression, though, is personally insulting. The last word in the first quote, "easy," sums up Zwerin's characterization of Kenny G: someone who has not worked hard to achieve his success. It is ridiculous to propose, as Zwerin clearly does, that Gorelick has not labored for his success. While maintaining a professional demeanor, on and off the stage, Gorelick exhaustively tours inside and outside of the United States. His work ethic results in unfailingly popular live performances. He consistently charms his audiences with energy and well-rehearsed stagecraft, such as walking into the audience while soloing. Although his critics may scoff at Gorelick's showmanship, it connects him with his listeners in a ways that mainstream jazz artists traditionally do not. In the second quote, Zwerin implies that Gorelick is musically naïve because he may not be able to read chord symbols. This may or may not be true, but why is this prerequisite for musical value? Many great musicians have confessed that they do not read music very well. For instance, Errol

¹⁶⁷ Michael Zwerin has been the jazz columnist for the *Village Voice* and the popular music critic for the *International Herald Tribune*.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Zwerin, "Kenny G" in *The Parisian Jazz Chronicles: An Improvisational Memoir*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 118.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

Garner and Jimi Hendrix publically divulged that they did not read music well, yet this confession has not damaged their standing in their respective histories. A learned musician such as Michael Zwerin must know that jazz remains largely an aural music, so it is puzzling that he would place such an emphasis on a jazz musician's ability to read music. Moreover, if reading skills are an important criterion for a jazz musician, one wonders why they have not been questioned more often in historical jazz writings. Zwerin insults Gorelick's work ethic and intellect and offers no genuine insight on his life or his music. This is unfortunate; Zwerin is an experienced journalist and musician who surely could have posited ideas that were more worthwhile.

Other critics are more concerned with Gorelick's connections to mainstream jazz. Peter Watrous, in "His Critics Don't Get It. But Kenny G's Fans Do," simultaneously places Kenny G inside and outside of mainstream jazz:

Kenny G either can't play jazz or won't, and his music is spectacularly lacking in any of the characteristics that define jazz as a genre. His work is improvisationally empty and doesn't swing, there's no blues sensibility, and he hasn't figured out the difference between emotionalism and sentimentality. No wonder people who have spent their whole lives trying to master the art form, to little recognition, get resentful.¹⁷⁰

Many in the jazz community would agree that Kenny G "is spectacularly lacking in any of the characteristics that define jazz." On closer examination, though, many of the stylistic parameters that Watrous sets in defining mainstream jazz seem spurious. Watrous states that Kenny G's improvisations are "empty," implying that they may not have the correct combination of chord/scale relationships, requisite emotions, historical perspective, or virtuosity. The term "empty," in this context, is vague and requires

¹⁷⁰ Peter Watrous, "His Critics Don't Get It. But Kenny G.'s Fans Do," *New York Times*, March 21, 1993.

readers to fill in what they think the criteria for mainstream jazz should be. Next, Watrous laments that Gorelick's music does not swing. If this characteristic is vitally important in defining jazz, then much of the music of Weather Report, Pat Metheny, Miles Davis, and Mike Stern can no longer be defined as jazz. Later, Watrous states that "there's no blues sensibility." Once again, if the blues are a mandatory criterion for defining mainstream jazz, then many musicians will be placed outside of that definition. Lastly, Watrous accuses Gorelick of not knowing the difference between emotionalism and sentimentality. There is a wide range of emotion in music and it is very difficult to create and judge affective qualities. Can one accurately rate one musician's emotional sensibility over another? For example, should a critic or scholar unquestionably interpret John Coltrane's style as authentically emotional and then judge it above a perceived sentimentalism of Johnny Hodges? This is a question only answerable by personal opinion. Watrous judges Kenny G with a set of shifting characteristics that, supposedly, define mainstream jazz. He then argues that Kenny G does not possess these characteristics, thus placing Gorelick outside of mainstream jazz. This is Watrous's prerogative and many agree with his conclusions. Unfortunately, the article does not end here. Watrous then attacks Kenny G on the grounds of the African-American origins of jazz:

Deep down the issue is ownership. Jazz has such a long history and is so intertwined with the black community in all its struggles and its joyousness that the casual theft of the label can't be anything less than an insult. When one of the greatest products of a historically disenfranchised minority is used to sell something that doesn't reflect its music's achievements, suspicion and resentment can be expected. Integrity and achievement can't be copyrighted, but they can be degraded.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Earlier, Watrous excludes Kenny G from mainstream jazz. Now he is *including* Gorelick, and uses his stylistic parameters as evidence of Gorelick's failings. Watrous states that Kenny G has stolen the historical sensibility of jazz by using it as a marketing tool, thus damaging the prior artists's integrity and achievements. Watrous's suspicions are well founded; Kenny G presents this dilemma to most of his critics. On one hand, Gorelick's musical ties to Grover Washington, Jr. and his stagecraft clearly connect him to the crossover tradition. On the other hand, Gorelick personally connects himself to mainstream jazz. He frequently speaks about mainstream jazz artists: "And you know, it's fun as a technical exercise to take those tunes . . . like a song called 'Scrapple from the Apple.' You take that song, and you learn those licks, and that's a great test of technique. You can learn the 'Giant Steps' solo of John Coltrane's. You learn that, that's an unbelievable feat of showing-off, of technique."¹⁷² These comments are clearly meant to connect with the mainstream jazz audience, but statements such as these may have fueled heated criticism from Watrous and others.

By 1993, the date of Watrous's article, Gorelick had recorded seven smooth jazz albums.¹⁷³ These albums do not include mainstream jazz repertoire, musicians, rhythm, or melodic and harmonic vocabulary. If Kenny G is to be blamed for stealing the musical integrity of a genre created by a disenfranchised minority, then it should be crossover jazz and smooth jazz, not mainstream jazz. Admittedly, Gorelick does perform an improvisatory instrumental music on a traditional jazz instrument, but this hardly constitutes a hijacking of mainstream jazz tradition. Watrous may have misplaced his

¹⁷² Ted Panken "G WHIZ: Kenny G Is Still the Smooth Jazz King," (2002)
<http://music.barnesandnoble.com/features/interview.asp?NID=598266&z=y> (accessed May 1, 2008).

¹⁷³ Gorelick recorded *Classics on the Key of G* in 1999, long after Watrous's article.

criticism. Instead, he should have criticized Gorelick's attempts at connecting to the mainstream jazz community or analyzed the public's categorization of Gorelick. Opinions from critics like Watrous are common and these have sometimes been incredibly creative. Although much of the criticism aimed at Kenny G is vicious, it can also be well written and creative.

Creative Criticisms

Jazz critics and listeners frequently malign Gorelick with short witty statements or jokes. These statements are blind criticism. Thoughtful analysis is rare in these instances, but this kind of criticism is unique to Kenny G and deserves some investigation. These short statements are sometimes so antagonistic that they clearly are the product of a great deal of thought and preparation. For example, Eric Snider, the music critic for the *St. Petersburg Times*, offers a critique of *Silhouette*: "Above all, *Silhouette* is stilted, restrained and burdened by thick, high-gloss production, run incessantly through a kind of quality control that squelches all spontaneity. This music is like the top of Ronald Reagan's head—never a hair out of place."¹⁷⁴ Richard Palmer summarizes his thoughts on Kenny G's album *Classics in the Key of G*: "There is almost no bottom to the rage and contempt this CD inspires."¹⁷⁵ An anonymous listener cleverly associates Kenny G with Twinkies and tractor pulls: "This vapid release is the audio equivalent of a Hostess Twinkie—sugary, short on nutrition and not very filling. People that think Kenny G plays the sax well also think that Twinkies and jug wine are essential

¹⁷⁴ Eric Snider, "Stiff follow-up LP has him looking like a one-hit wonder," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 30, 1988.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Palmer, "Record Review of *Classics in the Key of G* by Kenny G," *Jazz Journal International*, December 1999, 26.

components of fine dining and that tractor pulls constitute high art.”¹⁷⁶ Lastly, an anonymous listener associates Kenny with torture, “All President Bush has to do is play this in the hills of Afghanistan and/or Iraq at a tremendous volume and BELIEVE ME the terrorists will come running out with their hands up screaming for mercy! This CD as well as most ANYTHING by this artist is the key to World Peace, Who needs nuclear weapons when you got Kenny G's music played over the loud speaker?”¹⁷⁷

Aside from these humorous statements, the “Kenny G joke” is a distinct part of Kenny G criticism. Most jazz musicians do not attract jokes solely dedicated to harsh criticism, but Kenny G clearly does. For instance, various reviewers have contributed jokes:

Q: What's the difference between Kenny G and an Uzi sub-machine gun?

A: The Uzi only repeats itself 1,000 times.¹⁷⁸

Q: You Know Why It Rains So Much In Seattle?

A: It is the tears coming from Coltrane, Mingus, Ella, and the rest of jazz heaven.¹⁷⁹

Q: Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, and Kenny G are in a room together. You have a revolver with two bullets. Whom do you shoot?¹⁸⁰

A: Shoot Kenny twice.

¹⁷⁶http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_pr_link_16?%5Fencoding=UTF8&pageNumber=16&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending. July 8, 1999 (Accessed May 1, 2008).

¹⁷⁷http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B000002VEU/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints, July 21, 2007 (Accessed May 1, 2008).

¹⁷⁸http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_pr_link_19?%5Fencoding=UTF8&pageNumber=19&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending. June 25, 1999 (Accessed April 15, 2008).

¹⁷⁹http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B000002VCJ/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints. July 18, 1999 (Accessed April 15, 2008).

¹⁸⁰ There is no attribution; it is a common joke among musicians.

While there are dozens of other jokes that are meant to criticize Kenny G. He is aware of his critical standing, but there little he can do to deflect these particularly harsh words. Gorelick responds to his critics:

I feel sorry for all the derogatory ones, the ones that just tear at you as an individual. I don't mind so much negative criticism. I'm always a supporter of anybody saying what they feel, and a lot of times, the jazz critics really believe in what they're saying. They're being sincere. I just don't think they need to be so belligerent. That's what offends me. I'm not a bad guy. I'm playing the music that I feel. I'm writing the music that I feel. I'm producing the music that I feel. This is all me . . . I can't force someone to like me. I can't force anybody to respect me. But what I'm doing is sincere, and since I feel so good about that, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the negative parts of these jazz critics.¹⁸¹

Gorelick defends himself by making two important points. First, he respects their right to their opinion, but laments the fact that so much of this criticism is belligerent. Indeed, Gorelick is very aware that the kind of criticism he attracts tends to be unduly harsh. Second, Gorelick states that he is only performing the music the he "feels." This is an important statement. Gorelick attempts to present himself as a more "authentic" artist by stating that his music is not contrived, but is a representation of his true self. In fact, Gorelick attempts to characterize his music as authentic throughout his career:

This album [*Duotones*] was a sincere effort to try to just play and *not* be commercial, and look what happened. When I wrote "Songbird," it wasn't as if I said to myself "Okay, it's 1987 and it's time for another instrumental hit." I wrote the song, I played it, and I thought it was beautiful. I didn't think it was going to be a hit. I wasn't trying to do that.¹⁸²

Gorelick defends his music for good reason. Many critics characterize his music as commercially contrived. This assumption gives most critics and scholars tacit permission to treat Gorelick's music as a lower art form, one that critics are not

¹⁸¹ Hank Bordowitz, "Songbird Syndrome: The Triple Platinum Dilemma of Kenny G," *Jazziz* December/January 1988/1989, 52-53.

¹⁸² Stephanie Stein, "Kenny G: Songbird in Full Flight," *Down Beat*, January 1988, 18.

culturally obligated to respect. This opens the door for a wider range of personal and musical attacks. Gorelick emphasizes phrases like “the music that I feel” and “a sincere effort” because he is attempting to place his performances in the slightly more protected realm of authentic music. Unfortunately, Kenny G’s attempts at connecting his music to a kind of authenticity have been largely unsuccessful.

Criticism from Musicians

Gorelick is clearly the target of scholarly, journalistic, and public criticism, but he is a critical target for other musicians as well. Most musicians will criticize each other in private, but public proclamations are rare. In the case of Kenny G, though, musicians feel free to publically state their opinions; the best known of these critiques is from Pat Metheny in 2000.¹⁸³

Metheny’s comments were posted on his website, patmethenygroup.com, as a response to a reader’s question. “Pat, could you tell us your opinion about Kenny G—it appears you were quoted as being less than enthusiastic about him and his music.”¹⁸⁴ Metheny’s response targets two issues. First, Metheny responds to Kenny G’s position of being inside or outside of the mainstream jazz community. Second, he addresses Gorelick’s approach to mainstream jazz in *Classics in the Key of G*.

Initially, Metheny states that Gorelick should be included into the mainstream jazz community with this statement, “Lately I have been advocating that we go ahead and just include it under the word jazz—since pretty much of the rest of the world

¹⁸³ A number of jazz musicians have provided their opinions on Kenny G, including those from David Rosen, Jay Beckenstein, Fred Hersch, Bob Sheppard, Charles McPherson, and Eric Marienthal.

¹⁸⁴ Metheny’s comments were removed from patmethenygroup.com but they have been posted on other websites like <http://www.jazzguitar.com/features/kennyg.html> (Accessed November 15, 2007). All of Metheny’s comments are from this website.

OUTSIDE of the jazz community does anyway—and let the chips fall where they may.” According to Metheny, membership in the jazz community should be contingent on the successful fulfillment of certain criteria. These criteria *are* met by most in the community and, likewise, Gorelick should be subject to the same. Metheny states, “He SHOULD be compared to John Coltrane or Wayne Shorter, for instance, on his abilities (or lack thereof) to play the soprano saxophone and his success (or lack thereof) at finding a way to deploy that instrument in an ensemble in order to accurately gauge his abilities and put them in the context of his instrument’s legacy and potential.” Metheny wisely includes other artists who participate in styles similar to Gorelick’s: “He SHOULD be compared to Herbie Hancock, Horace Silver or even Grover Washington. Suffice it to say, on all above counts, at this point in his development, he wouldn’t fare well.” Metheny is only partially correct. Gorelick should be judged alongside his peers, like Grover Washington, Jr., but the aesthetic criteria on which this judgment is based may not be what Metheny believes them to be. As has been discussed throughout this section, crossover and smooth jazz artists should not be judged by the same standards as mainstream artists. Metheny comments that Gorelick has “major rhythmic problems and his harmonic and melodic vocabulary was extremely limited, mostly to pentatonic based and blues-lick derived patterns . . .” Indeed, according to the standards set in the mainstream jazz community, Gorelick is guilty of having a limited technical vocabulary. According to standards of crossover and smooth jazz, though, Gorelick’s attention to melody, his showmanship, compositional and arranging expertise, and marketing skills take a higher priority than his technical skill. As in the case of Watrous’s criticisms, Metheny is judging Gorelick by a set of criteria that may not provide a fair

representation of Gorelick's worth. Unlike Watrous, Metheny's criticisms are directed at a specific recording that offended many in the mainstream jazz community.

Metheny's most pointed comments are in response to Gorelick's *Classics in the Key of G*. Metheny is offended by Gorelick's attempt at performing a jazz-associated repertoire and, more specifically, his duet with Louis Armstrong. Metheny cleverly describes Gorelick's duet with Armstrong as "musical necrophilia": "When Kenny G decided that it was appropriate for him to defile the music of the man who is probably the greatest jazz musician that has ever lived by spewing his lame-ass, jive, pseudo bluesy, out-of-tune, noodling, wimped out, fucked up playing all over one of the great Louis's tracks (even one of his lesser ones), he did something that I would not have imagined possible." Once again, Metheny's objections are founded on standards and presumptions set by the mainstream jazz community. To begin with, Kenny G did not title his recording "Jazz Classics in the Key of G." The repertoire of this album is largely classic American tunes that have been historically performed by jazz artists; they are not necessarily tunes written exclusively by jazz musicians.¹⁸⁵ For instance, *Classics in the Key of G* features "The Look of Love," "Summertime," "Over the Rainbow," and "What a Wonderful World," which are popular songs, but not necessarily revered jazz compositions. Secondly, Gorelick does not arrange these tunes with extensive improvisatory sections; instead, he relies on the melody and the arrangement to maintain listener interest. With *Classics in the Key of G*, Gorelick may not be connecting to the jazz tradition, but linking himself to the American popular song tradition. Popular singers like Dean Martin and Rod Stewart have found enormous popularity for their

¹⁸⁵ The exception to this statement is "Round Midnight" written by Thelonious Monk.

renditions of American popular song, with little critical backlash from the jazz community. Kenny G may be attempting to follow the popular tradition of American musical icons performing classic American songs.

In 2000, Ben Ratliff responded to Pat Metheny's opinion of Gorelick's electronic duet with Louis Armstrong:

But sometimes pop culture is horrid, and Kenny G, Louis Armstrong and Pat Metheny all belong to pop culture. Armstrong's public persona was marked by generosity; he was the least rarefied of geniuses. And "What a Wonderful World" itself is not sacred. It's perfect within itself, but it's merely pleasant, a big, dewy Barney smile.¹⁸⁶

Ratliff states that Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" is equally part of popular culture and jazz culture. Armstrong's rendition was meant for public consumption and was not an example of his instrumental virtuosity. Kenny G was connecting to Armstrong's popular appeal, not his technical mastery. If Gorelick was attempting to link himself to Armstrong's virtuosity he could have performed alongside Armstrong's solos on "West End Blues," or "Weather Bird." Gorelick's limitless financial resources would have made such an undertaking easy. Instead, he chose Armstrong's most enduring *popular* song, tacitly confirming Ratliff's theory that at least part of Armstrong's legacy is not "sacred."¹⁸⁷ Metheny's critique is very unusual; most musicians hide their opinions of other musicians, especially popular musicians. Metheny should be applauded for "breaking the rules" by stating his personal thoughts

¹⁸⁶ Ben Ratliff, "Jazz Can Take Itself Too Seriously," *New York Times*, July 16, 2000.

¹⁸⁷ There are smooth jazz artists who have attempted to perform mainstream jazz. Grover Washington, Jr. and David Sanborn have released albums that feature jazz musicians, repertoire, and an overall jazz sensibility. Grover Washington's attempts at mainstream jazz albums include, *Then and Now* (1988) and *All My Tomorrows* (1994). These albums feature jazz artists like Hank Jones, Billy Hart, and George Mraz. David Sanborn recorded *Another Hand* in 1991, and consists of jazz standards performed by mainstream jazz musicians like Joey Baron, Jack DeJohnette, Don Alias, and Mulgrew Miller.

on Kenny G's music. Moreover, Metheny's essay is well organized and provides a public voice for the private opinions of many jazz musicians. Gorelick has been the subject of various types of criticism. His success has made him a very popular target, and, in public discourse, Gorelick's music has been debated among thousands of listeners. These listeners, most of whom are not scholars, journalists or professional musicians, have created a rich environment of debate that provides a revealing view of contemporary discourses on definitions of jazz. These discourses can be illustrated by using the theories of Jerome Harris.

Public Criticism

Public discourse about Kenny G positions him inside or outside the standard jazz narrative. Jerome Harris, in "Jazz on the Global Stage," identifies two philosophical positions; the first is a traditional/canonic position:¹⁸⁸

The canon position (with regard to any art form) extols the art's continuity with past historical practice; consequently, its concern is with the preservation, proper interpretation, and accurate transmission of this practice. It also stresses the art form's rootedness in a specific social context (often tied to a regional, national, class, ethnic, or religious identity and including functional ties, vital or vestigial, to social activities.)¹⁸⁹

The second of Harris's philosophical positions is process oriented:

The process position tends to valorize change, risk, surprise, and the development or discovery of fresh varieties of expression and beauty. Often its proponents openly seek inspiration from traditions, disciplines, or eras not their own. Distrustful of excessive codification, they are willing to challenge dogmas and test the limits of widely accepted definitions and truths.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Harris's canonic and process-oriented positions are possibly indebted to Amiri Baraka's "Swing—From Verb to Noun" in *Blues People* (New York: Morrow, 1963), 142-165.

¹⁸⁹ Jerome Harris, "Jazz on the Global Stage," in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 120.

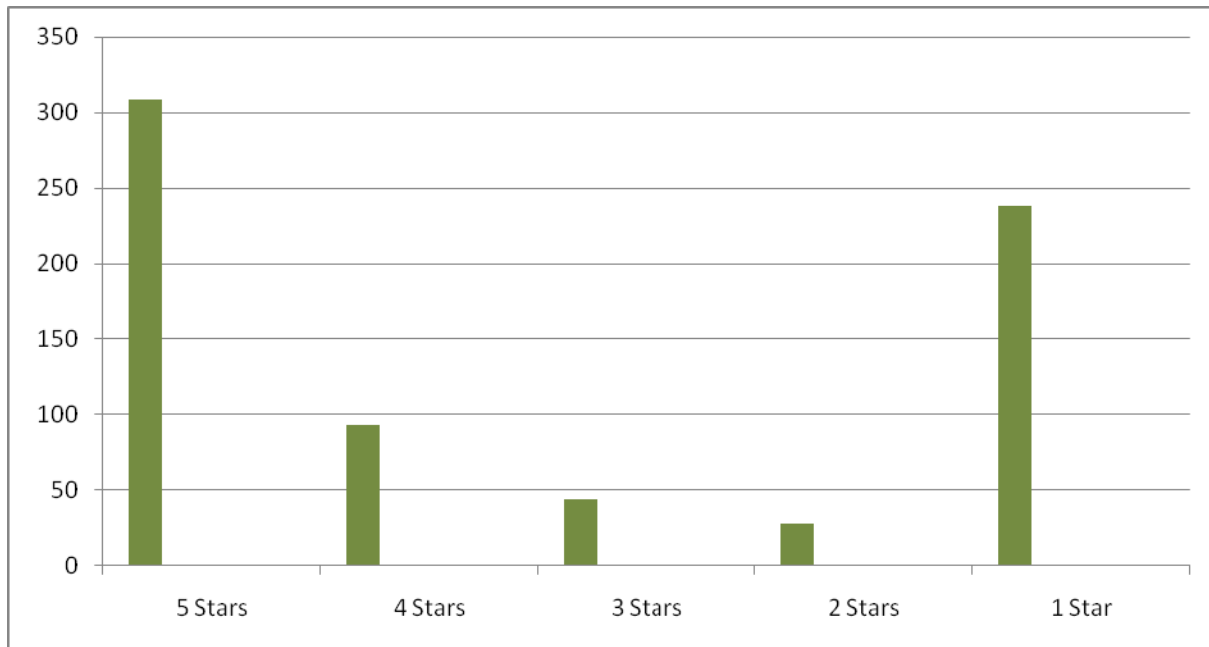
¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Harris is quick to point out that these two philosophical poles are idealized and that musicians tend to change their philosophical positions as it benefits the status of their current music. Although Harris conceived these positions with musicians in mind, I argue that these same philosophical positions have been codified among the listeners of Kenny G. Kenny G's popularity has created a dualism that supports Harris's conclusions. In his article on Kenny G, "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?," Christopher Washburne addresses the issue of Gorelick's popularity and his subsequent role in definitional debates: "As a result of his wide exposure, Kenny G provides many listeners with their first introduction to music that includes the word 'jazz' as part of its stylistic label and thereby he assumes a significant definitorial role in popular conceptions of what jazz is."¹⁹¹ Washburne astutely comments that Kenny G is recognized as a jazz musician by many and this issue contributes to new definitional debates. In fact, Kenny G is an extraordinarily polarizing figure; his listeners either love him or hate him.

The website Amazon.com contains hundreds of listener reviews of Kenny G. These annotated reviews include a descending rating system from five stars to one star. A survey of these reviews confirms that there is little middle ground in aesthetic judgments of Kenny G. The following figure is a compilation of the star ratings of all of Kenny G's albums.

¹⁹¹ Christopher Washburne, "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?" in *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, eds. Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (New York: Routledge, 2004), 124.

Figure 4.1 Compilation of star ratings of all of Kenny G's albums.



This chart demonstrates that roughly 325 listeners gave Kenny G a five-star rating while 240 gave him a one-star rating and a combined number of 160 listeners gave Gorelick a four, three, or two-star rating. As the chart indicates, there is scant middle ground; listeners either love or hate Kenny G. This sort of duality may not be unique to Kenny G and it may occur among other smooth jazz musicians. A survey of listener opinions on Grover Washington, Jr. and David Sanborn would indicate if this binary occurs among other smooth jazz artists.

A survey of *Amazon.com* responses of Grover Washington, Jr. and David Sanborn reveals a significant difference between these ratings and those of Kenny G. Figure 4.2 shows an overwhelming majority of listeners gave Washington a five-star rating. Likewise, Figure 4.3 indicates that a majority of listeners gave David Sanborn a five-star rating.

Figure 4.2 Compilation of star ratings for Grover Washington, Jr.

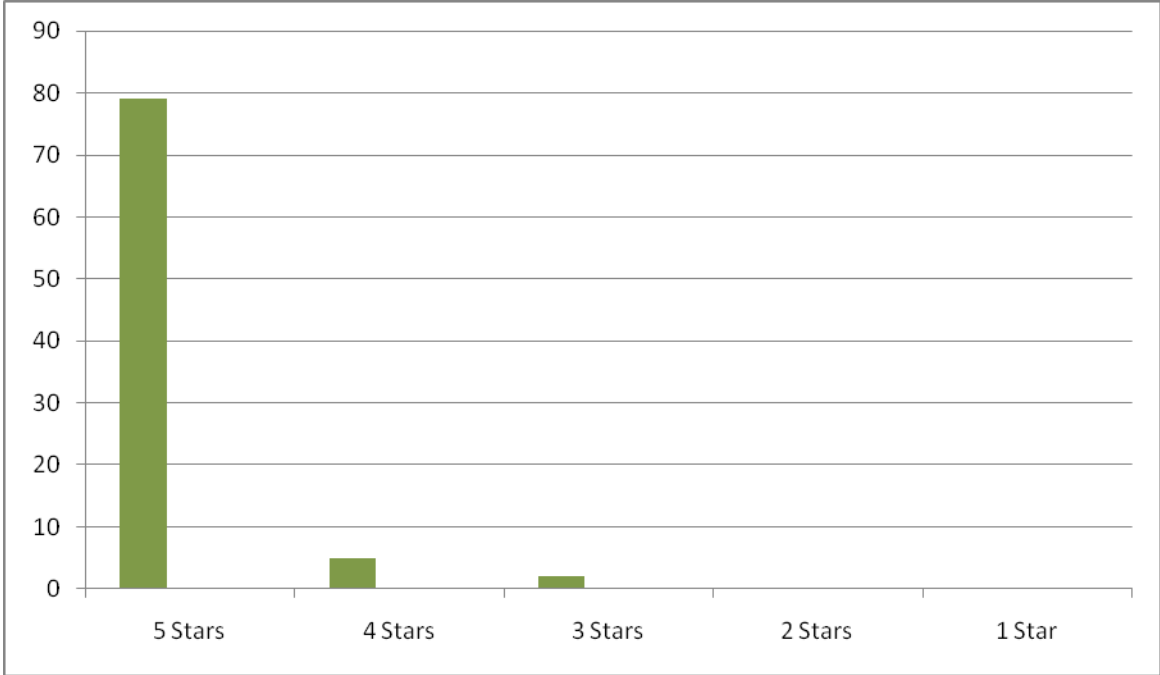
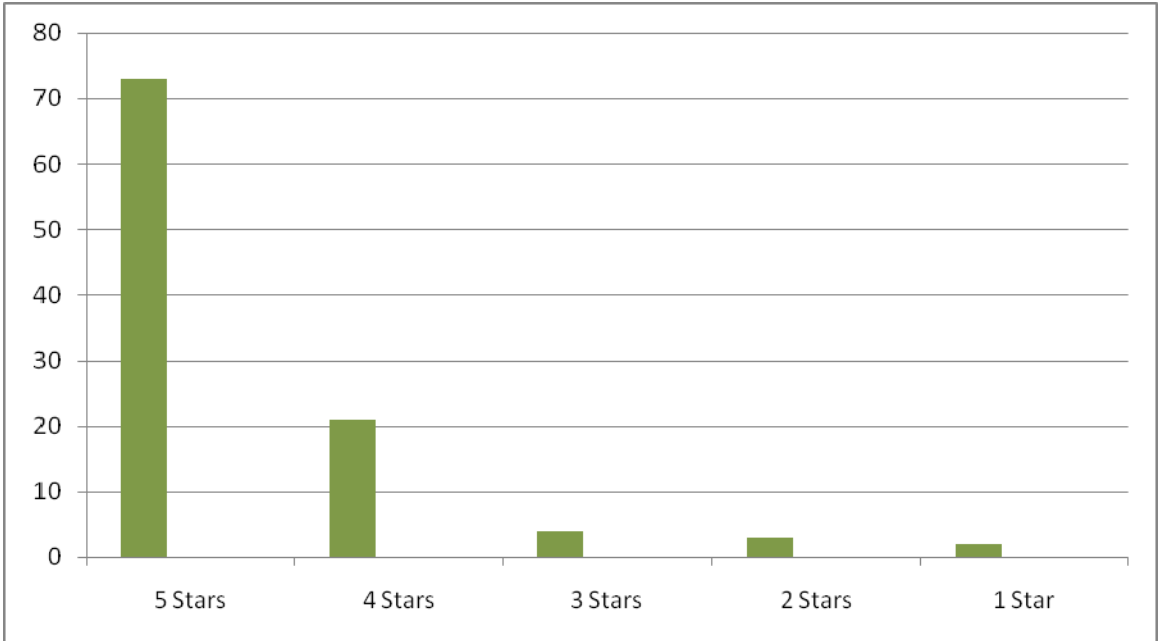
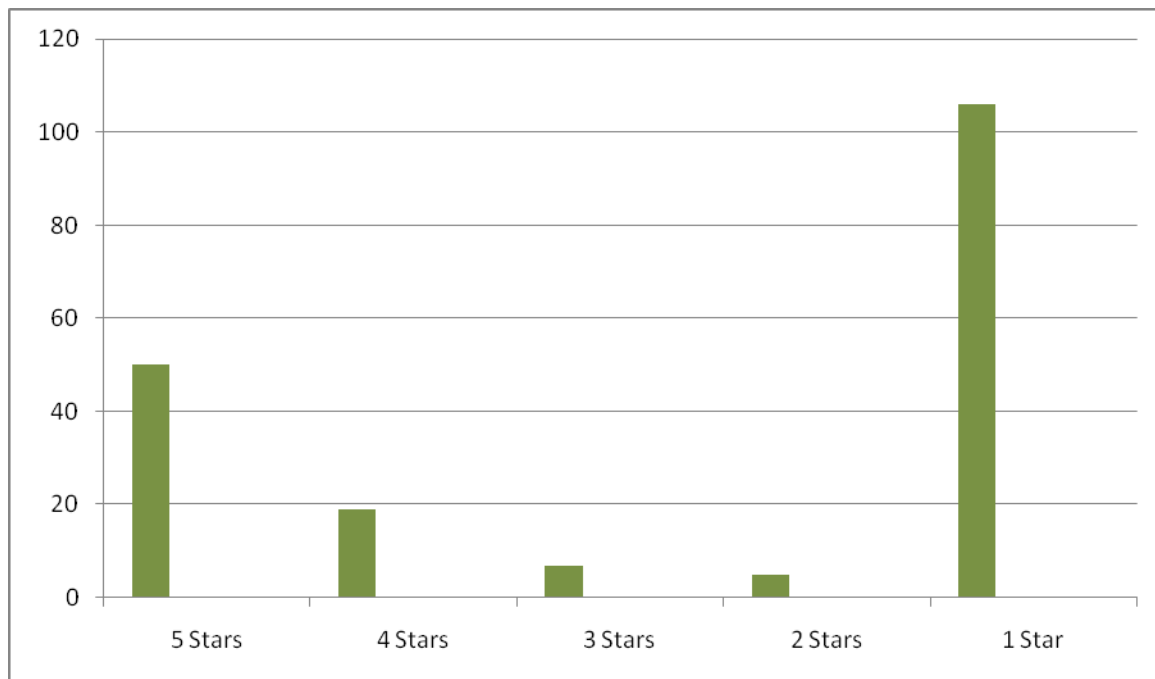


Figure 4.3 Compilation of star ratings for David Sanborn.



These listener ratings indicate that there is a dichotomy among Kenny G's listeners. This split is especially apparent in the reviews of Kenny G's *Classics in the Key of G*.

Figure 4.4 Compilation of star ratings for Kenny G's *Classics in the Key of G*.¹⁹²



Gorelick's choice of repertoire and his duet with Louis Armstrong, along with the resulting controversy, account for the larger number of reviews. Figure 4.4 echoes similar results to the surveys of Gorelick's other works. If one combines the four and five-star ratings, there is an even clearer dichotomy. Admittedly, the star ratings are a general indication of listener opinions. The reviewers's annotations show in detail the two-sided support and condemnation of Kenny G. This duality falls into Harris's two philosophical positions. On one side, Kenny G's opponents evoke the canonical jazz

¹⁹² These results can be found at http://www.amazon.com/Classics-Key-G-Kenny/dp/B00000JCN8/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&s=music&qid=1211986388&sr=8-3 (Accessed May 25, 2008).

greats to create philosophical lines between “masters” and supposed amateurs like Kenny G. On that *same* side of the canonical position, Gorelick’s proponents affiliate Gorelick with the smooth jazz tradition, stating that he should be judged by the stylistic parameters of smooth jazz and not those of mainstream jazz. On Harris’s process-oriented side, there are those who believe that the mainstream jazz community should embrace all styles of jazz.

Kenny G’s opponents use canonical references to condemn his music. They use the acknowledged “greats” of jazz as a definitive dividing line between Gorelick and mainstream jazz. These references are used to support rejection of Kenny G’s attempts to connect with jazz standards and jazz performers. Most reviewers see Kenny G as unworthy of any kind of connection to mainstream jazz:

The first rule of performing is do not mess with the greats. By dubbing himself over Louis Armstrong, THE legend of jazz in this country, Kenny G has made a fool of himself, and disrespected those musicians who have strived for the highest level of their art. This entire album is a debauchery of great standards, and he should be ashamed of himself, and everyone who pays to listen to this trash.¹⁹³

This reviewer succinctly begins with “do not mess with the greats.” This kind of warning is indicative of many of Gorelick’s negative reviews. Gorelick’s opponents position canonical jazz artists as untouchable greats, with whom Gorelick has no connection. Specific reasons why these artists are “great” are not mentioned, but this lack of detail does not appear to matter. It is assumed that Gorelick has associated himself with these canonical artists and should be condemned on the strictest terms. Here is an imaginative example of this kind of canonical-based argument:

¹⁹³ <http://music.barnesandnoble.com/Classics-in-the-Key-of-G/Kenny-G/e/078221908528/?itm=1#TABS> August 18, 2002. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

Indulge me for a moment and imagine if you will a film about a massive graveyard where all the great jazz players have been buried. It is this place where all the icons of the idiom have been laid to rest: Lady Day, Satch, Pres, Hawk, Art Tatum, Cootie, Jelly Roll, Django, Duke, The Count, Mingus, Dizzy, Bird, Monk, Bud Powell, Trane, Albert Ayler, Miles, Sun Ra, Eric Dolphy, Don Cherry and countless others. Now imagine that during the course of this story some land developers, totally oblivious and ignorant to the proprietors' of what the developers see as "a waste of prime real estate" decide to purchase the land. After which, not unlike in another horror film, "Poltergeist," decide to forego the costly endeavor of having the bodies relocated and just remove the headstones. After which they undergo the entrepreneurial task of constructing a rather large shopping mall, enabling consumers from far and wide to sip mocha grandes at Starbucks and restock on khakis at The Gap... which is of course very, VERY important. Everyone has a very MEANINGFUL shopping experience and all the storeowners reap some very substantial profits. If such a film were to be made, this album by Kenny G would be the soundtrack.¹⁹⁴

This reviewer provides an extensive list of "great jazz players" and places them in jeopardy by commercial interests (i.e., Kenny G). The review adds a different element to this kind of criticism. According to this reviewer, jazz artists are deemed "pure," and worthy of protection from the contaminating association of Kenny G. This perceived purity could be associated with authenticity. The reviewer alludes to authenticity when he or she emphasizes the term "meaningful." Emphasis on the term "meaningful" is meant to add a degree of quality to mainstream jazz, a degree of quality Kenny G does not possess. Another reviewer offers a similar view:

Apparently KG believes he is now good enough to play these great standards. The fact is, he is not. But the worse thing is that KG had the arrogance to overdub himself over Louis Armstrong, quite possibly one of the greatest musicians who ever lived. I cannot believe that KG could do something that disrespectful to the musicians that came before him. (The great musicians that came before him) KG should lose his right to play his saxophone for committing such an act.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints March 16, 2000. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

¹⁹⁵http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints December 31, 2003. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

This reviewer states that Kenny G is not “good enough” to associate himself with Louis Armstrong, a reference to the unnamed technical skills that have contributed to the greatness of this jazz artist. As with the prior opinions, this reviewer targets Kenny G as not being worthy of association with the jazz masters. This reviewer goes one step further; he or she accuses Gorelick of committing an act of musical treason and requests that he should lose his right to play his saxophone.

Most of these reviewers base their philosophical arguments on the unquestioned greatness of the jazz masters but do not support their opinions with qualifiable musical points or cultural context. All of these opinions fall under Harris’s canonical position, but the anonymity of these reviewers largely negates many of the contributing elements to Harris’s theory. This anonymity prevents clear identification of cultural contexts like class, religion, or national identity. This anonymity may contribute to honest opinions but sadly inhibits in-depth non-musical analysis.

Gorelick’s supporters also use canonical artists to support their arguments. His proponents use the traditions and values of crossover and smooth jazz to *include* him within another musical style. These reviewers frequently point out that the mainstream jazz community’s criticisms are based on incorrect stylistic judgments:

I absolutley love Kenny G. This c.d. was Kenny G’s interprations of some of the great classics. He added his own special twist. This cd just like all of his other cds are for SMOOTH JAZZ lovers not hardcore Jazz Purists if that is what you call yourselves. There are thousands out there that love and admire Kenny G. for his great works. I am one who appreciates what Kenny does for music, PERIOD!!¹⁹⁶

This reviewer defends Kenny G by stating that this recording is meant for “smooth jazz lovers not hardcore jazz purists.” This statement is clearly meant to

¹⁹⁶http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints June 13, 2003. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

differentiate the standards used to judge Kenny G from those used to judge mainstream jazz. This reviewer implies that Kenny G should be judged within the standards set by smooth jazz, not mainstream jazz. Another review echoes these sentiments:

So why do I think Kenny G is important? Whether it is fair or not, Kenny G has become the face representing “smooth jazz.” Kenny G isn’t even jazzy, but a number of musicians within this genre undoubtedly have jazz roots e.g. George Benson, Bob James (who ironically, was rejected frequently back in the early 60’s because of his avant-garde style).¹⁹⁷

This review begins with the statement that “Kenny G isn’t even jazzy,” a statement clearly aimed at separating Gorelick from the “jazzy” stylistic parameters of mainstream jazz. Once this reviewer separates Gorelick from mainstream jazz, Gorelick is placed within another list of canonical greats: George Benson and Bob James. The reviewer implies that associating Kenny G with smooth jazz artists may provide a fairer judgment of his talent. As these reviews show, Kenny G’s opponents and proponents occupy the same positions; they rely on canonical references to either associate or disassociate him with a specific musical tradition.

The process-oriented side of Harris’s philosophical binary is also exemplified in these reviews, but this open-ended philosophy is supported in more than one way. The process-oriented reviewers defend their shared positions by a variety of means. The following review exemplifies the opinion that listeners should be more open minded about interpretations of classic songs:

This album contains famous works of others done by G. Just as many artists interpret many others, Kenny has done his bit with these classics. For those of us who have no trouble listening to Johnny Cash, Bruce Springsteen, Boyz to Men, and Lawrence Welk all in the same day, this album is a welcome addition to the music library. Those who claim to be offended by this interpretation of these

¹⁹⁷http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints July 28, 2000. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

classics should be wise enough not to ruin their pristine “single-style” ear with these renditions in the first place. Their review of material that they know violates their personal tastes should be held suspect straight away.¹⁹⁸

This reviewer states that the repertoire of *Classics in the Key of G* has been subjected to other interpretations, so Gorelick has simply contributed to this tradition and “has done his bit with these classics.” It continues with a condemnation of those who listen to these classics with a “single-style ear.” He or she is not necessarily placing Kenny G within an open-ended mainstream jazz tradition; instead, they state that the entire process of listening should be open-ended. This opinion is supported with a list of diverse artists who have provided interpretations of classics. Some listeners position Gorelick as a single voice within many different styles of jazz:

The ‘G’ man delivers again. Jazz encompasses many different styles, and Kenny G’s style is a smooth, romantic style that fits his selection of cuts on this CD. Some hard core jazz fans do not think his music is real jazz, but if all jazz were played the same way, how boring would that be? For jazz fans and Kenny G fans, this is a winner.¹⁹⁹

This reviewer proclaims, “Jazz encompasses many different styles.” This statement is meant to include Gorelick in the tradition of mainstream jazz. This kind of statement demonstrates the most obvious use of Harris’s process-oriented position. The reviewer further emphasizes his opinion by stating “if all jazz were played the same way, how boring would that be?” This statement exemplifies Harris’s definition of a process-oriented position: “they are willing to challenge dogmas and test the limits of widely accepted definitions and truths.”²⁰⁰ Of course, Harris is referencing how musicians

¹⁹⁸http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints July 26, 1999. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

¹⁹⁹http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints July 2, 1999. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

²⁰⁰ Jerome Harris, “Jazz on the Global Stage,” in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 120.

handle definitions, but it is applicable to listeners as well. Unlike other reviewers who protect the traditions of mainstream jazz, this reviewer clearly sees Kenny G as part of mainstream jazz tradition.

Harris states: “The process position tends to valorize change, risk, surprise, and the development or discovery of fresh varieties of expression and beauty.” The idea of “beauty” is used in many of the proponent reviews of Kenny G. Many listeners see Gorelick as being a new source of musical beauty:

When I get into my vehicle after a long day at work, I like to listen to something soothing and relaxing. The songs in this album do exactly that. I especially like the blend of Kenny G’s sax and the smooth voice of the Master, Louis Armstrong. The purists of the world have voiced their indignation - but for the common ear, I love it.²⁰¹

Another review:

I just started getting into to Jazz (I thank Diana Krall for that). Now, Kenny G is going to be added to my growing jazz collection. This CD can be described in one word-- Breathtaking. The music is so sultry, it devours you. I don’t know why people had a problem with the song “What a wonderful world”, I thought it was great. This CD certainly sets the mood for romance. I am sure glad I have ears that work!²⁰²

Another review:

While driving to work yesterday I heard Louis Armstrong singing one of my favorite tunes, ‘What a Wonderful World.’ But something was different, it had a more full bodied sound and a ‘sumptuous’ arrangement. I loved what I heard, and when the DJ said that it was Kenny G/Armstrong I knew I had to add this cd to my current (500+) collection.²⁰³

²⁰¹http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints March 16, 2002. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

²⁰²http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints September 5, 1999. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

²⁰³http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B00138KL3O/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_summary?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints August 5, 1999. (Accessed May 15, 2008).

These reviews use words like “sumptuous,” “breathtaking,” “sultry,” and “soothing” to connote a version of beauty. Harris describes the process-oriented position as the pursuit and perception of beauty, and, indeed, all of these reviews describe Kenny G as a source of musical beauty. These reviews also show that the process-oriented position can be complex and varied. Some listeners view Kenny G as a part of a process of open-ended listening; others connect him to the jazz tradition, and others associate him with the idea of music beauty.

Although Kenny G is commonly marginalized or maligned within the jazz community, his immense popularity has generated new kinds of criticism. Much of the criticism from jazz scholars and journalists is particularly vicious and rarely provides insight into contemporary jazz culture. Kenny G’s popularity has also inspired musicians to speak publicly about his music. Lastly, public criticism of Kenny G has formed a two-sided debate that incorporates canonic and process-oriented positions. It is a mistake to dismiss Kenny G. His popularity has generated unprecedented varieties of criticism which have become an important element of contemporary jazz culture.

CHAPTER 5

THE CRITERIA AND CONCEPTS USED IN ELEVATING, DEFINING, AND DEFENDING JAZZ IN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

It goes against the intellectual's grain, no doubt, but isn't it one of the great achievements of jazz that it has been an intrinsic part of popular music, first in this country and soon elsewhere as well, for five decades or more? Despite the fact that it is an art, or because it is?²⁰⁴

Dan Morgenstern

Although jazz is no longer a popular music, it has a privileged position in American society. Jazz is an accepted topic for research and performance in nearly every major academic institution in the nation. Prestigious institutions such as Jazz at Lincoln Center and the National Endowment for the Arts have children's programs, awards, and performances that exemplify the highest regard for jazz. There is a thriving jazz publishing industry dedicated to pedagogical, journalistic, and scholarly materials. The United States Congress has even described jazz as a "rare and valuable national treasure."²⁰⁵ All of these public and private institutions exemplify the acceptance of jazz as a distinct and "high art" form.

Jazz critics and scholars in historical writings on jazz carefully cultivated the cultural acceptance of jazz as a "high art". I suggest that fixed criteria and arguments based on anti-commerciality were used (and continue to be used) by proponents of jazz to promote and reinforce the idea of jazz as high art. First, those who advocated jazz as a

²⁰⁴ Dan Morgenstern, "In Defense of 'Commercialism,'" in *Living with Jazz* ed. Sheldon Meyer (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 673.

²⁰⁵ This quote is part of a concurrent resolution in the House of Representatives, April 8, 1997. <http://bulk.resource.org/gpo.gov/bills/105/hc57ih.txt> (accessed October 1, 2008).

high art utilized fixed criteria, largely agreed upon by the jazz community, as a defense against other musical styles. These criteria were part of a theoretical border that included certain jazz styles but excluded others. Second, the jazz community frequently employed a jazz vs. commercial music dualism that was another theoretical demarcation between supposed authentic jazz and commercial music. Lastly, the content of these criteria and concepts has changed over time, but they remain powerful tools in excluding popular-influenced jazz styles, such as smooth jazz, from the standard jazz narrative.

Since the 1990s, there has been a concerted effort to define and reframe historical jazz discourse. This effort has revealed that the traditional “standard jazz narrative” is the result of contested discourses on race, class, and gender. Scholars such as John Gennari, Krin Gabbard, and Scott DeVeaux encourage new ways of analyzing these issues, and although jazz historiography is a complex field that has attracted various multi-disciplinary views, these scholars specifically chronicle and analyze the rise of jazz from a supposed folk art to a “high art.”²⁰⁶ According to these scholars, this rise has been cultivated by decades of critical and scholarly discourse.

This discourse is discussed from differing standpoints. For instance, John Gennari targets the role of the critic. In the article “Jazz Criticism” and in the recent book *Blowin’ Hot and Cool*, John Gennari discusses the historiographical importance of

²⁰⁶ See Krin Gabbard, “The Jazz Canon and Its Consequences,” in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 1-27, John Gennari, *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 525-560.

jazz writers such as Whitney Balliett, Stanley Crouch, Gary Giddins, and Nat Hentoff.²⁰⁷

Within a historiographical timeline, Gennari chronicles the development of the ideologies that surrounded historical jazz discourse and how these ideologies affected the way that jazz history was constructed and communicated. Gennari emphasizes the role of critics by arguing that they have equal influence on musicians and listeners.

Gennari states, “It seems to me undeniable that the meanings we attach to the music and the musicians—how we make sense out of what we hear and see and feel—are very deeply influenced by the filters that stand between us and the sound that comes out of the musicians’ bodies and instruments.”²⁰⁸

Krin Gabbard discusses the jazz canon as an outcome of critical discourse. He states: “The actual development of a jazz canon—not to mention the critic’s role in the process—is complex and multidetermined, caught in a complicated web of changing conditions.”²⁰⁹ Although Gabbard asserts that the creation of a canon is an historical outcome of the institutionalization of any high art form, in regards to jazz, this canon will become detrimental. Gabbard states, “The creation of a jazz canon, I argue, is as self-defeating as it is inevitable, especially as jazz studies move toward professionalization and autonomy.”²¹⁰ Gabbard’s prediction may or may not be coming to fruition, but historiographical studies like Gabbard’s have revealed the complexities of historical jazz criticism and scholarship.

²⁰⁷ John Gennari, “Jazz Criticism: Its Development and Ideologies,” in *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 449-522 and John Gennari, *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

²⁰⁸ John Gennari, *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4.

²⁰⁹ Krin Gabbard, “The Jazz Canon and Its Consequences,” in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 8.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Lastly, Scott DeVaux confronts the influence that critics and scholars have had on the standard jazz narrative. DeVaux creates a historiographical overview in which he discusses the social, racial, and class issues that are embedded in historical discourse. One of DeVaux's most salient points addresses the social status of jazz within the communities of jazz listeners, critics, and scholars. Furthermore, he describes the process that many in the jazz community undertook in promoting jazz from a low/folk art to a high/classic art. DeVaux states:

It is both symptom and cause of the gradual acceptance of jazz, within the academy and in the society at large, as an art music—"America's classical music," in a frequently invoked phrase . . . If at one time jazz could be supported by the marketplace, or attributed to a nebulous (and idealized) vision of folk creativity, that time has long passed. Only by acquiring the prestige, the "cultural capital" (in Pierre Bourdieu's phrase) of an artistic tradition can the music hope to be heard, and its practitioners receive the support commensurate with their training and accomplishments.²¹¹

The process of acquiring the requisite "cultural capital" is the central issue. How did critics and scholars build cultural capital while promoting the acceptance of jazz? Furthermore, how did this process affect popular styles of jazz, like smooth jazz?

Jazz Becoming "High Art"

According to Scott DeVaux, the "jazz as high art" movement did not reach its zenith until the 1950s, when a scholarly and journalistic effort was made to classify bebop as a legitimate art form, placing bebop at the peak of a stylistic evolution.²¹²

²¹¹ Scott DeVaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," in *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 525-526.

²¹² There are other writings that confirm DeVaux's point. See David Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), Bernard Gendron, "A Short Stay in the Sun: The Reception of Bebop (1944-1950)," *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas* 24 (1994): 137-160 and Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Although the musical characteristics of bebop make such an evolutionary lineage questionable, DeVeaux argues that the importance of a cohesive timeline overrode these practical matters.²¹³ DeVeaux states: “Bebop is the keystone in the grand historical arch, the crucial link between the early stage of jazz and modernity. Indeed, it is only with bebop that the essential nature of jazz is unmistakably revealed. . . . with bebop, jazz finally became an *art music*.²¹⁴ DeVeaux’s observations are astute. With its potent combination of virtuosity and personal style, bebop exemplified virtuosic art music. Bernard Gendron suggests, though, that many of the arguments made in favor of bebop were predicated on those that occurred in prior decades. He states:

The debates between swing modernists and New Orleans revivalists sufficiently reconstructed the issues . . . to make it possible, and indeed to make it seem very natural, to refer to jazz as an “art” music and to construe certain genres of jazz as “modernistic,” “experimental,” “formally complex,” and “avant-garde,” even before bebop made its appearance.²¹⁵

I demonstrate that, indeed, many of the arguments made before and after the bebop era were meant to elevate jazz beyond its folk roots. John Gennari states, “If jazz has the complexity, intelligence, and timeless significance of true art, the argument goes, it is because it has to overcome the aesthetic limitations of its conception in the boozy New Orleans red-light district and its development in the mindless mass-entertainment

²¹³ A case can be made for a more historically independent view of bebop. Many of the characteristics of bebop have a tenuous connection to the preceding swing era. The tempos, instrumentation, repertoire, musical function, and musical vocabulary of bebop deviate significantly from those of swing. Early on, these differences were dismissed by writers like Barry Ulanov: “One discovers a disastrous split in jazz inaugurated by the swing era and intensified during the days of bebop and so-called progressive jazz. But then one looks and listens more closely, and order and continuity appear.” Barry Ulanov, *A History of Jazz in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1952), 3.

²¹⁴ Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” in *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 543.

²¹⁵ Bernard Gendron, “Moldy Figs’ and Modernists: Jazz at War (1942-1946),” in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 31-56.

rituals of the urban dance hall.”²¹⁶ Gennari’s comment encapsulates the intent of those writers who sought to elevate jazz before the bebop era. For instance, in 1940 Charles Delaunay asks his readers to appreciate jazz on the basis of certain universalities:

*Jazz is an Art so long as it is created by Artists, so long as its creation is free and sincere. New Music, new Art—jazz was these because it was a symbol of man’s emancipation, because it had the instinct to abandon the tics, conventions, and all the draperies of an Art mummified by scholastic routine, because it had the strength to find in itself its inspiration and means of expression. Jazz is an Art because great artists such as Bechet, Armstrong, Bix, Tesch, Noone, and Harrison knew how to create an original music from improvisation—the simplest, most direct, and most human of musical forms—and swing, an entirely new element.*²¹⁷

Delaunay unequivocally states that jazz is an art, but with wider ramifications. He views jazz as a symbol of universal freedom and inspiration. Considering that Delaunay was a French citizen living in an era of European upheaval, it is understandable that he would attach such high-minded beliefs to his favorite music. Delaunay adds to his “universality of jazz” theory by stating that jazz is a product of improvisation, the “most human” of musical forms. Here, Delaunay is attempting to humanize jazz. He is connecting the act of performing jazz with a primal essence of humanity. Of course, Delaunay poses some restrictions to his assessments as well. In Delaunay’s view, jazz can only symbolize these virtues if its creation is free, sincere, and without tics or conventions. “Sincerity” may be the most powerful term in Delaunay’s list. He is using sincerity as a limiter to good jazz. At this point, Delaunay is not stating that *all* jazz is

²¹⁶ John Gennari, “Jazz Criticism: Its Development and Ideologies,” in *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 452.

²¹⁷ Charles Delaunay, “Delaunay in Trenches, Writes ‘Jazz Not American,’” *Down Beat*, May 1, 1940, 6, 19. Quoted in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 130-131.

universal and good. He is implying that only sincere (or real?) jazz possesses universal redeeming qualities.

Writing in 1941, Arthur Borsky also promotes the idea that jazz is a legitimate art form. More specifically, he discusses the universality of jazz and the intelligence of the listener:

People need to be awakened to a realization that jazz can be appreciated as a legitimate art-form; that many great musical minds have found good in it; that one need not be a moron to enjoy it; that even our popular music for dancing, such as was created by Porter, Youmans, Schwartz, Gershwin, Kern, Berlin, et al, is marvelous in its sophistication, conception and content, as compared to a lot of the junk emanating from other lands. . . the corniest disc is worth something if it contains an eight-bar solo by Bix, or Louis, but most people will dismiss the whole thing because of ignorance. Overcoming that ignorance is our problem!²¹⁸

First, Borsky uses the phrase “foreign junk.” This comment echoes Delaunay’s association with jazz and pro-American/anti-foreign characteristics. Second, Borsky views all styles of jazz as potentially artful. Borsky’s more inclusive definition is at odds with Delaunay, though, who implies that certain jazz styles are more artful than others. Third, Borsky makes a plea for more competent listeners, citing the under-appreciated performances of prominent jazz musicians.

Dave Dexter uses other arguments to promote jazz to high art status. In his book, *Jazz Calvacade* (1946), Dexter writes:

The layman’s ear becomes better developed. And just as more men and women enjoy the broadcasts of the symphony now, compared to a decade ago, more and more laymen have learned and will learn to distinguish between good and inferior music. The future will beckon smilingly upon creative artists who place aesthetics above showmanship; it will be easier for an Ellington to win homage. The nimble salesman of musical “tricks” will find fewer customers . . . Almost

²¹⁸ Arthur Borsky, “ ‘Ripplin’ Rhythm, Yes; But Why Apologize For Legitimate Jazz?,” *Down Beat*, October 15, 1941, 18.

anyone can don a funny hat and shout gags into a microphone. . . The point is this: a jazzman relies upon his music alone. The dance band man resorts to strange and often unmusical weapons in order to attract the public's fancy.²¹⁹

First, Dexter notes that the jazz audience is becoming more discerning and is learning to distinguish between good and inferior music. He also states that listener competence is high with classical audiences and that jazz audiences have the same potential. Although Dexter is clearly addressing listener competency, he is also attempting to connect jazz with Western classical music. Of course, this is an effort to associate a popular or folk art with an established high art. Second, Dexter draws a theoretical line between commercial music (funny hat and gags) and art music. This distinction is common to historical discourse and is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this section. Lastly, in stating that "a jazzman relies upon his music alone," Dexter is participating in the mythologizing of jazz musicians. Dexter implies that jazz musicians do not participate in any other styles of music and exist in a state of artistic purity, relying on only jazz for inspiration.

Although some jazz writers, even in the 1940s, argued that jazz should be considered high art music, there were those who questioned whether jazz should be considered high art at all. These statements demonstrate that there was debate over the legitimization of jazz even in the mainstream jazz community.²²⁰ In 1946, Winthrop Sargeant disagreed with many of his fellow jazz enthusiasts by stating that jazz should *not* be considered high art:

²¹⁹ Dave Dexter, *Jazz Cavalcade: The Inside Story of Jazz* (New York: Criterion, 1946), 7.

²²⁰ One of the first articles written on defining what the "mainstream jazz community" is Alan P. Merriam's "The Jazz Community," in *Social Forces* 38 (March 1960): 211-222. I define the mainstream community as listeners, scholars, journalists, and musicians (and others involved in music production) who actively participate in dialogues on jazz.

One of the most striking features of jazz as compared with art music is its lack of evolutionary development. Aside from a few minor changes of fashion, its history shows no technical evolution whatever. The formulas of the jazz musical language that we have analyzed were nearly all used in the earliest of jazz and still constitute, with minor modifications, the basis of jazz technique . . . This lack of evolution, which is an attribute of all folk music, is another of the main differences between jazz and concert music.²²¹

Sargeants's statements compare the evolution of jazz to the evolution of concert music. When Sargeant made his statements, the evolutionary paradigms of jazz were just being formed and, based on length of time alone, could not compare with those of Western art music. Furthermore, using the paradigms set for Western art music as measures to judge jazz nearly always resulted in an unfavorable judgment for jazz and its artists. In fairness, though, Sargeant was acting within an historical discourse in jazz which frequently compared jazz with Western art music.²²²

Orrin Keepnews, in more practical terms, also expressed pessimism towards the artful potential of jazz:

We were told, at the start of the '42–'52 period, that one way to clear up the sour public attitude towards jazz was to get very high-toned. Take jazz out of the smoke-filled, liquor-ridden cellars and thus—apparently automatically—give it respectability. . . . There was also, of course, some talk about this being the making of jazz as “serious” art; apparently it would now seduce critics who wouldn't be caught dead in a bar. But that sort of talk we have always had with us, of course, sometimes it makes sense; more often it is wishful thinking, or indicates that some highbrow has just “discovered” jazz for himself.²²³

Keepnews, who was affiliated with nearly every aspect of jazz, was skeptical of the jazz as a “serious” art movement. He argues that such talk simply reflected attempts at

²²¹ Winthrop Sargeant, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946), 259. These comments may have been included in the 1938 edition as well.

²²² The relationship between classical music and jazz, in historical writings, is an issue that demands more attention; I briefly address it elsewhere in the dissertation.

²²³ Orrin Keepnews, “Jazz and America (1952),” in *The View From Within: Jazz Writings, 1948-1987* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41.

raising the social status of critics themselves. He was unconvinced by recent pleas for the advancement of jazz, stating that they were just “wishful thinking.” Although Keepnews’s opinions were not supported by any facts or historical data, his extensive connections to every facet of the jazz community gave weight to his opinions.

Although strategies and opinions differed, there was debate over the merits of jazz before the pivotal era of the 1950s. These statements, more often than not, supported an effort to promote jazz as a high art. A few critics, like Sargeant and Keepnews, were certain that jazz would never be considered a fine art, but the majority of the mainstream jazz community continued historicizing and defining jazz throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This is not to say that the mainstream jazz community remained unchanged during the 1960s and 1970s. African-American writers and musicians began contributing to the historical discourse in the 1960s as well. Writers such as Amiri Baraka and Albert Murray introduced important new perspectives on race and jazz.²²⁴ Both writers placed jazz within American cultural, economic, and musical history. Furthermore, African American musicians such as Max Roach and Billy Taylor actively engaged in historical jazz debates.²²⁵ Although new perspectives were identified and examined, by the 1980s, the requisite documented and supported evolutionary

²²⁴ Among many writings by these authors, see LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People*, (New York: Morrow Quill, 1963) and Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976). These writings define the act of performing jazz as a musical, historical, and cultural process.

²²⁵ All of these musicians contributed invaluable African American perspectives. See Max Roach’s comments in “Racial Prejudice In Jazz,” *Down Beat*, March 15, 1962 and Billy Taylor, “Negros Don’t Know Anything About Jazz,” in *Jazz: A Century of Change*, ed. Lewis Porter (New York: Schirmer, 1997), 202-207.

paradigms were in place and jazz was now routinely referred to as “America’s classical music.”²²⁶

Although debates over the artful potential of jazz have resulted in a privileged position in the arts, crossover and smooth jazz have not benefitted and remain marginalized or maligned in the standard jazz narrative. For instance, only two of the 725 pages in Alyn Shipton’s *A New History of Jazz* address smooth jazz. Within these few pages, Shipton’s treatment of the style and its artists is condescending and glib. Even in works that address other marginalized styles, such as jazz fusion, smooth jazz is maligned. For example, Stuart Nicholson writes:

A blandness was creeping into the music influenced by jazz-tinged, electronic instrumental music that flowed into the entertainment mainstream through television, films, FM radio, and recordings. The dominant non-jazz elements of the jazz-rock equation were no longer coming from the creative side of rock, but from pop music with simple melodic hooks and currently fashionable dance beats. Major record companies, catering to a perceived demand for this type of music, cranked out countless albums that were immaculately recorded concoctions of flawlessly executed but emotionally unengaging solos against bland supportive musicianship.²²⁷

Nicholson’s comments typify how most jazz scholars and critics write about smooth jazz. First, Nicholson’s writing includes terms and phrases such as, “blandness”

²²⁶ The unquestioned evolutionary paradigms of the 1980s are best outlined, in my opinion, in Jack Wheaton’s “Jazz as Folk, Commercial, and Fine Art,” in *NAJE Research Papers*, ed. Dr. Charles T. Brown (Michigan: Saginaw Valley State University, 1989). Wheaton provides a neatly organized chronology detailing jazz as folk art in the 1920s, jazz as commercial music in 1930s and 1940s, and jazz as fine art, from the 1940s to the death of John Coltrane. This lineage somewhat naively shows a steady progress of jazz from folk to fine art. Wheaton summarizes his conclusions: “Fine art deals with the entire gamut of human emotions and frailties. Commercial art avoids controversy, sadness, anger, exploitation, etc. Commercial art concentrates on the positive emotions and emotions that are personal, not communal or universal. Commercial art is wrapped up in producing commercial success. Fine art is concerned with providing personal fulfillment for the artist, regardless of the cost.” Although his chronology can be debated, Wheaton’s general sentiments have been reiterated in many jazz histories.

²²⁷ Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz-Rock: A History* (New York: Schirmer, 1998), 217-218.

and “emotionally unengaging.” These kinds of terms carry negative connotations and should rarely be used while describing any style or genre of music. Second, Nicholson laments the waning influence of “creative” styles of rock and the rise of elements from “pop music.” In labeling one genre as more creative than another, Nicholson is constructing a subjective dualism that does not stand up to intellectual scrutiny. For instance, many in the mainstream jazz community argue that there are *no* creative sides to either rock or pop. On the other hand, millions of people appreciate the creativity that exists in both genres. Lastly, Nicholson blames the public and the record companies for demanding and producing “concoctions of flawlessly executed but emotionally unengaging solos . . .” Nicholson ignores the dialogues and interactions that occur between record companies, musicians, and the public, as well as the history and performance traditions of crossover and smooth jazz.

Statements like Nicholson’s are very common and prevent serious discussions of smooth jazz from being a part of historical discourse. Although there has been an historical effort to raise awareness of the artful aspects of mainstream jazz, these attempts have left crossover and smooth jazz behind.

Criteria Used in Support of Jazz as High Art

Writers supported (and continue to support) the idea of “jazz as high art” by utilizing specific criteria. These criteria were not used consistently by every writer, but were an integral element to most arguments in support of jazz as high art. These criteria came about for practical reasons. Writers could not unequivocally state “Jazz is high art”; they were expected to provide supportive data. Critics and scholars created this supporting data by defining and, thus defending jazz with a definitive set of

characteristics. I suggest that these characteristics fall into the categories of formal paradigms, canonical references, stylistic parameters, and affective qualities.

First, formal paradigms, such as instrumentation, swing, and song forms, are general characteristics typically used by writers to differentiate jazz from other genres or styles. Formal paradigms also encompass the perceived mastery of technical skills. Second, writers created a network of influences between jazz artists, which I label as canonical references. These references reinforced the view that influences among jazz musicians are indicative of a closed system. In creating a “pure lineage,” jazz writers marginalized influences from other genres or styles. Third, stylistic parameters emphasized the perceived individuality of jazz artists. Each performer is viewed as a lone entity that absorbs prior influences and creates a distinct musical persona. Lastly, affect is frequently cited as a quality of a good jazz performance. Affective qualities are commonly identified either as a trait of the performer or the result of a meaningful jazz performance. These qualities can also refer to moments of inspiration or profundity.

These criteria are part of a theoretical border that helped writers resist certain styles, like smooth jazz, while including others, like bebop. These categories do not encapsulate all the attributes that have defined jazz; they are meant to illustrate the use of criteria in including and excluding styles and genres within the standard jazz narrative. The content of each of these categories has shifted in relation to the style and era of jazz, but each heading remains remarkably consistent in defining what is and is not jazz. The following statements from prominent jazz writers demonstrate how criteria have been used to define and promote jazz.

In the program notes for the historical *From Spirituals to Swing* concert in 1938, John Hammond and James Dugan use criteria to define and defend jazz:

The music of these hot musicians and their talented colleagues must first be considered as *music*; it is not, as ignorant people contend, a sort of anarchy in music. Good jazz has outlived its highbrow detractors of the twenties and will continue to refute their petty charges. Look to it for the same qualities you expect in the classics: expert instrumentation, a musical structure (even in *ad lib* jazz), and a quality that we must call sincerity. The best hot musicians are men of profound feeling, even if this feeling is inarticulate. It has its special qualities and formal divergencies within this definition. Its melodic instruments are played with a hot intonation, unlike the tone color of usual musicianship: and its rhythmic aspect is a prime importance, characterized by insistent percussion effects, both in slow and fast tempo. It has its own specific style as musical expression.²²⁸

Hammond and Dugan begin with a statement proclaiming that even ad-lib jazz is an orderly and structured music. The authors use two criteria to support their claims. First, they use formal paradigms to demonstrate the validity of jazz performances. Hammond and Dugan cite “expert instrumentation” and the existence of musical structure, rhythm, and hot intonation as formal paradigms supporting the validity of jazz. Second, Hammond and Dugan use affective qualities to differentiate jazz from other genres: “The best hot musicians are men of profound feeling, even if this feeling is inarticulate.” The authors offer no details of what “profound feeling” is, but they clearly agree that an effective jazz musician must participate in some kind of emotional experience. As these comments show, even as early as 1938, jazz writers incorporated these kinds of criteria in promoting and defending jazz.

²²⁸ John Hammond and James Dugan, “Program Notes from *From Spirituals to Swing 1938*” Quoted in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102.

Writing in 1949, Barry Ulanov divides the defining traits of jazz into three categories: freshness, profundity, and skill. These traits are meant to, in Ulanov's words, "tell good from bad in jazz." Ulanov begins with "freshness," suggesting that stylistic innovation is important to the continuing vitality of jazz. Ulanov states:

The thirty, forty, fifty or sixty years of jazz, depending upon how you date its history, all can be totted up, listened to for the most part on records and at least outlined on paper. It is possible to follow the blues tradition, the common variations on the very common themes, the rows of familiar riffs and the mountains of only slightly different solos . . . the very least, then, that we can do with freshness of idea or inspiration is to name the changes wrought by musicians, to discover exactly what they are doing with notes and chords and rhythms and to make public that discovery.²²⁹

Under the "freshness" rubric, Ulanov uses stylistic parameters to reinforce his statements on freshness of idea. He cites the personal innovations of jazz artists as reason for the superiority of jazz over other art forms. Unfortunately, Ulanov supports his argument by dismissing the innovations of blues artists, and writes that the "only slightly different" solos of blues musicians are based on low-level variations that are based on too common themes. In making his argument, it is ironic that Ulanov uses the same flawed comparative methods (jazz vs. blues) to support jazz that many have used to disparage it.

Ulanov moves on from "freshness" to "profundity." He writes:

For I hold with many others that the distinguishing mark of music, as contrasted with the other arts, is its ability to portray states of being rather than *things* with the qualities of those states, sorrow rather than a sorrowful girl, joy rather than a joyful boy, tragedy rather than a tragic, even pathos rather than a pathetic situation . . . jazz can make an infinite number of grasps at profundity.²³⁰

²²⁹ Barry Ulanov, "What's Hot and What's Not," *Metronome*, July 1949, 18.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

His discussion of profundity clearly falls under the affective-qualities rubric. In this case, Ulanov does not discuss the specific emotional attributes of an artist or even listener responses; instead, he attempts to associate jazz with universal emotional experiences. According to Ulanov, jazz has the potential to convey a universal emotional message, whereas other arts are restricted to symbolic representations of specific emotional situations. This is an important philosophical position. Ulanov argues that jazz has the capacity to symbolize universal human emotion. In other words, listeners from around world can interpret the pathos that jazz can provide. This kind of implication is a potent supporting element to attaining Bourdieu's "cultural capital." A music that is universally understood is certainly a distinctive art form and merits higher standing in American culture.

Lastly, Ulanov discusses "skill" as an important jazz trait. He writes, "The abundant technical skill of such men as Roy Eldridge, Johnny Hodges . . . is beyond argument . . . this must come from practice and from conviction, from the desire to express such ideas, a desire which is really a need and as such molds the means necessary to its vital end."²³¹ Discussing technical skill is a common method in defining and defending jazz because jazz improvisation requires two highly specialized abilities. First, refinement of motor skills makes virtuosity possible but requires large amounts of time and an intense practice regiment. In fact, the solitary act of practicing physically and emotionally separates jazz musicians from society. On the other hand, when a musician is onstage they are actively engaged with the audience. The combination of solitude and engagement helps contribute to the mythmaking of jazz musicians. Second,

²³¹ Ibid., 31.

a musician must also practice the intellectual utilization of those motor skills. The refinement of these abilities is largely a solitary endeavor as well; the audience rarely sees the work involved. Many jazz musicians may be seen as physical and intellectual aberrations, driven by an inner desire to express themselves, when in fact they are participating in multiple cultural and musical contexts. Those contexts were downplayed in favor of the myth of a lone artist who exemplifies the uniqueness of jazz.

Martin Williams utilizes multiple criteria as well. In his introduction to *The Jazz Tradition* (1970), Williams uses canonical references, formal paradigms, affective qualities, and stylistic parameters to define and elevate jazz. First, he recreates a typical historical lineage of canonical figures:

If we take the most generally agreed-upon aesthetic judgments about jazz music, the first would undoubtedly be the dominant position and influence of Louis Armstrong . . . If we take a second generally agreed-upon opinion, it would concern the importance of Duke Ellington . . . And a third opinion? Surely the importance of the arrival of Charlie Parker. And after Parker, what made jazz history was the rediscovery of Thelonious Monk. And after that, the emergence of Ornette Coleman.²³²

Williams reiterates the traditional list of “great men” that make up the backbone of the standard jazz narrative. His “intellectual genealogy” exemplifies the standard jazz narrative. Historical figures like Armstrong, Ellington, and Parker are certainly a vital part of jazz history, and it is difficult to question their importance. More importantly, though, Williams’s list echoes the same kinds of typologies created for classical music. Many listeners, and certainly many jazz connoisseurs, were very familiar with the lineage of great European composers. This lineage, showing an evolutionary line from Guillaume de Machaut to Oliver Messiaen, provides a remarkably powerful succession

²³² Martin Williams, *The Jazz Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 5.

of compositions, personalities, and individual innovations. When Williams offers a similar kind of lineage, he subtly associates jazz with the traditions of Western art music.

Next, Williams uses formal paradigms to discuss specific jazz characteristics. In this instance, Williams focuses on rhythm as a central formal paradigm of jazz: “In all the stylistic developments of jazz a capacity for rhythmic growth has been fundamental . . . Players either *think* rhythmically in a particular style, or they do not. Oscar Peterson has prodigious facility as a pianist but rhythmically he does not think in the manner of ‘modern’ jazz.²³³” Williams makes two important points. First, he states that rhythm is a defining factor in identifying styles of jazz. Williams is not breaking any new ground; swing rhythm is frequently quoted as a characteristic of jazz. Second, Williams uses rhythm as an identifier of specific jazz styles. He states that Oscar Peterson is not intellectually capable of employing the rhythms typical of modern jazz. Furthermore, Williams believes the reason for Peterson’s apparent shortcoming lies in the fact that Peterson does not “think” in the manner of modern jazz. In this respect, Williams echoes Ulanov’s philosophy in associating technique with intellectual capability.

Williams, nearly twenty years later, uses rhythm again as a defining characteristic of jazz:

I heard Clark Terry say to a student band a few years ago: the beat in jazz moves forward; it is played so as to contribute to the all but irresistible momentum of the music: jazz *goes* somewhere. The beat in most rock bobs and bounces away in one place—like the kids on the dance floor these days. Rock *stays* somewhere. And to be a bit technical about it, “jazz eighths,” the implied

²³³ Ibid., 7.

“triplet feel” of jazz, is rarely heard in fusion, and can seem strangely out of place when it is.

“Jazz” eight [sic] notes, the “jazz” triplet, are not the superficialities or the mere ornaments of a musical style; in jazz, they have always been among the fundamentals. One of the unwritten (and undiscussed) laws of jazz has been that each of the great players has found his own way of pronouncing the triplet . . . ²³⁴

In this case, Williams is arguing that the swing feel is not an option in jazz; it is fundamental to the genre. This, of course, is a controversial statement. To proclaim that the jazz triplet is fundamental to jazz invites disagreement. Williams defends his statement by arguing that swing rhythm “goes somewhere” but rock rhythms “stay somewhere.” As in the case of Williams’s statement about Oscar Peterson, this is an incredibly subjective position. One may dismiss the importance of such subjectivity but Williams’s influence is widely felt. Williams was a respected and prolific writer and his work on the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* has unquestionably influenced generations of jazz musicians. More importantly, such opinions have validated the marginalization of other forms of jazz, such as smooth jazz. For instance, the use of even eighth-note rhythms is frequently used as a point of criticism and difference in discussions of smooth jazz. Using the criteria set by Williams, smooth jazz cannot qualify as a jazz style simply on the grounds of its widespread use of non-swing patterns. This conclusion minimizes other links to mainstream jazz that may exist.

Lastly, Williams uses stylistic parameters to highlight the individuality of jazz performers. Williams states: “No music depends so much on the individual as jazz. Indeed, jazz requires not only an individual interpretation of melody, it demands spontaneous individual invention of new melody, individual articulation of emotion,

²³⁴ Martin Williams, “How Long Has This Been Going On?” in *Jazz in Its Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 48.

and individual interpretation of music sound.”²³⁵ In this passage, Williams emphasizes individual jazz performers and alludes to the canonical “great men” of jazz. He propagates the axiom that jazz artists were individuals driven solely by an inner desire to express themselves through jazz. This “myth of individuality” adds to the mystique of jazz artists but, unfortunately, de-emphasizes influences from other genres and styles.

This kind of philosophy can lead to the exclusion or marginalization of other styles or genres in analyses and historical chronologies. Although smooth jazz musicians routinely cite mainstream jazz artists as influences, mainstream jazz musicians rarely cite smooth jazz musicians as influences.²³⁶ This is a puzzling omission. It is probable that the popular styles of Grover Washington, Jr. or David Sanborn have influenced mainstream jazz artists. Many critics and scholars downplay these links possibly because it would pollute the perceived purity of the canon of great jazz artists.

In the preceding statements, Williams employs a variety of criteria to define, elevate, and defend jazz. Along with many like-minded writers, Williams uses the criteria of formal paradigms, canonical references, and stylistic parameters as starting points from which he can discuss the uniqueness and viability of jazz. He eloquently associates jazz with Western art music, cites a particular rhythmic pattern as a defining characteristic, and emphasizes individuality in support of the high art status of jazz. Jazz history texts use the same criteria.

Frank Tirro’s *Jazz: A History* is representative of how many jazz texts use these four criteria to define jazz. Under the heading “Jazz: A Musical Definition,” Tirro writes:

²³⁵ Martin Williams, *The Jazz Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 11.

²³⁶ See Zan Stewart, “Kevin Eubanks: Sorry, No Sell-Out,” *Down Beat*, November 1995, 26, Scott Aiges, “Mark Whitfield Uncuffed,” *Down Beat*, December 1995, 46, Howard Mandel, “David Sanborn Swings Back,” *Down Beat*, February 1993, 17.

Certain musical elements are common to all, and the musical sound produced in combination is usually recognized as jazz even by the untrained listener. These elements may be present in varying proportions, depending upon the style, the performers and sometimes accidental circumstances, but the common features usually are:

1. Improvisation, both group and solo
2. Rhythm sections in ensembles (usually drums, bass, and chordal instrument such as piano, banjo, or guitar)
3. Metronomical underlying pulse to which syncopated melodies and rhythmic figures are added
4. Reliance on popular song form and blues form in most performances
5. Tonal harmonic organization with frequent use of the blues scale for melodic material
6. Timbral features, both vocal and instrumental, and other performance-practice techniques that are characteristic of particular jazz substyles, such as vibrato, glissandi, articulations, etc
7. Performer or performer-composer aesthetic rather than a composer-centered orientation²³⁷

Unlike writings aimed at the jazz connoisseur, jazz texts are targeted toward university students who may know little or nothing about jazz. Tirro, along with many others, downplays the emotional effects of jazz and, instead, focuses on formal paradigms. In Tirro's list, the formal paradigms listed are improvisation, instrumentation, rhythm, and song form. These are presented as characteristics of jazz. This approach is understandable. Much of university education, especially at the undergraduate level, leans heavily on easily memorizable lists. Texts like those by Frank Tirro and Mark Gridley are very popular because they offer easily explainable and teachable "trait lists." Pedagogy aside, the listing of formal paradigms does a disservice

²³⁷ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 99-100.

to the variety of styles and genres that influence jazz. These lists convey the notion of a closed system that discourages discussion of other jazz styles, like smooth jazz. This is not to say that these texts only offer groupings of formal paradigms. Most jazz texts emphasize canonical references and stylistic parameters, proving, once again, that these four criteria are a consistent part of historical jazz discourse.

Admittedly, these texts usually provide some information on smooth jazz. Mark Gridley even adds a well-informed section on contemporary saxophonists in his *Jazz Styles* text. More often, though, these texts only offer a short section on smooth jazz, which is usually tied to the fusion era. These perfunctory sections further minimize smooth jazz in the standard jazz narrative.

“True Jazz” vs. Commercial Music

Promoting jazz as a high art has largely meant the subsequent denigration of commercial music and other popular styles of jazz. A remarkable number of critics, journalists, scholars, and fans have conjured a jazz-vs.-commercial-music binary in defense of jazz. This binary, which has existed throughout writings on jazz, remains remarkably popular, and appears even in contemporary writings on smooth jazz. In fact, the commercial aspects of smooth jazz are frequently cited as reasons for its marginalization. Titles such as “Man with the Midas Touch” and “Sorry, No Sell-Out” exemplify how writers use commerce as a negative aspect of smooth jazz.²³⁸ Unfortunately, this tactic is particularly persuasive and difficult to debate. Many jazz writers have created musical and theoretical demarcations between “pure” jazz and

²³⁸ See Brian Soergel, “Man With the Midas Touch,” *Jazz Times*, May 2004, 41 and Zan Stewart, “Kevin Eubanks: Sorry, No Sell-Out,” *Down Beat*, November 1995, 26.

commercial music. This binary has proven to be very effective in separating jazz (high art) from popular music (low art). The following excerpts are examples of an argument that has been in use for decades. In fact, some of the earliest and best known jazz writers used this binary.

Robert Goffin in *Hot Jazz* (1932) draws a parallel between hot jazz and melodic jazz:

They [African-American musicians] were the first teachers of the genuine lovers of jazz, while others in whom the commercial instinct was more highly developed ignored this necessary contact and transposed jazz airs in a way quite foreign to the Negro tradition.

This explains the upgrowth of a school of melodic jazz, exploited for a time with great success by Paul Whiteman, Jack Hylton and other famous leaders, who industrialized jazz to such an extent that nothing remained but a weak dilution devoid of all real musical character.

Melodic jazz has contributed nothing to music and will only be remembered for its unspeakable insipidness; whereas hot jazz is a creative principle which can scarcely fail to affect the music of the future in the most original and unexpected directions.²³⁹

Goffin, writing in support of the influence of African-Americans in jazz, views authentic jazz as corrupted by those who ignored early African-American traditions. He cites Paul Whiteman and Jack Hylton, both white, as performers who stripped jazz of its character and created a lesser and more commercial music. This is a typical type of discourse in jazz history; an author will commonly lament the loss of an authentic art form to a corrupted and inauthentic popular style. Goffin states that such performers will only be remembered for their lack of creativity, but hot jazz principles will lead to exciting new musical directions. This comment shows that, even in the early 1930s,

²³⁹ Robert Goffin, "Hot Jazz," in *Negro Anthology Made by Nancy Cunard: 1931-1933*, ed. Nancy Cunard (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 378-79. "Hot Jazz" can also be found in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 84.

writers such as Goffin expressed concern about the future significance of hot jazz. Of course, many believed that jazz could not be properly historicized with commercial influences included, so there was a concerted effort to separate “authentic” jazz from these elements.

In attempting to draw a distinction between “true jazz” and commercial jazz, Hughes Panassié writes in a similar passage:

Almost a half a century has elapsed since the birth of jazz. Much has been spoken about it: several books have been written about it; and still the public has not the least idea of what this music really is . . . One of the chief reasons for this lack of understanding is that two vastly different sorts of music have become associated with the word jazz—true jazz, which is today still unfamiliar to the greater part of the public—and a commercial counterfeit of jazz, represented by such orchestras as that of Jack Hylton or Paul Whiteman, whose music has inundated the public. The name jazz should never have been given to this counterfeit . . . I am well aware that there are other words used to describe authentic jazz—the most common being “hot jazz” and “swing music.” But experience has shown that these terms create confusion . . . In reality there is only one real jazz.²⁴⁰

Unlike Goffin, who lamented the loss of African-American purity, Panassié takes a more practical approach to the jazz-vs.-commercial-music binary. Panassié creates a distinction between jazz and commercial music by emphasizing terminological issues. He explains that the labels for hot jazz and swing cause confusion among the public, and this confusion leads some to believe that commercial music, once again represented by Hylton and Whiteman, is jazz. According to Panassié, the use of terms such as “hot jazz” and “swing music” are failed attempts at changing these misconceptions.

Panassié’s emphasis on labels is important in smooth jazz as well. The label “smooth jazz” itself is a result of market research in the mid 1980s. Critics, scholars, and

²⁴⁰ Hughes Panassié, *The Real Jazz*, trans. by Anne Sorelle Williams (New York: Smith and Durrell, 1942), 3.

jazz musicians point to this commercial connection as evidence of the contrived origins of smooth jazz. On the contrary, the label “smooth jazz” was invented and propagated by people who listen and participate in the music itself. In a way, the invention of the “smooth jazz” label confirms Panassié’s emphasis on the importance of labels.

Goffin and Panassié offer little in support of their assumptions that jazz is inherently superior to commercial music; both writers simply state their somewhat subjective positions. In a 1947 article in *Metronome* magazine, Lennie Tristano offers a passionate argument for bebop:

Bebop is a valiant attempt to raise jazz to a thoughtful level, and to replace emotion with meaning. It is successfully combating the putrefying effect of commercialism . . . The development of jazz must be the concern of every musician who attempts to play it. Jazz is not a form of popular entertainment; it is art for its own sake. Its popularity or unpopularity is coincidental. The man who plays to entertain is not as objectionable as the man who plays to entertain and at the same time protests that he is playing jazz. This overwhelming pleasure that some bandleaders experience in pleasing the people is a rather poor camouflage for their desire to increase their bank accounts. Perhaps if the people had more opportunity to hear good jazz, they might learn to like it.²⁴¹

Tristano makes multiple arguments to elevate and separate bebop from commercial music. First, he draws a distinction between emotion and meaning. Tristano states that commercial music deals with lower emotions while art music (in this case bebop) deals with wider concepts of meaning. This is a difficult point to debate for a proponent of popular music. The subjective nature of emotion and meaning makes any objective discussion nearly impossible. Second, Tristano states that jazz is not popular; it is an art that exists without need for social function. In other words, audience appreciation or interaction has no bearing on the performance of bebop. It is ironic that

²⁴¹ Lennie Tristano, “What’s Right with the Beboppers,” *Metronome*, July 1947, 14, 31.

Tristano, a well-regarded performer, ignores the political and cultural context in which bebop takes place.²⁴² Third, Tristano promotes the high-art aspirations associated with bebop by pointing out that, unlike popular music, bebop is an autonomous art form that does not need the support of the public. In fact, he argues that popularity denigrates high art. Lastly, Tristano states that popular musicians do not perform “art for its own sake,” but play music only for financial gain. After Tristano lauds the artistic integrity of bebop performers, he criticizes the economic motivations of popular musicians. Once again, this kind of observation reinforces the “solitary jazz musician” myth. Tristano implies that jazz musicians are only concerned with artistic credibility and have no experience or need for such mundane matters as financial security. This kind of mythmaking makes for good reading but it results in one-dimensional portrayals of jazz artists who appear to be disengaged from their social environments.

Although Tristano was more interested in theoretical differences between jazz and commercial music, some writers demonstrated the superiority of jazz by noting specific musical features. Leonard Feather, in his *Encyclopedia of Jazz* (1960), attacks the newest variety of commercial music, rock and roll:

Contemporaneous with these new movements, though of little or no musical importance, was the rise to national popularity of the late 1950s of rock ‘n’ roll. Representing nothing more than the baser manifestations of rhythm and blues music, but expanded into the white area among both exponents and audiences, rock ‘n’ roll consisted largely of technically crude and harmonically dull performances by inferior singers, out-of-tune vocal groups and instrumentalists willing to prostitute their art to the financial interests of the “big beat.” The

²⁴² The social, economic, and racial dialogues surrounding bebop have been explored by scholars, including Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Musical and Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) and Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

greatest damage afflicted by rock ‘n’ roll can be blamed on good musicians like Lionel Hampton, who taking advantage of the tremendous appeal of music that was all quantity and no quality, became guilty of subverting both his own style and that of the fine musicians who worked for him.²⁴³

Feather uses powerful phrases to denigrate rock and roll and its artists, such as: “baser manifestations,” “technically crude,” “harmonically dull,” and “prostitute their art.” These phrases leave little doubt about how Feather views rock and roll. These kinds of phrases are commonly used in journalistic, and sometimes scholarly, discourse about other types of commercially viable art forms. He is judging the technical, harmonic, and aesthetic paradigms of rock and roll by the standards of the jazz community. Feather implies that jazz is superior because its artists possess a higher level of technical skill, when technical skill may not be an important element in rock and roll. Next, Feather accuses a prominent jazz artist, Lionel Hampton, of being both proponent and victim of the corrupting influence of profit. As is the case in the preceding examples, Feather claims that success, and the accompanying financial gain, is the result of inferior music and fundamental moral flaws. He argues that Hampton incorporated certain characteristics from commercial music and, in so doing, subverted his own inspiration. This kind of statement is based on the previously addressed “cult of the individual,” which is prominent in historical jazz writing. According to Feather, Hampton’s use of popular aesthetics and techniques made Hampton a disingenuous and inauthentic jazz musician. Of course, Hampton did combine popular music characteristics and showmanship with jazz virtuosity. In 1942, he states:

I’ve read a lot of articles in the music magazines about the differences between “commercial” and “artistic” jazz, as if they were two separate kinds of music . . .

²⁴³ Leonard Feather, *Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York: Horizon, 1960), 49.

There's no dividing line left between commercial and artistic jazz, and it's my solid conviction that most of the best dance music today is both . . . I think it's unwise for any musician to take it for granted that he must decide on a course of playing either "commercial" or "artistic" music. There are so many ways, nowadays, of following both courses, and as far as my own band is concerned, if we can claim to have done that successfully, I'll be more than satisfied.²⁴⁴

Hampton suggests that there should be no dividing line between commercial and artistic music. This comment is indicative of those by many jazz musicians who have combined popular elements with mainstream jazz. This is not to say that jazz musicians are unaware of the differences between popular and "art" musics. They are aware of the differences between mainstream jazz and popular music, but many bridge this dualism in their everyday performing lives. Many musicians engage with popular music or showmanship to conjure a particular reaction or expression from the audience. This is sometimes a calculated and practical matter, and not necessarily a representation of a wholesale adoption of another musical style. Journalists and scholars, on the other hand, see the commercial music vs. jazz binary as a boundary that can only be crossed at the peril of the artist. Fortunately, this kind of thinking is not a universal belief in the mainstream jazz community. Writers like Dan Morgenstern argue that there is merit to commercial music:

It goes against the intellectual's grain, no doubt, but isn't it one of the great achievements of jazz that it has been an intrinsic part of popular music, first in this country and soon elsewhere as well, for five decades or more? Despite the fact that it is an art, or because it is? Ponder that, and ask yourself if it isn't a measure of a musician's strength and identity as an artist that he can make silk purses out of sow's ears, and if it isn't an axiom that if you have something of your own to say, it will come through no matter what? If you can play, there are

²⁴⁴ Lionel Hampton, "The Public is Square, But It Rocks!," *Metronome*, October, 1942, 8-24.

many ways to play yourself. And who the hell says that “art” must always be pure and holy and profound?²⁴⁵

Critics view the intersections between jazz and popular music as low points in jazz history. Morgenstern, on the other hand, states that one of the greatest achievements of jazz is in its various connections to popular music. Morgenstern supports his argument by stating that the strength of jazz artists may not only lie in artistic achievement but also in overcoming adversity. According to Morgenstern, triumphing over poor material or adverse performing conditions shows “that you have something to say . . . no matter what” and may be a real indicator of “high art.”

Although Morgenstern’s message presents an opposing viewpoint to many in the mainstream jazz community, there remains a bias against popular music in his statement. For example, he assumes that jazz musicians have to “overcome” the inherent limitations of popular music (“sow’s ears”). In many cases, the inclusion of popular music rhythms, instrumentation, and harmonies have contributed to the musical experience. These inclusions are not impediments to artistry; they are enhancements.

Morgenstern’s article is meant as a reply to decades of discussion over the jazz and commercial music. His final comment, “And who the hell says that ‘art’ must always be pure and holy and profound” is particularly important. Morgenstern is addressing the idea that the standard jazz narrative has reached such a level of perceived profundity that any commercial aspects should be minimized or omitted. The marginalization or omission of commercial styles has resulted in an incomplete narrative. As any practicing

²⁴⁵ Dan Morgenstern, “In Defense of ‘Commercialism,’” in *Living with Jazz* ed. Sheldon Meyer (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 673. This article was originally written for *Down Beat* in 1970.

musician knows, there are always connections between mainstream jazz and more commercially-oriented styles. These exchanges are part of the cultural and economic context of jazz. In the following section, I demonstrate that critics and scholars continue to use criteria and anti-commerciality as theoretical support for the marginalization and malignment of smooth jazz.

The Exclusion of Smooth Jazz from the Standard Jazz Narrative

Contemporary writers use the same methods of exclusion as writers have used in the past. Today, although fewer debates are dedicated to the elevation of jazz, fixed criteria and anti-commerciality remain in use to defend the borders of jazz from “lesser” styles, like smooth jazz. Even in articles aimed at supporting smooth jazz, there can be a great deal of animosity. For instance, the article “Smooth Jazz” in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* is meant to enlighten readers on the repertoire, artists, characteristics, and critical issues that surround smooth jazz. Instead, the article is a typical example of the sort of negative criticism that smooth jazz attracts, even within a scholarly environment. The following are excerpts from Mark Gilbert’s article on smooth jazz:

The soft, easily assimilated character of smooth jazz made it palatable to a wide audience with little interest in unprefixated jazz, and musicians, broadcasters, and record companies formed a symbiotic, profit-driven triangle which perpetuated the style.

.....

The style has developed various shadings, but most typically it features a three- or four-chord soul vamp over which a saxophone generates synthetic, carefully calculated passion from a limited palette of diatonic, pentatonic, and blues phrases.

.....

The apparently easy success of leading performers resulted in a proliferation of formulaic, musically stagnant imitations, but ambitious and imaginative musicians added extra content within the constraints of the style.²⁴⁶

Gilbert's first statement conjures the traditional jazz vs. commercial music binary. In stating that there is a "symbiotic, profit-driven triangle," Gilbert introduces two implications. First, he implies that the smooth jazz style is predicated on a profit motive. The desire for commercial viability has been treated negatively in historical discourse, and when a writer implies that a particular jazz style is connected to money making, that jazz style is assumed to be of lower status (if considered "jazz" at all). Second, Gilbert's statement about economics implies that the market for mainstream jazz is not connected to commerce, when, in fact, there is a symbiotic relationship between mainstream jazz musicians, broadcasters, and record companies. It would be naïve to believe that jazz has not always been connected to commerce. In fact, finances are a prominent aspect in the lives of canonic jazz musicians such as Miles Davis. Davis frequently employed finances to frame his narratives on women, record companies, musicians, and his family. Gilbert reproduces historically negative sentiments towards commercial music in order to cast smooth jazz in a negative light.

Next, Gilbert accuses smooth jazz artists of having synthetic and carefully calculated passion. This passage conjures the criteria of affective qualities and formal paradigms. Phrases such as "carefully calculated passion" and "synthetic" connote

²⁴⁶ Mark Gilbert, "Smooth Jazz" in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=663873918&hitnum=1§ion=jazz.6967002007 (Accessed June 12, 2008).

inauthentic affective qualities. Historically, emotion has been an important defining element of jazz. Gilbert has followed generations of observers who have positioned their favorite style of jazz over another on the subjective grounds of emotional superiority. When Gilbert implies that the emotion generated by smooth jazz musicians is inauthentic, he is denigrating the style and reinforcing its marginalized position in the standard jazz narrative. Later, Gilbert states that smooth jazz is produced over a “limited palette of diatonic, pentatonic, and blues phrases.” This description uses formal paradigms as a means to demonstrate the supposed limited technical capacity of smooth jazz. These statements are unfortunate because this short article could include discussions on the innovations of artists such as David Sanborn, Grover Washington, Jr., and George Benson, instead, the writer uses criteria and anti-commerciality to deride smooth jazz and present their music as a homogenous style.

Lastly, Gilbert states that some smooth jazz artists have had “easy success,” hinting that these musicians have not “suffered” like the central figures in the myth of the jazz musician. It is arguable that successful smooth jazz artists have not suffered for their art. Although there are unquestionable financial advantages to being a smooth jazz artist, the demands of the marketplace are formidable. After years of “paying dues,” the pressures of maintaining commercial viability by recording, marketing, touring, and composing, are considerable. It is indeed debatable that smooth jazz artists have had easy success. Of course, suffering is part of the historical narrative, so Gilbert may be further denigrating smooth jazz artists by implying that they have not “suffered” like those who perform “real” jazz.

The article concludes with the following statement, “As heard on his album *Close-up* (c1987, Reprise 25715-2), the saxophonist David Sanborn is perhaps the epitome of the player whose music seems to contain the key components of smooth jazz yet rarely sounds smooth, synthetic, or formulaic.”²⁴⁷ Following a series of condescending and debatable comments, this final statement is the most enlightening. It is a pity that more could not have been written about how certain artists, like Sanborn, have transcended the negative connotations associated with the label smooth jazz. Unfortunately, the idea of exceptionalism, which is so important to the standard jazz narrative, is rarely explored in writings on smooth jazz. Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk are all considered artists whose abilities transcended their stylistic labels and the contributions of their contemporaries. Unfortunately, when most writers address smooth jazz, they fail to address transcendence and all that can be said is that smooth jazz is largely a homogenized style that features equally homogenized performers.

Alyn Shipton, who has written one of the most important histories of jazz in recent years, employs formal paradigms to criticize two popular smooth jazz artists. Shipton writes:

Earl Klugh, despite recordings with another crossover guitarist, George Benson, and with Return to Forever, has specialized in lightweight undemanding discs, in which his acoustic guitar solos are set over a simple repetitive rock backing. Klugh is one of the progenitors of so-called “smooth jazz,” which has become so widespread in broadcasting and the record industry that it is what passes for jazz altogether in the minds of many listeners. . . . The anodyne performer in this field is saxophonist Kenny G. (Kenneth Gorelick) whose albums frequently succeed in

²⁴⁷ Mark Gilbert, “Smooth Jazz” in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=663873918&hitnum=1§ion=jazz.6967002007 (Accessed June 12, 2008).

the United States pop charts, but whose simple, melodic alto and soprano playing, underpinned by predictable rock rhythms, is the antithesis of improvisation, collective interaction, swing, soul, or heart.²⁴⁸

Shipton's critique of Earl Klugh and Kenny G uses formal paradigms as a means to denigrate the work of both artists. In regards to Klugh, Shipton uses such phrases as "lightweight undemanding discs" and "simple repetitive rock backing." These phrases are part of the familiar tactics that jazz advocates have been utilizing for decades. It can be inferred from this passage that real jazz makes "heavyweight" demands on the listeners while employing endlessly varying rhythm.

When Shipton criticizes Kenny G, he also uses formal paradigms. This time the terms "simple" and "predictable" are used to denigrate Kenny G's work. In the case of Kenny G, though, Shipton goes one step further and questions Kenny G's "soul" and "heart." This type of subjective criticism does little to contribute to jazz discourse. How can any scholar accurately judge an artist's inner motivations or spirit? It would be more informative to briefly outline the position that Kenny G has within the jazz community as well as within public discourse. These kinds of discussions can lead to more inclusive and informed views of jazz.

In contemporary jazz scholarship, the jazz-vs.-commercial-music binary is particularly apparent. The popularity of smooth jazz, and the inevitable financial gains, has provided a ready rationale for marginalizing or excluding the style. Instead of exploring the cultural good or musical aspects of smooth jazz, many writers choose economics as a defining issue. Stuart Nicholson writes:

There was no doubt that the "smooth jazz" format had become a potent commercial force in the 1990s, with musicians writing tunes to coincide with the

²⁴⁸ Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 2007), 625-626.

requirements of rigid formatting . . . The essence of the music was to get onto playlists that were constructed with the lowest common denominator in mind to appeal to the broadest possible constituency. The music was unadventurous, nonchallenging, and unthreatening because it had to be, programmed to attract audiences and thus advertisers . . . Increasingly, it seemed, the “smooth jazz” phenomenon appeared to be transforming an art form back into a commodity by responding to commercial logic.²⁴⁹

In *Jazz Rock*, a groundbreaking history of jazz fusion, Nicholson spends minimal time discussing smooth jazz, but in what little space is allotted he questions the validity of smooth jazz as jazz. He views the radio industry as a prime motivator in how the overall aesthetic of smooth jazz has developed. Instead of offering a cogent argument on how the radio market has influenced smooth jazz, as he does in regard to jazz fusion, he generalizes the style by stating that “the essence of the music was to get onto playlists.” While it may be true that smooth jazz is influenced by radio play, it is arguable that the “essence” of the music is predicated on radio play. Commercial viability was not the sole reason for the rise of smooth jazz. As has been demonstrated, smooth jazz artists are part of a long tradition, one that began long before radio was a factor. Nicholson concludes his critique on smooth jazz with the statement: “transforming an art form back into a commodity.” This is an obvious example of the art-vs.-commercial music binary in contemporary jazz scholarship. Nicholson views smooth jazz as the result of a theoretical shift from the artful intentions of jazz fusion to more commercially-minded aims.

²⁴⁹ Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz-Rock: A History* (New York: Schirmer, 1998), 222.

In contemporary jazz journalism, the jazz vs. commercial music concept is frequently evoked as well. For instance, James Jones in the preface to an article on Lee Ritenour makes the following statement:

Especially in light of the blatant commerciality of fusion lately, the adventure, the originality, the musicality of 1970s Weather Report, Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Return to Forever have been replaced by sound-alike, crossover obsessed instrumentalists. What exactly is fusion now? . . . Fusion's commerciality has been thoroughly exploited by a flood of saxophonists: Najee, Kirk Whalum, Sadao Watanabe, Kenny G, Gerald Albright. Who can differentiate one from the other?²⁵⁰

Like Nicholson, Jones's comments lament the loss of fusion's artful intentions as well. First, Jones assumes that smooth jazz has replaced groups like Mahavishnu Orchestra. It is difficult to understand that smooth jazz artists such as Gerald Albright could "replace" Mahavishnu Orchestra in terms of listeners or musical aesthetics. Next, Jones uses terms like "blatant commerciality" and "sound-alike" to conjure ideas of anti-commerciality. Most importantly, he appears to long for the days of jazz fusion. This is particularly ironic because jazz fusion has also been a casualty of negative discourse in historical writings. It appears that the rancor for smooth jazz has caused other jazz styles to be reevaluated in a more favorable light.

Tom Moon, in an article about David Sanborn, summarizes how many critics feel about smooth jazz: "He has forsaken the ready pleasures of the marketplace. He has seen the folly of his ways. He has moved from the darkness to the light. He has risked confounding longtime fans. Rather than make music that plays well in shopping malls, he has begun investigating music with a genuine improvisatory spirit."²⁵¹ Moon's

²⁵⁰ James Jones IV, "Lee Ritenour," *Down Beat*, May 1980, 16.

²⁵¹ Tom Moon, "David Sanborn's New Direction," *Down Beat* October 1991, 27.

comments may be tongue-in-cheek but they echo the sentiments of many in the mainstream jazz community. In fact, many of Moon's phrases are constructed around traditional exclusionary dualisms. For instance, the phrase "forsaking the pleasures of the marketplace" is indicative of the commercial music-vs.-jazz binary. Moon further characterizes this binary by stating, "He has moved from the darkness to the light . . . investigating music with a genuine improvisatory spirit." This is a very powerful analogy. Moon is positioning the light (goodness) of mainstream jazz versus the dark (evil) of smooth jazz.

The works of Tom Moon and James Jones are exemplars of how the economics of smooth jazz have been emphasized in jazz writings. A brief overview of article titles confirms this observation. Article titles such as, "Freddie Hubbard: Money Talks, Bebop Walks," "Earl Klugh: [P]Lucking out in The Material World," and "In Search of Integrity: Smooth jazz has built a huge audience over the past 25 years, but does it have an artistic future?" demonstrate that discussions of smooth jazz are frequently predicated on financial issues.²⁵² Although economics should be part of discussions of the social context of smooth jazz, these matters should not be the focus.

Conclusion

The mainstream jazz community has historically used fixed criteria and jazz-vs.-commercial binaries to reinforce the idea of jazz as high art. These fixed criteria, along with the concepts of anti-commerciality, have been used effectively in arguments in defense of jazz. While these methods have been part of a successful strategy to protect

²⁵² Steve Bloom, "Freddie Hubbard: Money Talks, Bebop Walks," *Down Beat*, November 1981, 17, Steve Bloom, "Earl Klugh: Plucking Out in the Material World," *Down Beat*, March 1980, 20 and Pat Cole and Jason Koransky, "In Search of Integrity," *Down Beat*, November 2002, 46-51.

“true” jazz, they have also resulted in the exclusion of other styles from historical jazz discourse. Serious discussion of peripheral styles, like smooth jazz, has been stifled. This is unfortunate because mainstream jazz scholarship could benefit from studies specific to smooth jazz. For instance, instead of focusing on commerciality, the mainstream jazz community would be better served by targeting such topics as: atypical improvisational styles, jazz in public discourse, listener demographics, communicative links using nostalgia, or jazz marketing; all of these topics could be explored in relation to smooth jazz and would contribute greatly to mainstream jazz scholarship.

CHAPTER 6

SITES OF MUSIC PRODUCTION: THE DIALOGUES OF SMOOTH JAZZ RECORDINGS AND LIVE PERFORMANCES

There are two principal sites of smooth jazz production: recordings and live performances. These sites frame a collection of musical, physical, or emotional gestures that are communicated to listeners through a series of mediated dialogues. In recordings, this mediation is constructed and sustained by radio stations, record labels, or any number of media outlets. During live performances, the initial sound event is immediate and is part of a wider series of messages that are mediated by venue, stagecraft, and audio engineering. The levels and kinds of mediation are usually dictated by the audience, which in turn, is acting in response to musical and cultural traditions. I suggest that recordings and live performances of smooth jazz provide substantial differences in regards to performing and listening experiences. The diversity of listening environments for smooth jazz and market research have contributed to consistent and similar musical characteristics of recordings. On the other hand, audiences of live performances have a much greater tolerance for diversity, resulting in performances that feature nostalgia, musical interaction, and mainstream jazz characteristics.

Each musical genre has its own practices for production, mediation, and consumption. For example, mainstream jazz recordings have customarily included many of the traditional characteristics and gestures of live performance: lengthy improvisations, acoustic instrumentation, virtuosity, and high-level musical interaction. To emphasize the integrity of these recordings, some mainstream jazz recordings even make such claims as, “This recording contains no overdubs or multi-tracking; the music

was performed live in studio.” This familiar statement highlights the similar aesthetic connections that mainstream jazz recordings have with live performances. To jazz audiences, obvious mediation by the record companies can sometimes damage the authenticity of the recording. Record companies go to great lengths to convey an impression of minimal mediation. For instance, box sets such as Columbia’s *Miles Davis: The Complete Live at the Plugged Nickel 1965* supposedly include every note of a performance or series of performances, sometimes including the audience chatter and ambient noise. The release of such highly regarded box sets satisfies demands by mainstream jazz listeners for a “near live” listening experience, thereby meeting the audience’s expectation for a low level of mediation. Of course, the *Plugged Nickel* is a recording of a live performance, so the primary impression is given that there is very little mediation between the listener and the musicians. By including background noise, musician chatter, and lower quality performances in the set, the record company has minimized its presence as a mediator. Minimal mediation is apparent in nearly all jazz recordings, resulting in a close musical relationship between recordings and live performances.

The sites of production and the subsequent mediation and consumption in smooth jazz are different than those of mainstream jazz. Listeners of smooth jazz recordings do not have the same sensitivity to mediation as those who listen to mainstream jazz. Smooth jazz recordings generally feature limited but refined improvisations, short song lengths (similar to the lengths of popular songs), sophisticated orchestrations (utilizing keyboards or string sections), simple and catchy melodies, and obvious multi-tracking recording processes. All of these traits constitute a

high level mediation that is targeted towards commercial success, inciting the emotions of mainstream jazz connoisseurs while delighting smooth jazz listeners. Unlike mainstream jazz, however, the performance context of smooth jazz utilizes an entirely different set of interactions between audience and performer. Ironically, smooth jazz concerts feature many of the characteristics that the mainstream jazz community values. Live performances can demonstrate group interaction, harmonic and rhythmic variations, call and response, lengthy improvisations, and elevated levels of emotionality. In other words, recorded and live versions of smooth jazz can be, and frequently are, entirely different performing and listening experiences.

There is more to these differences than can be revealed in a musical trait list. An examination of the processes of production, mediation, and consumption of recorded and live performances can reveal distinct aspects of the performing and listening experiences of those who participate in smooth jazz. Moreover, genre studies are a potentially rich source of insight of these communicative loops. I suggest that genre studies, borrowed from literature, popular music, and jazz research, can help reveal some of the interactions that occur between musicians and listeners in recorded and live performance sites.

Style and Genre

Style and genre are integral parts of genre studies. In the proceedings sections, genre studies, as interpreted by Mikhail Bakhtin, are used in discussions of recordings and live performances of smooth jazz. Furthermore, I have chosen audience and performer expectations, largely derived from Bakhtin's theories, as fundamental aspects of my analyses.

The terms “style” and “genre” are frequently employed interchangeably in discussions about music; for purposes of clarity, these terms must be defined. Some scholars have differentiated between style and genre but many have not, so when using genre theory one must know what definitions are being used. Gino Stefani provides a simple but effective definition of style: “‘Style’ is a blend of technical features, a way of forming objects or events; but it is at the same time a trace in music of agents and processes and contexts of production.”²⁵³ Franco Fabbri offers a more complete definition of style:

As a codified way of making music, which may (or must) conform to specific social functions, style is related to genre, and is sometimes used as its synonym, more often in languages where style is a more common-sense word and genre is felt to be more technical. However, style implies an emphasis on the musical code, while genre relates to all kinds of codes that are referred to in a musical event, so the two terms clearly cover different semantic fields.²⁵⁴

Style can range from a wide series of musical codes, such as country music, to a very specific set of personal performance characteristics, such as the vocal style of Hank Williams, Sr. It is precisely this range that makes style such a potent, but potentially confusing, aspect of the listening experience. As Ronald Byrnside explains, the word “style” can include a wide range of musical attributes:

The term style refers to various levels, from the very general to the very particular. For instance, on a very general level one can refer to a Western style of music (as opposed to a non-Western style), or to a Renaissance style (as opposed to, say, a baroque style) . . . On a more particular level one may speak of a Dixieland jazz style, as distinct from jazz style in general. On a still more particular level one can deal with the style of a given composer, or even a specific

²⁵³ Gino Stefani, “A Theory of Musical Competence,” *Semiotica* 66 (1987): 8.

²⁵⁴ Franco Fabbri, “Browsing Music Spaces: Categories and Musical Mind,” paper delivered at IASPM (UK) conference, 1999, <http://www.tagg.org/others/ffabbri9907.html> (accessed August 1, 2008).

composition. On any level the term style usually involves a description of the technical elements of the music.²⁵⁵

Although style has broad implications, its importance should not be underestimated. Expert listeners are vitally aware of style. A hip-hop connoisseur can immediately identify the seemingly slight stylistic differences between early and later Jay-Z recordings, just as an expert jazz listener can easily detect the differences between John Coltrane's early and late periods. These stylistic differences may seem minute, or even trivial, to an uninformed listener but detecting such differences is one of the factors that differentiates a less competent listener from a more competent one.²⁵⁶

Allan Moore, who attempts to differentiate between style and genre, provides this definition:

Genres, on the other hand, cut right across styles, such that there will be genres that intersect both rock *and* other styles of popular music. Any performance of an individual song will necessarily exemplify both. Thus, a list of genres relevant to rock styles might include the "uptempo dance number," the "anthem" and the "romantic ballad." A more complete categorization would surely want to differentiate, with this last example, between the positions taken by the singer (unrequited approaches, love lost, and so on). The distinction approximates to that between the 'what' of the meaning of the song (genre) and the 'how' it is articulated (style).²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Ronald Byrnside, "The Formation of a Musical Style: Early Rock," in *Contemporary Music and Music Cultures*, ed. Charles Hamm, Bruno Nettl and Ronald Byrnside (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 159-160.

²⁵⁶ The terms "competent" and "incompetent" may appear unduly harsh, but they are terms used in a series of discussions put forth by Gino Stefani. Stefani believes that the communicative dialogue between musicians and listeners is predicated on the listening competence of the audience. Stefani's theories have been discussed at length by popular music scholars such as Alan Moore, Richard Middleton, and David Brackett. See G. Stefani, "A Theory of Music Competence," *Semiotica* 66 (1987), 7-22. Theodor Adorno, in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (New York: Seabury, 1976) also addresses listening competency by categorizing listeners into six types that range from expert to entertainment.

²⁵⁷ Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 3.

I believe that genres do not cut across styles, as Moore puts it, but that styles cut across genres, or styles work *within* the parameters of genre. In other words, genre is the broad category within which differing styles exist. For instance, within the genre of jazz, bebop is a style exemplified by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, who performed within the overall stylistic performance parameters of the bebop tradition. Admittedly, the boundaries between style and genre can blur together, and the common interchangeability of the terms has not helped clarify the situation. For my purposes, I propose that style is a more detailed element that exists within the broader category of genre. This does not mean that style is an inferior musical element; it is one of the central topics addressed in the “Chronological Case Studies” in Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

Issues of style and genre are particularly complex in jazz. Bebop, for instance, is a historically accepted style within the jazz genre, but bebop can also mimic many of the features of genre. For example, bebop is defined by canonic performers who utilize specific melodic and harmonic language, repertoire, and timbre. Although some of these features exist in other jazz styles, this distinct combination of performers and musical techniques only occurs in bebop. Bebop can arguably be termed a genre.²⁵⁸ In other words, bebop can be considered a style of jazz or a genre (with jazz roots) that features many personal styles. To clarify these matters, I believe that bebop is a style of jazz that contains individual sub-styles.

²⁵⁸ Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) states that, in fact, bebop and blues are both genres: “They sit autonomous . . . Blues and BeBop are *musics*. They are understandable, emotionally, as they sit: without the barest discussion of their origins. And the reason I think for this is that they are origins, themselves. Blues is a beginning. BeBop, a beginning.” See Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), “The Jazz Avant Garde,” *Metronome*, September 1961, 10-11.

These same complexities occur in defining smooth jazz. Once again, by having its own characteristics and artists, smooth jazz complies with the definition of genre. As with bebop, though, smooth jazz may be best defined as a style of mainstream jazz that contains many individual sub-styles.²⁵⁹ The duality between style and genre makes genre studies particularly useful. In the following discussions about generic expectations and meanings; smooth jazz is treated as genre *and* a style of jazz. Whether one considers smooth jazz a genre or a style, the results of a generic-based analysis are the same. Genre studies help reveal the discourses between smooth jazz musicians and listeners, but also address engagements between smooth jazz and mainstream jazz musicians. Before genre-triggered meanings can be discussed, a thorough examination of the complexities of genre must be made. The following section details some practical aspects of genre from the musician and listener's points of view. Following this section, a more detailed and philosophical view of genre is included in "Bakhtin and Dialogics." During discussions of smooth jazz recordings and live performances, both practical and philosophical aspects of genre are discussed.

Defining Genre

Genre is a collection of sonic, physical, or philosophical characteristics that musicians and listeners agree upon as defining attributes of a music. For instance, smooth jazz generally contains a lead saxophone, guitar or keyboard, electronic instruments, R&B-derived rhythms, and tuneful compositions. Moreover, many smooth

²⁵⁹ Of course, this is a very controversial statement. Many in the mainstream jazz community would prefer smooth jazz to remain outside the jazz genre. I am not necessarily advocating a wholesale acceptance of smooth jazz into the standard jazz narrative, but for purposes of discussion about genre and style; I am asking readers to consider smooth jazz as style of jazz.

jazz musicians reflect or acknowledge the long history of the style, and perform with the familiar timbre, phrasing, and lyrical accents that have become identifiers of smooth jazz. Lastly, smooth jazz artists frequently perform cover versions of popular R&B tunes. This admittedly general list of musical and textual attributes of smooth jazz acts as a set of generic expectations for listeners. The smooth jazz audience expects to hear these characteristics; if they do not, then it is either not considered smooth jazz or the artist has chosen to significantly deviate from audience expectations and runs the risk of disapproval. Of course, these generic characteristics shift. Grover Washington's popular style of crossover jazz has been joined by other, more current, styles such as smooth jazz and chill, which have their own set of generic parameters. This shift was not immediate; it was the outcome of years of negotiated discourses between listeners and musicians. These negotiations have occurred in recorded and live performance contexts. In regards to recordings, listeners have communicated to musicians (via record companies) through marketing research. In live performances, the communication is certainly more immediate.

The parameters of genre are constantly shifting; there are no immovable generic paradigms. Frederic Jameson writes: "*Pure* textual exemplifications of a single genre do not exist; and this, not merely because pure manifestations of anything are rare, but . . . because texts always come into being at the intersection of several genres and emerge from the tensions in the latter's multiple force fields."²⁶⁰ As in literature, there are rarely perfect musical generic paradigms. Genres are constructed and deconstructed with each new or revised version, as are the dialogues and expectations that are formed and re-

²⁶⁰ Frederic Jameson, "Towards a New Awareness of Genre," *Science Fiction Studies* 28 (1982): 322.

formed. Robert Walser, writing about popular music, agrees that genres are always shifting: “Nowhere are genre boundaries more fluid than in popular music. Just as it is impossible to point to a perfectly exemplary Haydn symphony, one that fulfils the “norms” in every respect, pieces within a popular genre rarely correspond slavishly to general criteria. Moreover, musicians are ceaselessly creating new fusions and extensions of popular genres.”²⁶¹ This fluidity is the result of negotiations between formed and re-formed expectations and helps give genre such vitality.

Meanings conveyed through genre are part of an exchange between musician and listener; both sides receive and manipulate generic codings, but in different ways. Musicians are vitally aware of both the practical and philosophical importance of genre. In practical terms, musicians use genre as an easily accessible and efficient means of conveying instructions. Simon Frith describes how musicians can use genre in practical situations:

In music terms, the words used here are difficult to understand unless one already knows their meaning (a technically skilled but generically ignorant musician would not be able to understand requests to “give it some funk!”; to “try a reggae bass!”; to “hit that Phil Collins hi-hat!”; to “fall into the Stock-Aitken-Waterman groove!”). Genre discourse depends, in other words, on a certain sort of shared musical knowledge and experience (think, for example, of the use of musical labels in the ads published by groups seeking a new member, or on the “musician wanted” cards pinned up in musical instrument stores). What is obvious from this language is that for musicians too, genre labels describe musical skills and ideological attitudes simultaneously.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 27.

²⁶² Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 87.

As a professional musician, I have experienced what Frith describes throughout my career. There is no more accurate and efficient way to describe a musical technique than to associate it with a generally recognized generic trait. On the other hand, there is competency needed for a successful exchange of ideas between musicians. For instance, if musician A calls out, “hit that Phil Collins hi-hat!,” and musician B has never listened to Phil Collins, then that exchange is voided; musician B will not be able to respond to musician A’s request. Just as listeners expect certain generic codes to be respected and understood, so do musicians. If musician A hired musician B with the assumption that he or she has an awareness of popular drumming styles, and musician B is not aware of Phil Collins’s style, then there will be inevitable social dissonance.

Genre is also a popular mode of verbal discourse between musicians and the public. People will often ask a musician “What kind of music do you play?” As most musicians know, the answer to this question can be very complex and, in some instances, almost impossible to answer. Most often, the musician will respond using generic or style codes. For example, a musician can respond with, “I sing country music, mostly in the style of Dierks Bentley or Brooks and Dunn.” Generic and stylistic coding offers an efficient way to convey a sometimes difficult definition. As in the case of musician to musician exchanges, both parties must have knowledge of the genre or style. If the musician references Dierks Bentley, and the person has never listened to either the genre or artist, then the dialogue is broken and useless.

Lastly, and most importantly, musicians actively participate in genre during the act of performing. Musicians are vitally aware of the expectations created within a genre. For instance, a competent smooth jazz musician knows the “rules” set by the genre.

These rules can govern compositional characteristics, improvisational styles, length of tunes, kinds of stagecraft, or timbral choices. Of course, a musician can choose to comply with, bend, or break these rules. With each decision, the musician must deal with the consequences. By adhering to performance conventions, the musician is aligning himself or herself with the most accepted characteristics of the genre. Success can be achieved by closely following genre expectations. Musical groups like Steely Dan and The Eagles are renowned for imitating their prior successes in the studio and slavishly reproducing their studio recordings on stage. On the other hand, musicians can also choose to bend the rules of genre, introducing new and maybe unexpected musical elements to a performance. For instance, Bob James customarily interprets his somewhat conservative compositions with extensive improvisations, varying emotional levels, and high-energy group interactions.²⁶³ Although James may add more exciting elements to his studio compositions, he does not entirely dispense with generic expectations; he does not entirely “break” the rules, he just bends them. The choice of breaking with generic conventions can have drastic consequences for an artist. For example, when Bob Dylan decided to “go electric” in 1965 with *Bringing It All Back Home*, he broke the rules set by the folk community by using electric guitar and rock rhythms. Dylan further broke the generic rules of the folk community by utilizing non-musical generic traits: he wore sunglasses, “Beatle” boots, and grew his hair long. These musical and social choices denied Dylan’s audiences of their expectations and he suffered years of criticism for it. All of these examples show that musicians choose whether to comply with, bend, or break generic expectations, and these decisions can

²⁶³ For an example of Bob James’s live performances, see *Bob James: Live at Montreux*, DVD, KOC-DV-9699 (Koch Records, 2005).

have lasting consequences. Although these decisions are unquestionably important, how listeners interact with genre holds equal significance.

In a practical sense, genres are particularly important to how listeners identify and search for music. American music is largely organized by generic categories; this has been in evidence for nearly the entire history of the American recording industry and remains the case today. For generations, consumers bought music, in any format, from stores that were organized strictly by genre (R&B, jazz, pop, country, etc.). Aside from a helpful salesperson, there was no way to search for an individual artist without knowing what genre he or she was categorized under. This manner of organization was used for over 100 years and remains in use today. For instance, *iTunes*, one of the most popular and influential internet music purchasing sites, organizes its offerings largely by genre. There are categories for jazz, pop, R&B, country, world music, etc. Although consumers can search by artist or song title, the site, along with most other internet music sites, is organized by genre. This kind of organization has been an integral part of how record companies promote their music. Simon Frith explains: “Genre distinctions are central to how record company A&R departments work . . . The underlying record company problem, in other words, how to turn music into a commodity, is solved in generic terms. Genre is a way of defining music in its market or, alternatively, the market in its music.”²⁶⁴ Indeed, genre is utilized by record companies as a way to link specific demographics to specific genres, but genre categories can also influence the music itself. Some musicians are aware of the genres that record companies prefer and they adjust their performances and recordings accordingly. This indicates that genre is

²⁶⁴ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 75-76.

not just a product of traditional musical organization and labeling; genre can alter the characteristics of art itself. The following sections will explore elements of genre and its importance on how listeners and musicians of smooth jazz interpret meanings through genre.

Bakhtin and Dialogics

Mikhail Bakhtin created some of the most influential post-structuralist literary theories of the twentieth century. These theories are so comprehensive, particularly those centered on genre, that they are the basis for notable scholarly writings in various musicological fields. In the field of Western musicology Jeffrey Kallberg, Robert Pascall, and Jim Samson have used Bakhtinian concepts to discuss genre interpretation in the works of Chopin and Brahms.²⁶⁵ In popular music studies, Robert Walser, Richard Middleton, and Ian Marshall have published multiple studies that use Bakhtin's concepts as a basis for analyses.²⁶⁶ Even a few jazz scholars, such as Gary Tomlinson and Ingrid Monson, have employed Bakhtin's theories in their writings.²⁶⁷ Gregory Clark summarizes the applicability of Bakhtin's theories:

²⁶⁵ See Jim Samson, "Chopin and Genre," *Music Analysis* 8 (Oct 1989): 213-231, Jeffrey Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor," *19th-Century Music* 11 (Spring 1988): 238-261, Robert Pascall, "Genre and the Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony," *Music Analysis* 8 (Oct 1989): 233-245.

²⁶⁶ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil : Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), Richard Middleton, *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music* ed. Richard Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Ian Marshall, "I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together: Bakhtin and the Beatles," in *Reading the Beatles: Cultural studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four* ed. Kenneth Womack and Todd F. Davis (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 9-36.

²⁶⁷ See Gary Tomlinson, "Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies," *Black Music Research Journal*, 11 (Autumn 1991): 229-264, Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

For people studying rhetoric and composition as well as for those studying literature, Bakhtin's work provides perhaps our most comprehensive explanation of the process through which social knowledge is constructed in a cooperative exchange of texts. However diverse its particular applications, Bakhtin's explanation persistently and explicitly affirms the two complementary assumptions about language that support a social constructionist point of view: that our language creates rather than conveys our reality . . . and that it does so in a process that is collaborative rather than individual . . .²⁶⁸

It is Clark's phrase, "social knowledge is constructed in a cooperative exchange of texts" that is most important to musicologists. Social knowledge and musical knowledge are unquestionably linked, but how those kinds of knowledge are shared is frequently the question asked within musicological discussions. Although Bakhtin's theories have been used in multiple musicological fields, they have yet to be applied to discussions on smooth jazz, and, more specifically, on the differences between recordings and live performances.

Bakhtin's work with genre correlates with his theories of monophony and polyphony (dialogics). Simply stated, Bakhtin's theories split language into two categories. First, in a monophonic language, the speaker attempts to compress all utterances (personal, politic, emotional, etc.) into a single, centralized utterance. In other words, a monophonic speaker seeks to reject all other kinds of language and present an "official state" language that most listeners can understand.²⁶⁹ Bakhtin explains monophony:

Language is regarded from the speaker's standpoint as if there were only one speaker who does not have any necessary relation to other participants in speech communication. If the role of the other is taken into account at all, it is the role of

²⁶⁸ Gregory Clark, *Dialogue, Dialectic and Conversation: A Social Perspective on the Function of Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 8-9.

²⁶⁹ In my view, Bakhtin was using certain examples of poetry, such as that of Gustave Flaubert, as exemplars of monologic communication; he surely knew that the genre had the capability to be polyphonic.

a listener, who understands the speaker only passively. The utterance is adequate to its object (i.e., the content of the uttered thought) and to the person who is pronouncing the utterance. Language essentially needs only a speaker—one speaker—and an object for his speech.²⁷⁰

Bakhtin labels many types of poetry as being monologic. According to Bakhtin, the only voice in some poetry is that of a single author; there are no other characterizations or viewpoints. One could postulate that smooth jazz recordings are also monologic, resulting in criticisms of its “lack of soul” or blandness. Many critics assume that there are no other stylistic or cultural “voices” represented in smooth jazz recordings. These kinds of criticisms can easily fit under Bakhtin’s monologic rubric; smooth jazz represents a single voice that does not incorporate any other styles or genres and does not work within or represent any important cultural meanings.

Bakhtin’s second category addresses polyphonic (or heteroglot) communication.²⁷¹ Heteroglot language moves away from a central speaker and towards multiplicity; it focuses on a wide range of vocabularies, speaking styles, and experiential interpretations. Bakhtin referenced novels as being inherently polyphonic. Novels are frequently written from multiple character viewpoints, along with the accompanying adjustments in a character’s speaking style, subject matter, colloquialisms, even regional dialects or accents. The author’s voice is no longer monophonic; it is transferred into a

²⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 67.

²⁷¹ I use the terms “heteroglossia” and “polyphony” interchangeably. I do recognize, though, that there are subtle differences between heteroglossia and polyphony. Heteroglossia embodies the various language ideologies of cultural influences like age, class, location, family, etc, that unquestionably affect communication. Polyphony embodies the act of acquiring and signifying on multiple voices in order to convey meaning. For example, the same vocal inflections, vocabulary, or subject matter used in speaking with our mother are not used when speaking to a childhood friend. Of course, this sort of communication can certainly be influenced by heteroglossia as well. For purposes of clarity, I will dispense with these linguistic matters and use the terms interchangeably.

polyphonic world of meanings and interpretations through the characters of the story.

Bakhtin clearly favored polyphonic writing:

The scientific consciousness of contemporary man has learned to orient itself in the complex circumstances of the ‘probability of the universe;’ no ‘uncertainties’ are capable of confusing this scientific consciousness, for it knows how to calculate and account for them. It has long grown accustomed to the Einsteinian world with its multitudinous systems of measurement etc. But in the realm of *artistic* cognition people continue now and then to demand the crudest, most primitive certainty, which cannot possibly be true. We must renounce our old monological habits in order to become comfortable in the new artistic sphere which Dostoevsky discovered and to orient ourselves in that incomparably more complex *artistic model of the world* which he created.²⁷²

Bakhtin suggests that a polyphonic model of writing explored, exploited, and modeled itself after the complexities of the world. Arguably, that “model of the world” could be better described as the “model of a world” because each interpretation or reading is a privileged and unique dialogue between creator and consumer. Moreover, Bakhtin argues that these dialogues are even more unique because there are no embodied meanings to any word:

The use of words in live speech communication is always individual and contextual in nature . . . since I am dealing with it in a particular situation, with a particular speech plan, it is already imbued with my expression . . . the word is expressive, but, we repeat, this expression does not inhere in the word itself. It originates at the point of contact between the word and the actual reality, under the conditions of that real situation articulated by the individual utterance.²⁷³

Bakhtin compounds the dizzying complexity of heteroglossia by arguing that words, by themselves, have no meaning; meaning or expressions are only communicated when they are received and understood as an individual utterance.

²⁷² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R.W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), 228.

²⁷³ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 88.

Bakhtin, of course, recognizes that heteroglossia is simply a part of a precise dialogue that speaker and listener can have. He states:

The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning . . . he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on. And the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning – sometimes literally from the speaker’s first word.²⁷⁴

Bakhtin recognizes that heteroglossia does not hinder a dialogue that features mutual understandings of meaning. Richard Middleton offers his own description of heteroglossia:

Heteroglot networks of discursive conventions resulting from never-ending, historically contingent exchanges create a kind of giant intertextuality, operating both between utterances, texts, styles, genres, and social groups, and within individual examples of each. Any act of meaning production works through dialogue – echoes, traces, contrasts, responses – both with previous discursive moments and at the same time with addressees, real or imagined.²⁷⁵

The issue arises, however, of how these limitless meanings can be defined or at least described. Middleton uses powerful phrases like “never-ending” and “giant intertextuality” to describe the boundless potential of heteroglossia, making the process of description or limiting a bit daunting. If heteroglossia is a limitless web of potential meanings that are contingent on countless variables, then how can these meanings be discussed with any degree of certainty or accuracy?

One of the answers to the formidable task of limiting the boundless potential of heteroglossia lies in genre, more specifically, how genre frames how creators and

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 68.

²⁷⁵ Richard Middleton, “Introduction,” in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. Richard Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13.

consumers convey and interpret meaning. Robert Walser addresses the link between genre and coherence:

However, the fact that ideas can be fairly consistently communicated, regardless of the nuances of individual response, is what points to the importance of musical discourses as coherent systems of signification. The range of possible interpretations may be theoretically infinite, but in fact certain preferred meanings tend to be supported by those involved with a genre, and related variant meaning are commonly negotiated.²⁷⁶

Indeed, genre aids in limiting and negotiating the boundless interpretative possibilities of heteroglossia; it is what Walser labels “a coherent system of signification.” The term “coherent” is key, because mutual coherence or understanding is particularly important to musicians and listeners. Coherence is achieved when the musician and listener have successfully participated in sending and receiving generic codes. The codes initiated and framed by genre are contingent on a listener’s or musician’s personal and social experiences. Stan Hawkins states, “Musical codes, by their very nature, are identifiable as auditory events in time and space. The implications of this for the music analyst lie in the task of code identification, which involves a range of levels of *acquired* listening competence.”²⁷⁷ Indeed, generic codes can be auditory events that take place within a definite time and place, but Hawkins’s “code identification” is not only contingent on the auditory event. Code identification is equally contingent on venue, physical events, and philosophical recognition, along with many other variables. Hawkins addresses these variables, “For music to signify anything, for it to assume its own set of meanings, it needs to be rooted in an organized

²⁷⁶ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil : Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 33.

²⁷⁷ Stan Hawkins, *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 10.

system which exposes the traits of the author's and reader's identity through the text's purposive function. Central to this idea is the assumption that organised sounds are predicated upon their own currency within defined social contexts."²⁷⁸ According to Hawkins, code identification (interpretation of meanings) can only happen when the listener recognizes the music's organized system (genre).

These generic codes are part of the dialogues between musician and listener. These codes are not randomly pulled from the heteroglot web; they are arranged and rearranged by a musician's and a listener's expectations and the market. David Huron explains that expectations are essential to forming distinctions between diverse styles and genres.

A schema is often described as an expectational 'set.' A schema provides an encapsulated behavioral or perceptual model that pertains to some situation or context . . . the ability to form distinct schemas permeates musical experience. It is the ability of brains to form multiple schemas that provides the psychological foundation for distinguishing different styles and genres. Without this foundation, baroque and reggae would meld into a single general musical schema. Our experiences with baroque harmony would interfere with our ability to accurately predict harmonic progressions in reggae, and vice versa.²⁷⁹

Huron suggests that the expectational set is *essential* to how listeners differentiate between genres and styles. One could go a step further and state that expectational sets also help create and modify the music itself. When listeners are able to convey their reactions to musical events, musicians can modify their actions in response. Expectations are of the utmost importance to dialogues between musicians and listeners. In order to quantify these relationships, Jeffrey Kallberg categorized these expectations as a "generic contract." Kallberg explains:

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁷⁹ David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), 204.

Generic contracts, like their legal counterparts, may be broken; indeed frustrated expectations often play a key role in the communicative process. Departures from perceived norms or expectations in genre have been a persistent stumbling block for many critics. The notion persists that genres represent fixed and prescriptive types, that their value is limited because no composer of any achievement would remain bound by inhibitory rules. Prescriptions and norms have been fundamental to generic theory for centuries, and still are today, but it does not follow that they must restrict composers. On the contrary, the rejection of the prescriptions of a genre by a composer can be seen as a major force in the promotion of change.²⁸⁰

Kallberg's generic contract describes the audience's expectations of a particular genre as a somewhat immovable set of requirements that the composer (or performer) must work within or outside of. The crux of Kallberg's theory, though, lies in the instance when a performer complies with, bends, or breaks these rules, thus, either honoring or breaking the contract. Unfortunately, Kallberg's contract is a bit too static. A legal contract is either honored or it is broken; there is no middle ground. In art, there is *always* middle ground; a "horizon of expectation" may be a preferable way to describe this discourse. Bakhtin discusses his theory of horizons:

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context).²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Jeffrey Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor," *19th-Century Music* 11 (Spring 1988): 243.

²⁸¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 170.

As Bakhtin states, there are no limits to context or expectations. Generic expectations are not necessarily only broken or complied with; many times they are bent or rearranged according to the listener's experience. Unlike a two-dimensional contract, a listener's horizon can include unforeseen events, distant but recognizable events, current events, or past events. Each event, either musical or non-musical, comply with, bend, or break generic parameters and audience expectations. In order to describe and discuss the variables presented in a musician's and listener's horizon of expectations, the Italian musicologist Franco Fabbri has created a set of categories that frame these expectations. Although these categories, or rules, are not applicable to every aspect of smooth jazz recordings and live performances, they do provide general guidelines on which dialogic analysis may be based.

Realms of Potential Dialogue

The horizon of expectations is essential to the dialogue between listener and musician. Although there are many variables that affect this horizon, listeners synthesize variable but precise expectational sets. Fabbri comments on the importance of these sets: "If we examine how we recognize music events, how we react to them, how we conceptualize them and organize a social response to them (including a music performance), it seems that most of our effort is concentrated around a basic set of collectively accepted norms that define types of musics, against which we confront - as occurrences - the musical events we are dealing with."²⁸² Fabbri's research targets how

²⁸² Franco Fabbri, "Browsing Music Spaces: Categories and Musical Mind," paper delivered at IASPM (UK) conference, 1999, <http://www.tagg.org/others/ffabbri9907.html> (accessed August 1, 2008), 6-7.

we recognize and react to musical events. What is most important to Fabbri's approach is that he holds the musical event or gesture as the primary focal point. Simon Frith comments on the importance of Fabbri's work:

The value of Fabbri's approach here is that it clarifies how genre rules integrate musical and ideological factors, and why *performance* must be treated as central to the aesthetics of popular music . . . The particular way in which a guitarist gets a guitar note, for example (whether George Benson or Jimi Hendrix, Mark Knopfler or Johnny Marr, Derek Bailey or Bert Jansch) is at once a musical decision and a gestural one: it is the integration of sound and behavior in performance that gives the note its 'meaning.'²⁸³

Frith points out that Fabbri's categories of analysis are aimed at the relationship between musical decisions and how those decisions can convey meaning. Admittedly, Fabbri's work on the dialogues of genre is aimed toward popular music studies, but it is remarkably applicable to smooth jazz as well.

Franco Fabbri creates five categories that help codify areas in which dialogues occur between musicians and listeners. These categories include: Formal and Technical Rules, Semiotic Rules, Behavioral Rules, Social and Ideological Rules, and Economic and Juridical Rules. The term "rules" is an unfortunate choice by Fabbri; it connotes an immovable and specific categorization, and Fabbri's categories are neither specific nor immovable. Fabbri has essentially identified areas of potential dialogue that, after analysis, can reveal numerous aspects of the communicative links between listener and musician. Following brief descriptions of these five "general areas of dialogue," an analysis of the recordings and live performances of smooth jazz reveals that there are important dialogic differences between these two performance sites.

²⁸³ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 94.

Simply stated, Formal and Technical Rules are the aural characteristics that define a genre. Although this category is the easiest to define, it is possibly the most important area for discussion. On the most basic level, musicians and listeners communicate and react through expectations. When there are few other identifiable gestures available, as with a recording, the characteristics of the music itself are of the utmost importance.

Semiotics can explain how genre conveys meanings by the incorporation of other genres. This kind of borrowing is mostly expressed through literary means. Fabbri lists Roman Jakobson's linguistic communicative functions as examples: referential meaning, emotional meaning, imperative meaning, phatic meaning, metalinguistic meaning, and, poetic meaning. The use of these categories of emotion and expressive meaning are meant to define or describe how music expresses meaning through intertextuality. Most of what Fabbri has to say about meaning is based on analyses of text, something that rarely occurs in smooth jazz, but lyrics are not the only element of music that convey meaning through intertextuality. In fact, the incorporation and referencing of other musical genres is an essential element of smooth jazz.

Behavioral rules are used to describe and discern the physical gestures of musicians and audiences within a particular genre. This category is particularly important to smooth jazz. Performers such as Kenny G pride themselves on physically connecting with the audience. In fact, part of Kenny G's live show features him walking through the audience while soloing. This kind of showmanship has proven to be very successful for Kenny G and meaningful for his audience. This kind of behavior influences audience perceptions and expectations.

Social and Ideological Rules target the makeup of the audience. Fabbri provides a more detailed definition of this category:

Every genre is defined by a community of varying structure which accepts the rules and whose members participate in various forms during the course of a musical event But there are cases in which this sociological information becomes a part of the set of rules for a genre: it is by no means unusual for sociological analysis to be anticipated by the precise awareness, on the part of participants in a musical event, of the social meaning and structure of that in which they are participating.²⁸⁴

This category covers the social and ideological networks that musicians and listeners form around a given genre. These rules relate to how certain groups are constructed by ethnic, gender, class, and age divisions. Audience makeup is particularly interesting in smooth jazz. The smooth jazz listener is part of a unique demographic that does not exist in any other genre.

Lastly, Economic and Juridical Rules enable discussions of economics and its influence on a genre. Once again, this kind of discussion is valuable to smooth jazz studies. Commerce has an unquestionable influence on how smooth jazz is created, mediated, and disseminated. Most importantly, market research is an important part of interactions between listeners and musicians.

Fabbri's rules, or areas of potential dialogue, are by no means definitive; they only provide a starting point for analysis. All of these categories influence each other. These rules are combined to help in organizing and identifying the horizon of expectations created by smooth jazz musicians and listeners. These rules will be

²⁸⁴ Franco Fabbri, "A Theory of Music Genres: Two Applications," in *Popular Music Perspectives*, ed. D. Horn and P. Tagg (Göteborg and Exeter: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1981), 58.

particularly useful in framing discussions of the interactions that surround recordings and live performances of smooth jazz.

Smooth Jazz Recordings: Expecting Perfection

Many mainstream jazz critics, scholars, and journalists describe smooth jazz recordings as being “slickly produced,” “homogenous,” “souless,” or “blatantly commercial.” These sorts of descriptions are attributable to taste and historiographical tradition, but they also are indicative of a very common observance: most smooth recordings (at least those in wide release) *do* sound remarkably similar. Aside from commonalities that are indicative of every genre and style, smooth jazz recordings have a strong set of characteristics in regard to packaging, mixing and mastering, compositional style, instrumentation, and improvisational style. These characteristics are rarely deviated from, which makes the majority of the recordings sound and look alike.²⁸⁵ Admittedly, this is a radical acknowledgment within a study that seeks to demonstrate that smooth jazz is a marginalized style that features innovative and unique musicians. What makes smooth jazz recordings distinct, apart from other elements that have been previously discussed in prior chapters, is the commercial discourse in which they are a part. Smooth jazz recordings are integral to a discourse that features strict expectations. These expectations are maintained and modified by listeners and, moreover, the expectations influence (or dictate) the characteristics of the music itself. I argue that these discourses, framed by genre and expectations, are a unique and powerful aspect of smooth jazz. Audience expectations are mechanically

²⁸⁵ Competent listeners do not think that smooth jazz recordings all “sound the same.” There are many connoisseurs of smooth jazz who can tell the differences between recordings within an instant. I am simply reiterating what I believe is the most common observation of smooth jazz.

measured by marketing research companies and those results affect the aesthetic decisions made by musicians. Furthermore, smooth jazz recordings are created to be heard in multiple venues, so consistency is very important. Recordings are only one side of the equation; live performances participate in an entirely different set of expectations and discourses. The following section will explore the discourses that are integral to the creation, mediation, and experiencing of smooth jazz recordings.

Smooth jazz recordings are produced, marketed, and disseminated for use in multiple listening venues. In fact, it is possible that smooth jazz recordings are both passively and actively listened to in more venues than any other musical style. This high level of ubiquity is indicative of how all music is now experienced in North America.

Chris Kennett comments:

One of the most significant patterns in the consumption of music in the industrialized world during this century has been the trend towards ubiquity . . . In our post-Walkman world, recorded music can be played and experienced more or less anywhere—at home, in an aeroplane, under water, in a supermarket, for example—and from an ever-increasing variety of sources—terrestrial and satellite TV and radio, personal CD players, the Internet, and so on.²⁸⁶

Kennett's "ubiquity" is exemplified in the prominence of smooth jazz in commercial settings such as doctor's offices, elevators, or large retail outlets. Smooth jazz is also broadcast and enjoyed in private residences, automobiles, and even on the Weather Channel.²⁸⁷ Between 1998 and 2003, Arbitron measured the smooth jazz

²⁸⁶ Chris Kennett, "Is Anybody Listening?" in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Allan F. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

²⁸⁷ In 2007 The Weather Channel released a smooth jazz compilation recording named *The Weather Channel Presents: The Best of Smooth Jazz*.

category as earning a 3.0 average.²⁸⁸ While these numbers do not compare to traditionally popular music formats such as rock or country, smooth jazz is listened to by millions of people in multiple environments. Creating and maintaining such a universal presence is the result of interactions that are predicated on generic expectations and market responses to those expectations. In no other area does this occur more prominently than in radio.

Smooth jazz is historically linked to the consumer through commercial radio and marketing companies like Arbitron and Broadcast Architecture. Although crossover jazz had been artistically vital since the late 1960s, through the efforts of Frank Cody, smooth jazz did not become a codified style until the mid 1980s. In 1987 Frank Cody, among others, was hired to help revitalize the Los Angeles hard rock radio station KMET. Using shrewd musical instincts and business acumen, Cody renamed KMET as KTWV, “The Wave,” and began programming a blend of crossover jazz, R&B vocal tunes, and light rock. Cody comments about the early days of KTWV:

I was actually hired to revitalize the Rock and Roll station KMET, it was a legendary station here in L.A. So I came here thinking that was what I was going to do but it was just too far gone. It had lost all of its credibility and its vitality. We did some research and had a big think tank in Princeton, New Jersey. I did this big think tank with a guy who was to become my partner, Owen Leach, and we came up with several different ideas. Interestingly, The Wave was only one of those ideas.²⁸⁹

“The Wave” was one of the first radio stations to feature instrumental music by crossover artists. Cody recognized the commercial viability of smooth jazz in 1987: “You

²⁸⁸ See <http://www.arbitron.com>. Arbitron is a company that measures radio listenership. A 3.0 share represents the percentage of listeners listening to a specific radio station. Three out of one hundred listeners were tuned into smooth jazz.

²⁸⁹ John Beaudin, http://www.smoothjazznow.com/interview_frank_cody.htm August 2, 2004 (accessed September 11, 2008).

know it was pretty hard in 1986 not to be aware of David Sanborn, Jeff Lorber and Bob James. There was this great music out there that wasn't getting any airplay on any commercial radio station."²⁹⁰ Although "The Wave" was one of the first radio stations to feature crossover jazz (along with KIFM in San Diego and KKSF in San Francisco), the smooth jazz style had yet to be codified; in fact, the phrase "smooth jazz" had yet to be coined.

Along with creating "The Wave," Frank Cody founded Broadcast Architecture, a marketing company that tailors the playlists of radio stations to desired demographics. Companies like Broadcast Architecture conduct market research to ascertain consumer preferences in regards to the music. During the process of defining a demographic for KTWV and other "New Adult Contemporary" radio stations, Cody realized that in order for the style to become successful, it had have a definite categorical presence in the public consciousness and, thus, a title. Allen Kepler, now the president of Broadcast Architecture, comments on the creation of the phrase "smooth jazz":

We didn't know what to call the stations because the music was transitioning from New Age to something else. Everyone was saying "well it's Jazz but it's not like that kind of Jazz" so we didn't want to call the station Jazz or Jazz FM or anything like that and we didn't want to call it Light-Jazz . . . We kept asking them to throw out words. A lot of people were using smooth and a lot of people were using Jazz and we had this one woman in particular and I can still see her face and she said, "you know it's Jazz but it's not like the old school it's smooth, it's Smooth Jazz" and it was like wow! . . . That's where the actual name came from and it's stuck pretty well as a marketing term.²⁹¹

This is a rare moment in music history: a musical style is named, not by music historians or journalists, but by the people who were actually listening to and interacting

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ John Beaudin, "Allen Kepler Interview"
http://www.smoothjazznow.com/interview_allen_kepler.htm (accessed September 13, 2008).

with the music itself. The importance of labeling and codifying a style is clearly present in the creation of the “smooth jazz” label. The radio station owners and Broadcast Architecture acknowledged the power of categorization by seeking a label for the emerging crossover music, knowing that a single title was vital in helping foster a music and marketing identity.

Companies like Broadcast Architecture are a vital part of the interactions that surround smooth jazz recordings and are particularly engaged in generic expectations. Allen Kepler comments on the process that Broadcast Architecture uses in gauging listener responses to smooth jazz recordings:

We sort of take the research analyst mentality out of research by letting the listeners vote emotionally about songs. Rather than filling out a bubble sheet giving that song a 3 or whatever, they actually have a little box in their hand that's wireless. It has a hand held dial and it has a LED screen that goes from 0-100 and it shows every number on the LED screen and you can turn it from 0 to 100 in about half a second so you can react very quickly . . . So if they hear something they really love they'll turn the dial up towards a 100 if they hear something they really hate they go to 0 and if they're kind of neutral about it they hang around 50.²⁹²

Broadcast Architecture is one element of a four-part model of marketing research companies, consumers, media outlets, and musicians. After consumer expectations are measured, Broadcast Architecture sends its results to radio stations and record companies. In turn, the radio stations and record labels mandate, or at least strongly suggest to smooth jazz performers that they must create music that coincides with the expectations of the audience. The communicative loop can progress in this order: expectations of the audience—expectations are measured—radio and record companies acknowledge expectations—performers create music that abides by these expectations—

²⁹² Ibid.

radio stations play music that corresponds with the majority of listeners, and so forth. Many mainstream jazz critics and scholars scoff at such a commercially dominated relationship because mainstream jazz does not participate in the same kinds of interactions. The commercial relevance of mainstream jazz is limited, so marketing research and consumer reactions are not measured on a large scale.

Nonetheless, the outcome of this precisely controlled communicative loop is a strongly defined set of musical characteristics. These musical characteristics are the result of years of tradition, largely from crossover jazz, and the expectations of listeners, which are precisely measured by marketing companies such as Broadcast Architecture. The following section will explore some of traits of smooth jazz recordings and, using Franco Fabbri's rules, the traditions and interactions that has influenced these characteristics. In order to best explore the dialogues that surround smooth jazz, Fabbri's Formal and Technical Rules and Semiotic Rules have been combined to show the intricacies and effect of nostalgia. Also, Fabbri's Social and Commercial rules have been consolidated in order to demonstrate the diversity of the smooth jazz audience.

Nostalgia and Smooth Jazz

The formal and technical aspects of smooth jazz could be considered the most identifiable elements of the style. Most listeners identify smooth jazz by its widely known musical characteristics: tune length of less than five minutes, R&B-derived harmonic and rhythmic patterns, amplified/electronic instruments, use of saxophone or guitar as a primary voice, and synthesized or orchestral backgrounds. These characteristics define smooth jazz and, some of these formal and technical aspects are

borrowed from various R&B styles. Smooth jazz not only shares some technical characteristics with R&B, it also shares repertoire.

Rhythm and blues tunes are the overwhelming favorite of smooth jazz artists. The similarities between the formal and technical aspects of smooth jazz and R&B make recording covers a relatively simple transition. To begin with, the instrumentation, rhythm, and harmonies of smooth jazz are indebted to R&B influences. Also, the compositional style featured in many smooth jazz recordings echo many of the characteristics of R&B: short song lengths, catchy melodies, and tempos averaging 100 BPM. These similarities make producing R&B-based covers a logical choice. These similarities also provide a seamless aesthetic transition from covers to original tunes within the albums. Most importantly, smooth jazz is usually conceived with a singular lead instrumental voice, in contrast to mainstream jazz which can feature an array of different soloists.²⁹³ An instrumentalist can easily substitute for the original lead voice of an R&B tune. In addition, the instrumentalist can determine how the melody is phrased and how improvisations will reflect or deviate from the original melody.

Smooth jazz recordings have historically featured “covers” of popular tunes.²⁹⁴

Richard Middleton explains the importance of covers:

²⁹³ There are many differences between the performing of smooth jazz covers and mainstream jazz standards. The purpose of covers in smooth jazz is to connect with the audience; the performing of mainstream jazz standards is commonly more centered on intra-musical connections. Jazz standards usually offer a specific musical challenge or a particularly beautiful melody that commonly interest musicians. On the other hand, there is a form of nostalgia conjured among jazz musicians when they are performing standards, even if they are too young to actively remember the origins of the tune. Many jazz musicians may play a standard like “Donna Lee” with a nostalgic/mythic view of Charlie Parker in mind. This form of nostalgia is worth further examination.

²⁹⁴ The term “cover” is frequently used by performers to describe a re-working of a canonical work that was written and performed by a specific artist or artists. Covers are performed in a variety of genres.

The ubiquitous phenomenon of covers, undoubtedly grasped by listeners as a species of “interpretation,” is merely the most striking exemplar of a widespread “practical criticism” pursued through musicians’ exploitation of stylistic intertextuality.²⁹⁵

As Middleton argues, the use of covers is more than simply performing a “golden oldie” in a different musical style; covers derive meanings from the intersecting of varying styles. For instance, when David Sanborn performs “One Hundred Ways,” he uses a familiar tune as a foundation on which he applies various levels of improvisation, melodic interpretation, personal style, etc. The result is a new listening experience blended with a prior listening experience. The richest source of meaning, though, is predicated on prior engagement with the tune, and, of course, most musicians want their listeners to have the deepest connection to their music as possible. If the listener has no prior engagement with “One Hundred Ways”, David Sanborn’s version, while no less entertaining, does not have the same kind of meaning. Prior engagement is particularly important in choosing cover repertoire. Most smooth jazz musicians pick tunes that are most likely to conjure pleasant associates or nostalgia. In fact, nostalgia is a potent component of how smooth jazz musicians pick their repertoire.

Most smooth jazz covers are based on popular R&B repertoire. Crossover artists like David Sanborn and George Benson have recorded many covers of popular R&B tunes. Among many other examples, Sanborn recorded “One Hundred Ways” in 1984 and “You Don’t Know Me” in 1985.²⁹⁶ Benson’s version of War’s “The World is a Ghetto,” and “Everything Must Change,” popularized by Randy Crawford, are featured

²⁹⁵ Richard Middleton, “Introduction,” in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. Richard Middleton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11.

²⁹⁶ “One Hundred Ways” was popularized by James Ingram in 1980 and “You Don’t Know Me” was written in 1955 by Eddy Arnold and Cindy Walker.

on his *In Flight* (1977). Contemporary smooth jazz artists routinely include cover versions on their albums as well. Candy Dulfer recorded “For the Love of You” and “Valdez in the Country.”²⁹⁷ Rick Braun and Boney James have recorded the Bill Withers compositions “Use Me” and “Ain’t No Sunshine.”²⁹⁸ The smooth jazz guitarist Norman Brown recorded versions of “What’s Goin’ On” and “You Make Me Feel Brand New.”²⁹⁹ To further emphasize the importance of covers in smooth jazz, Kenny G recorded an entire album of duets that feature songs like “Baby Come to Me,” “I Believe I Can Fly,” and “At Last.”³⁰⁰

The success of these artists has proven that the connection formed by covers can be very useful in guiding or prompting positive reactions from the audience. These artists chose these cover tunes with a specific audience in mind. The smooth jazz audience is largely middle aged, predominantly African American, white, and Hispanic, and is well educated. These cover tunes are meant to connect with this core audience. Smooth jazz musicians assume (or hope) that these listeners have prior engagement with this repertoire and will be eager to re-engage with it. Listeners find resonance or points of identification through nostalgia.

Nostalgia can be triggered or set into motion by the creator but the reception of meaning is contingent on the listener. Smooth jazz musicians seek tunes that may conjure pleasant memories or associations. Of course, there is no way to accurately

²⁹⁷ Dulfer’s “For the Love of You” is featured on *For the Love of You* (1997) and “Valdez in the Country” is part of *Right In My Soul* (2003). The Isley Brothers popularized “For the Love of You” and Donny Hathaway wrote and performed “Valdez in the Country.”

²⁹⁸ “Use Me” is featured on Rick Braun’s *Kisses in the Rain* (2001) and “Ain’t No Sunshine” is part of Boney James’s *Seduction* (1995).

²⁹⁹ “What’s Goin’ On” can be found on Brown’s *West Coast Coolin’* (2004) and “You Make Me Feel Brand New” is featured on Brown’s *Celebration* (2000).

³⁰⁰ Kenny G’s duets album is titled *At Last . . . The Duets Album* (2004).

measure individual responses but the popularity of many smooth jazz musicians indicates that, indeed, nostalgia can promote pleasant emotions. Fred Davis explains that contemporary nostalgia is usually associated with positive thoughts:

No matter how one later comes to reevaluate that piece of past which is the object of his nostalgia—or, for that matter, irrespective of how he may later choose to interpret the meaning of the nostalgic experience itself—the nostalgic feeling is infused with imputations of past, beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love, and the like, in sum, any or several of the *positive* affects of being. [italics original]³⁰¹

Davis's statement explains the most obvious reason why smooth jazz artists perform covers; cover versions usually conjure past experiences that evoke a general feeling of goodness, happiness, or love. The audience is usually receptive to such feelings. In my experience as a smooth jazz musician, I routinely witness positive reaction to covers. In many instances, within the first moments of a cover many audience members begin interacting with the musicians by yelling confirmation, clapping, singing along, or even dancing. Covers trigger a nostalgic group of memories, almost like an expectational set, that washes over some audience members and enables them to reminisce while enjoying a new version of an old tune. Covers also enable audience members to actively identify a tune, even if it is not necessarily a canonical or well-known composition. Many audience members will delight in the fact that they are savvy enough to identify a tune, as if they have solved a riddle that the musicians have posed. Admittedly, individual reactions to nostalgia are difficult to define. Everyone

³⁰¹ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 14.

reacts to covers in a different way but, covers are one of the most potent ways that smooth jazz musicians connect with their audience.

The prominence of R&B covers in smooth jazz recordings is the result of both the powerful communicative links that are produced through listener identification and the relative ease of incorporating them into the existing aesthetic framework of smooth jazz. This prominence is also the result of the careful attention and response to audience expectations that are measured and conveyed by companies like Broadcast Architecture. The expectations of most smooth jazz listeners include cover versions and musicians often meet those expectations.

Diversity of Venues and Smooth Jazz Audiences

As discussed above, the communicative loop that incorporates consumers, media outlets, market research, and musicians has helped create a consistent musical product. This loop has also created a large and diverse audience. Using demographic studies from Arbitron, I argue that the smooth jazz audience is varied in terms of race, social status, gender, and, education.³⁰² This demographic is the result of the consistency of the music, the repertoire, and the various venues to which the music is broadcast.

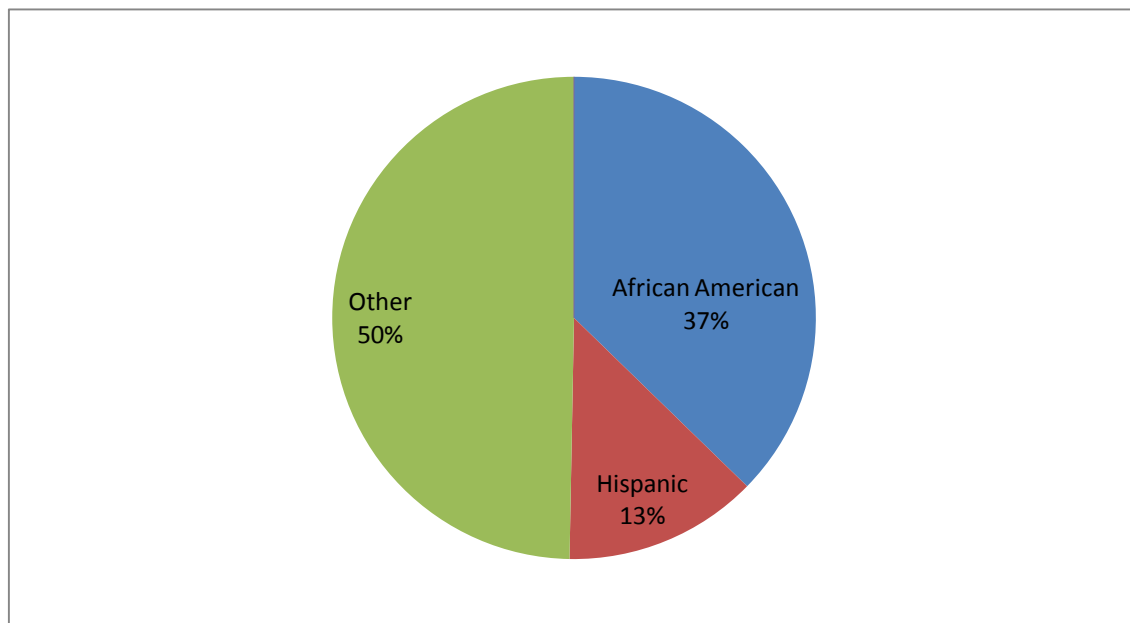
According to an Arbitron report, “Radio Today 2007,” between 2005 and 2007 smooth jazz radio listeners were 53% women and 47% men. A majority of listeners were over 45 years old (73%). Almost 74% of all listeners have attended college and more than

³⁰² Arbitron® is a media research and marketing company which measures audience ratings for radio and television stations. Their research is based on diaries and electronic metering systems. The data compiled by Arbitron is invaluable in estimating the makeup of various audiences and is easily found online.

58% of the households have incomes of more than \$50,000 a year.³⁰³ These statistics reveal that the audience for smooth jazz is largely older, somewhat affluent, and split evenly between the sexes.

The ethnic composition of the audience is specific to smooth jazz. African Americans and Hispanics make up half of the audience of smooth jazz. Comparing the statistics of other genres that target the over-45 audience, no other musical genre attracts more African Americans and Hispanics over the age of 45 than smooth jazz (fig 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Ethnic composition of smooth jazz radio listeners between 2005 and 2007 (*Radio Today*, 2008).

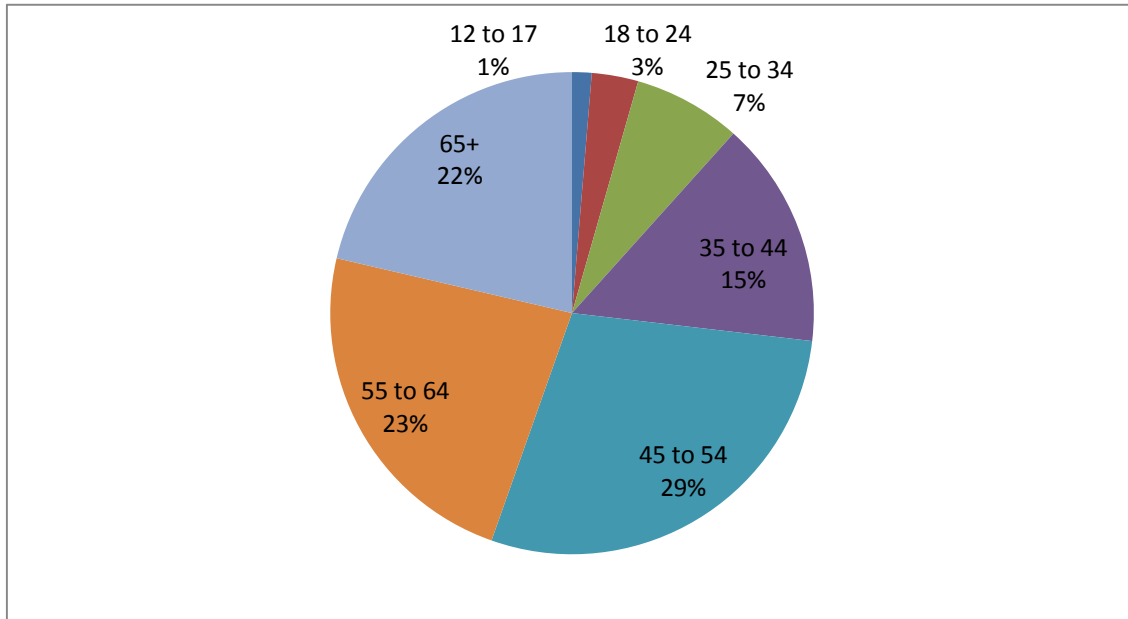


The segment of African-American listeners is particularly significant. “Black Radio Today 2008,” a report issued by Arbitron, states that “Slightly more than 3 million African-Americans tuned in to the nation’s 72 New AC/Smooth Jazz stations

³⁰³ See <http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/radiotoday08.pdf> for these statistics.

each week in Spring 2007, earning a 5.4% share of the Black audience. New AC/Smooth Jazz's gender balance was nearly even, with men posting a 1% edge over women."³⁰⁴ The ages of African-American smooth jazz listeners tend to be older (fig. 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Ages of African-American listeners of smooth jazz in 2007 (*Black Radio Today*, 2008).



As the figure indicates, the majority of African-American listeners are over the age of forty-five. Also, the education level of African-American listeners is relatively high. The statistics in Figure 6.3 show that the majority of African-American listeners have had some college education or have graduated from college. Lastly, Figure 6.4 confirms that African-American listeners are remarkably affluent. Only 15% of African-American listeners of smooth jazz earn less than \$15,000 a year and nearly 30% make more than \$75,000 annually.

³⁰⁴ See "Black Radio Today, 2008 Edition"
http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/Black_Radio_Today_o8.pdf (accessed September 8, 2008).

Figure 6.3 Education of African-American listeners of smooth jazz in 2007
(*Black Radio Today*, 2008).

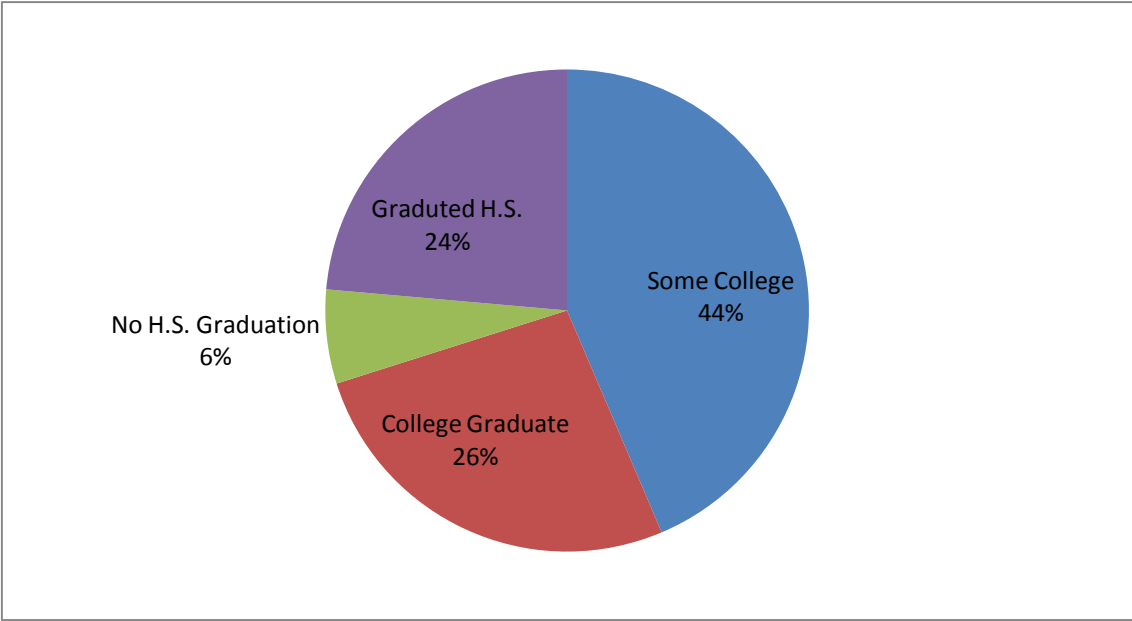
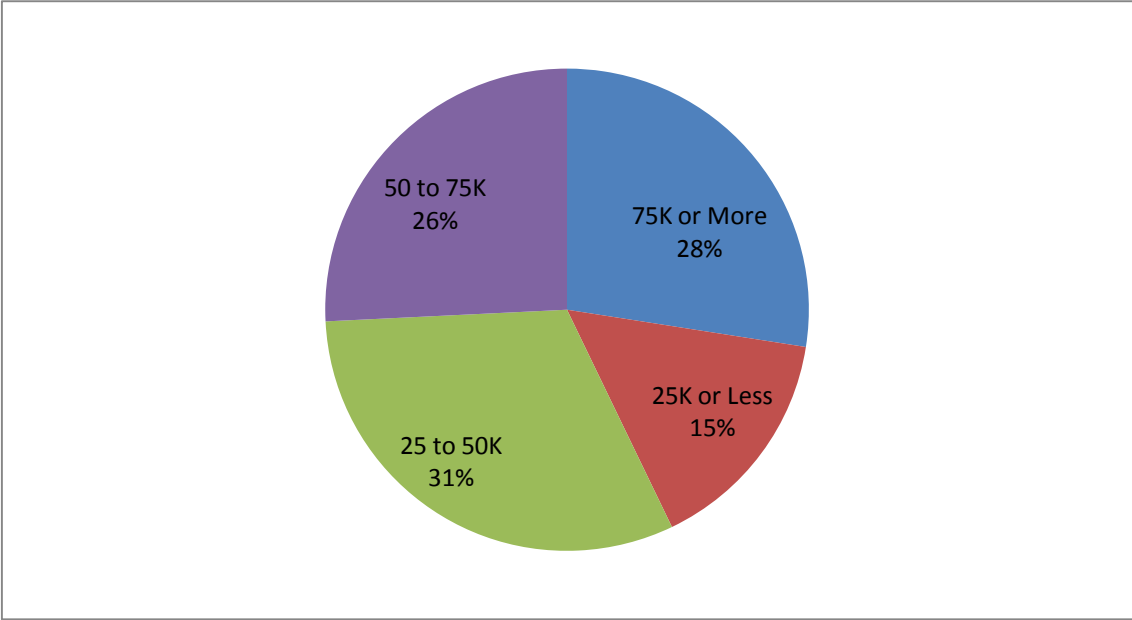


Figure 6.4 African-American smooth jazz listener income for 2007
(*Black Radio Today*, 2008).



In summary, the audience for smooth jazz is roughly split between men and women, it is older (over forty-five), it is largely affluent, and nearly half are African American or Hispanic. This demographic composition is to be expected when viewing the repertoire and performers of surround smooth jazz. First, smooth jazz has its roots in crossover of the 1970s. Audience members over forty-five have a chronological connection to the innovators of crossover jazz such as George Benson, Bob James, or The Crusaders. It is to be expected that older listeners would be attracted to a style, such as smooth jazz, that echoes many of the musical characteristics that were began in the 1970s. Second, the general affluence of smooth jazz listeners helps explain why recordings are typically viewed as homogeneous. The affluent listener, one who is willing and able to purchase music, perhaps desires a professionally packaged and recorded product that reflects sophistication and maturity. Irregularities in solo styles, poor mastering, or aggressive lyrics can sometimes signal a musical or social immaturity that many older listeners would prefer to avoid. Third, the obvious R&B influences of smooth jazz particularly appeal to older African-American listeners who are familiar and comfortable with the aesthetics of R&B music. The preceding discussion of nostalgia is also important because many of the R&B artists that are featured on smooth jazz recordings, like Bill Withers or Marvin Gaye, are part of the era of music that many over-forty listeners are familiar with.

There is an undeniably close connection between the smooth jazz audience and the music itself. The expectations of smooth jazz listeners are carefully monitored by companies like Broadcast Architecture and Arbitron, and are relayed to musicians through radio stations and record labels. The music, in turn, largely reflects these

expectations. These expectations are by no means arbitrary; they are indicative of a specific demographic that strongly responds to specific kinds of nostalgia and familiar musical aesthetics.

Live Performances of Smooth Jazz: Expecting the Unexpected

Much of the criticism of smooth jazz is based on recordings. Many mainstream jazz critics and scholars have not made an effort to observe smooth jazz in live performance situations. This is due to the traditions of mainstream jazz. Jazz recordings echo many of the same aesthetic and musical characteristics as live performances. For instance, Keith Jarrett recordings are very similar to his live performances, so a recording is a good indicator of what Jarrett provides in a live setting. It is understandable that many critics or scholars regard smooth jazz recordings in the same way. This is an unfortunate assumption. Live performances of smooth jazz can provide a wider range of musical options such as incorporating mainstream jazz musicians, a diverse repertoire, and mainstream jazz influences. These elements can make live performances a different performing and listening experience than the experiences provided by recordings.

In recent scholarship, the historical usage of mainstream jazz recordings has become a target of scrutiny. Although recordings are an important source for jazz research, they have been over-emphasized in historical writings. Some musicologists have discussed how recordings have been utilized in historical discourse. Jed Rasula states: “Despite their prodigious use of recordings in formulating perspectives on jazz history, historians have tended to avoid theorizing the actual status and function of

these artifacts—the very artifacts that constitute what would seem to constitute primary evidence about jazz music.”³⁰⁵ As Rasula points out, jazz historians have generally neglected acknowledging the cultural context that surrounds recordings, and have instead treated them as if they were timeless artifacts. This sort of historical treatment is akin to that used in Western art music. The Western music score in historical musicology is usually treated as the definitive and primary document. This treatment has given the impression that scores are definitive statements of a musical work. This may not be the case in all instances. For example, there is ample evidence of a tendency by composers such as Chopin or Mendelssohn to approve and publish multiple versions of the same composition, yet there remains a prevalent and compelling need for a definitive version of a composition.³⁰⁶ In both Western art music and jazz studies, this is an understandable position. Matthew Butterfield explains that recordings have become the primary document for good reason: “Due to the situational vagaries of live performance contexts and the fallibility of human performers (and sound technicians), recorded listening often offers a *better* acoustic experience of the music today; in this way, it is actually the performance that provides an imperfect simulacrum of the recordings.”³⁰⁷ Butterfield is correct; it is far easier to analyze an unchangeable and unquestioned work of art, something that you can literally hold in your hand, than to attempt to explain the unpredictable variables and shifting meanings of Bakhtin’s

³⁰⁵ Jed Rasula, “The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History,” in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 134.

³⁰⁶ See Jeffrey Kallberg, “The Chopin “Problem: Simultaneous Variants and Alternate Versions,” in *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* and John Michael Cooper, *Mendelssohn’s ‘Italian’ Symphony*, (New York: Oxford, 2003).

³⁰⁷ Matthew W. Butterfield, “Music Analysis and the Social Life of Jazz Recordings,” *Current Musicology* 71-73 (Spring 2001-2002): 329.

heteroglossia. Recordings offer a sonically and economically convenient primary source for analysis, but one of the dangers of depending solely on recordings is that the interactions of live performances can be ignored or minimized.

As discussed earlier, smooth jazz recordings are the result of communicative loop surrounding audience expectations and the musicians. The audience expectations for live performances, on the other hand, feature a far wider range of tolerance for personnel, song length, repertoire, genre mixing, and solo style. I suggest that these broader expectations have enabled smooth jazz performers to demonstrate musical variances during live performances, far beyond what is represented on recordings, sometimes to the point of delving into musical elements historically considered to belong solely to mainstream jazz. In order to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of these live performances, I have chosen the DVD *Casino Lights '99* as an exemplar of recorded live performances of smooth jazz.³⁰⁸ *Casino Lights*, filmed at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1999, features performances by prominent smooth jazz artists and exemplifies the diversity of smooth jazz performances. Although no single video can display all the complexities of an art form or substitute for live experiences, *Casino Lights* highlights many of the attributes that make live smooth jazz emotionally and musically compelling.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ *Casino Lights '99*, DVD, 38528-2 (Warner Bros., 2000).

³⁰⁹ Future research will include an ethnography supplementing the DVD. Ethnography is an important aspect of research of live performances of smooth jazz. Many issues of repertoire, personnel, and solo style are actively discussed among smooth jazz musicians and the audience. These discussions reveal more musical similarities between smooth jazz and mainstream jazz, but also reveal aesthetic and social differences between these two styles.

Onstage: Mainstream and Smooth Jazz Musicians

Although mainstream jazz critics and scholars have drawn a definitive aesthetic line between mainstream jazz and smooth jazz, there is far more intermixing than critics or scholars dare to acknowledge. In the professional world, it is common for highly successful mainstream jazz artists to perform alongside smooth jazz artists. *Casino Lights* features smooth jazz and mainstream jazz artists who perform together seamlessly. This is contrary to critics who suggest a sizable stylistic division between the two styles. The first track of *Casino Lights*, for example, features the Bob James Trio, which includes James, Billy Kilson on drums, and James Genus on bass. Bob James, one of the originators of crossover jazz of the 1970s, is widely known for his work with the band Fourplay and is linked more with smooth jazz than to mainstream jazz. Billy Kilson has recorded with the Dave Holland Quintet, Tim Hagans, Dianne Reeves, and Bob Belden. James Genus has performed and recorded with Michel Camilo, Chick Corea, Greg Osby, and Dave Douglas. Both Kilson and Genus could be classified as mainstream musicians, but contrary to the expectations of the mainstream jazz community, they are performing alongside a smooth jazz icon at the Montreux Jazz Festival. Before a note is performed, one notices that there is a mixing of smooth and mainstream jazz traditions.

Bob James is the central element of this mixture. Instead of choosing the customary smooth jazz instrumentation of keyboards, percussion, electric bass, and horn or guitar, James opts for the piano trio format, one of the most significant instrumental combinations in jazz history. Some of the most respected and canonical works of Nat Cole, Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Wynton Kelly, Bill Evans, Chick Corea,

Keith Jarrett, and Brad Mehldau have been produced in the piano trio format. In choosing this combination, James is working within a time-honored tradition. This tradition conjures a set of audience expectations.

James has undoubtedly considered how far he can measure expectations. Although expectations are more flexible during a live performance, this does not necessarily mean that there are *no* expectations. James's "Mind Games" exemplifies a blend of musical characteristics from mainstream and smooth jazz. This mixture is supported by a few observations. First, James does not perform a mainstream jazz repertoire. In fact, James performs only his original compositions: "Restoration," "Restless," "Mind Games," and "Raise the Roof." Considering his considerable pianistic versatility, this is not a decision made for technical reasons; he could have performed a series of jazz standards as well. James may have performed his original compositions because the audience clearly appreciates his compositional style and because the audience is expecting, and receives, a piano-trio rendition of his older material. Second, throughout his solo on "Mind Games," which is the only track from James's set that is featured on *Casino Lights*, James utilizes many of the musical techniques found in mainstream jazz such as rhythmic displacement, side-slipping, and modal patterns.³¹⁰ However, he does not entirely dispense with the character of the original tune. He retains the even eighth-note feel and the overall structure of the original.

Bob James, in forming a trio with Billy Kilson and James Genus, exemplifies two common characteristics of live smooth jazz. First, mainstream jazz artists do perform

³¹⁰ Bob James's complete set list for his July 14, 1999 performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival is posted at <http://www.montreuxsounds.com/detail2006.php?fiche=2125>.

and excel in smooth jazz.³¹¹ Second, audience expectations are flexible enough to allow the use of a mainstream jazz instrumentation and formal techniques.

Diversity of the Smooth Jazz Repertoire

The repertoire utilized during many live performances is indicative of the various genres and styles that are represented in smooth jazz. As *Casino Lights* demonstrates, the repertoire of smooth jazz can be categorized into four parts: original compositions, mainstream jazz standards, smooth jazz standards, and covers of popular tunes. These categories are exemplified in the tune list of the show by the Larry Carlton/Kirk Whalum Band that is featured on *Casino Lights*. Although the entire program is not on the DVD, the set list is documented on the Montreux Jazz Festival archives website.³¹²

1. Comin' Home Baby (Bob Dorough/Ben Tucker) (Jazz Standard)
2. Cold Duck Time (Eddie Harris) (Smooth Jazz Standard)
3. Through the Fire (popularized by Chaka Khan) (R&B Cover)
4. Soweto (Kirk Whalum) (Smooth Jazz Original)
5. Smiles and Smiles to Go (Larry Carlton) (Smooth Jazz Original)
6. Ascension (popularized by Maxwell) (Smooth Jazz Standard)
7. B.P. Blues (Larry Carlton) (Smooth Jazz Original)
8. Desperately (Kirk Whalum) (Smooth Jazz Original)
9. (Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay (Otis Redding) (R&B Cover)

³¹¹ Kilson and Genus are not the only mainstream jazz performers participating with smooth jazz artists on *Casino Lights*. Kenny Garrett, Kevin Mahogany, and Lenny Castro perform throughout the DVD.

³¹² See <http://montreuxsounds.com/detail2006.php?fiche=2174>.

10. Yesterday I Had The Blues (Kenneth Gamble/Leon Huff) (R&B Cover)
11. Always There (Ronnie Laws) (Smooth Jazz Standard)

This repertoire categorization, by no means a complete listing of the entire repertoire of the style, shows that live smooth jazz demonstrates a propensity for diversity and variety.

Original compositions have an important place in smooth jazz. Compositional skill has been a hallmark of the careers of Bob James, Joe Sample, Ralph MacDonald, George Duke, Jay Beckenstein, and Boney James. All of these performers may find artistic fulfillment through composing, but there are economic motivations as well. Compositions that are replayed, revised, or used in various environments produce financial rewards.³¹³ The importance of original compositions is exemplified by the Carlton/Whalum set list. Four of the eleven tunes are written by the performers: “Soweto,” “B.P. Blues,” “Smiles and Smiles to Go,” and “Desperately.”

During smooth jazz performances, audiences accept and expect the performing of original compositions. This acceptance is based on the popularity of smooth jazz. Contrary to mainstream jazz where original compositions are generally unknown to the audience, the popularity of smooth jazz makes familiarity with original compositions more likely. The performance of original compositions, which many listeners may have heard through a media outlet or on CD, is widely accepted and expected. During a live performance many in the audience may instantly recognize an original composition. This recognition complies with expectations of live performances. Of course, these sorts of expectations can become very strict. For instance, if George Benson does not perform

³¹³ The financial aspects of composing are discussed in Chapter Four, “Longevity in Jazz.”

“On Broadway” or if Kenny G does not perform “Songbird” at nearly every public performance, expectations can be broken.

Jazz standards also have a place in the smooth jazz repertoire. In the Carlton/Whalum set list, “Comin’ Home Baby,” written by the eclectic jazz singer Bob Dorough, is based on a 12-bar blues in a minor key. Although “Comin’ Home Baby” is considered a jazz standard, its melodic construction has helped it to become a smooth jazz standard as well. The most distinctive aspect of the tune resides in the chromatic descent from the fifth scale degree. This simple chromatic feature supplies a foundation for reharmonizations, rhythmic displacement, melodic references, and improvisational patterns and leaves ample room for other types of added complexities.

Smooth jazz standards are possibly the most important part of the repertoire and this is demonstrated in the Carlton/Whalum set list by “Cold Duck Time,” “Ascension,” and “Always There.” To begin with, some mainstream jazz critics and scholars may disdain the notion of a “smooth jazz standard” but, there is a large and widely performed list of smooth jazz standards. This list is so consistent and universally referred to that I believe that a “smooth jazz canon” exists. This canon has not been compiled by external entities like critics, scholars, or journalists; rather, it has been codified by decades of communications between audiences, musicians, record companies, and media outlets.³¹⁴

As with any canon, there are practical advantages in having a universally recognized set of standards. In the case of the Carlton/Whalum performance, it is possible that this band had little practice time before the performance. Standards would be an easy way to fill out a set list. More importantly, most artists (certainly of this

³¹⁴ Non-academic canon formation is an under-researched area in musicology. There may be much to learn in exploring the creation of “alternative canons” in various genres.

caliber) are very familiar with these standards, so performers are more apt to experiment with new arrangements or reharmonizations. This experimentation can also lead to spontaneity and interaction which is a common element to live performances.

Lastly, the inclusion of “Through the Fire,” “(Sittin’ On) The Dock of the Bay,” and “Yesterday I had the Blues” in the Carlton/Whalum set exemplifies the use of cover tunes in smooth jazz. It is very rare for a smooth jazz concert not to feature at least one cover. In many cases the audience expects some kind of unique treatment of a pre-existing popular tune, and in my experience, covers usually get the most positive response from the audience. Covers commonly evoke a mass response and reflect a general familiarity with another repertoire, such as R&B, soul, or Latin music. Whether in a huge outdoor concert or in a small nightclub, all of these activities lead to a sense of community and participation.

Mainstream Jazz Influences on Live Performances of Smooth Jazz

The listeners of live performances of smooth jazz expect a blend of musical styles and genres. In the case of *Casino Lights*, styles and genres such as Brazilian music, electric blues, swing blues, free jazz, R&B, and Gospel, are all represented. The following section demonstrates how smooth jazz artists utilize and maximize some of the most dominant characteristics of mainstream jazz.

Although these examples are all found on *Casino Lights*, in my experience, most smooth jazz artists utilize these same general stylistic and aesthetic traits of mainstream jazz. In fact, there are connections between smooth and mainstream jazz in nearly every track of *Casino Lights*. Some of these connections are technical, like rhythmic

displacement, and some are more formal, like call and response and instrumental “battles.”

In terms of technical borrowing, the technique of side-slipping is widely used in smooth jazz and is also used extensively in mainstream jazz. Side-slipping is a musical technique that features an unexpected half-step or whole-step shift in a melodic or harmonic pattern. Mainstream jazz artists such as McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, and Mike Stern have incorporated this technique into their musical vocabulary to such an extent that it is now part of their personal musical styles. In smooth jazz, side-slipping is particularly useful because many tunes are based on just one or two harmonies. Side-slipping enables the performer to add color, harmonic tension, and rhythmic interest to a static harmonic foundation. In *Casino Lights*, Bob James employs side-slipping on “Mind Games” (3:40) and Kirk Whalum uses it on “Always There” (55:00) and “Cold Duck Time” (28:20).³¹⁵ Side-slipping is a technique that many musicians immediately recognize and frequently evokes a response from fellow bandmates. These responses can be verbal, such as a “yeah,” or they can be musical; accompanying musicians will frequently attempt to respond to or anticipate side-slipping.³¹⁶ This kind of intra-musician dialog can result in positive reactions from the audience as well. When the audience sees that the musicians are having a good time, then the audience wants to be included.

³¹⁵ These timings are taken from a standard DVD player.

³¹⁶ An example of this kind of communication occurs at the beginning of Whalum’s solo on “Always There.” Whalum begins his solo with a side slipping pattern that is very reminiscent of what Kenny Garrett has performed immediately prior to Whalum’s solo. Kenny Garrett is also well-known for using the side-slipping technique.

Utilizing the traditional call and response pattern is also prominent in smooth jazz. In Chapter Three, Grover Washington, Jr.'s use of call and response was discussed; in *Casino Lights*, Nathan East also uses the technique. East, performing with Fourplay on "Westchester Lady," vocalizes a few syllables and responds to those vocalizations on the bass (1:48:40). After this short section, East mimics the vocal style of George Benson by vocalizing along with his bass improvisations. This kind of reference demonstrates that there is an historical and stylistic dialog between smooth jazz musicians and their listeners. Most smooth jazz listeners (or musicians) will recognize East's reference and connect it to the pioneering work of George Benson. Furthermore, during East's "Benson-like" improvisation, he quotes Dizzy Gillespie's "Manteca." "Manteca" may be one of Gillespie's best known compositions and many mainstream jazz musicians and listeners would identify it. Within East's short solo section (it only lasts 90 seconds), he connects with the overall jazz tradition by using call and response, he references the history of smooth jazz by echoing George Benson, and recognizes the influence of Gillespie by quoting "Manteca."

There are other traditional aspects of mainstream jazz that are utilized in smooth jazz. For instance, the legendary instrumental "battles" of jazz are also a part of smooth jazz. During "Notorious" there is an extensive battle between Rick Braun (flugelhorn) and Boney James (tenor saxophone) (1:09:00). Also, on the final track of *Casino Lights* Kirk Whalum and Boney James perform an extensive battle on the smooth jazz standard "Watermelon Man"(1:59:00). Admittedly, the artistic content of these battles is negligible, but the smooth jazz audience expects some showmanship. Some performers communicate with listeners by walking into the audience, others perform scripted

banter, and others may incorporate amusing musical quotes into their solos. These kinds of stagecraft are an important link to the audience. Stagecraft personalizes the musicians and allows the audience to appreciate the humor and humanity of the musicians. Instrumental “battles” have the same effect. The audience is thrilled to see two musicians competing for technical dominance. Although most musicians view this “battle” more as a friendly communication than a competition, the audience is usually entertained by this exhilarating spectacle.

Lastly, one of the most prevalent philosophies of mainstream jazz is that every artist has his or her own “sound,” “voice,” or style. This philosophy is exemplified in the historical discussions of the styles of Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Bill Evans. These musicians possessed consistent and recognizable sounds that were distinct and personal. Possibly beyond all other measures of greatness, the individual sounds and musical approaches of these musicians is what makes them “great.” At the same time, the idea that smooth jazz artists “all sound the same” is both naïve and damaging. If greatness is defined by a definitive and personal style, then many of the performers on *Casino Lights* should be called “great.” The performances by Larry Carlton, Kirk Whalum, Bob James, Nathan East, and George Duke, demonstrate that their stylings are readily identifiable. Their rhythmic vitality, technical mastery, and flawless sense of timing makes it easy to be physically and emotionally moved by this music. It is a mistake to label such creative and intelligent musicians as “homogenous” or “commercially invented.”

The sites of production, and the subsequent communicative loops and interactions, of smooth jazz are very different from those of mainstream jazz. The sound

and look of smooth jazz recordings are the result of a communicative loop that includes consumers, media outlets, marketing companies, and musicians. On the other hand, smooth jazz in a live context utilizes an entirely different set of interactions. Smooth jazz audiences have more flexible expectations for live performances, including the incorporation of other musical genres and styles. In fact, live performances exemplify many of the characteristics that are coveted by the mainstream jazz community, such as call and response, instrumental battles, and various technical skills. All of these characteristics are part of what the smooth jazz audience expect. I do not believe that live performances should necessarily be considered more valid than recordings. Each venue has its own challenges and clearly the results are very different, but one must look beyond the recordings and explore the interactions that surround all aspects of smooth jazz performance in order to achieve a more complete understanding of this complex genre.

CONCLUSION

Christopher Washburne's essay "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?" is one of the inspirations for this dissertation. He situates the popular emergence of Kenny G within the mainstream jazz tradition and also reveals how tensions between perceived commercialism and artistic integrity have resulted in the marginalization of viable jazz styles. In his closing statement, Washburne challenges music scholars to embrace the diversity of jazz:

It is troubling to me that we, as music scholars, choose to write about our own favorite music, searching for those Schulleresque gems, while ignoring the mundane, the music that actually plays a role in the everyday lives of millions . . . I am suggesting that if we seek to understand "jazz" in its entirety, gems and all, we must examine the wide variety of jazz styles and their myriad manifestations.³¹⁷

In order to "examine the wide variety of jazz styles and their myriad manifestations" music scholars must set aside their personal tastes and act as advocates, not necessarily for their favorite music, but for understanding of the social complexities and stylistic diversity of the jazz tradition. This tradition will not be rightfully researched until impartiality and neutrality are more thoroughly pursued and rewarded.

Throughout "Caught Between Jazz and Pop," I have avoided advocating the wholesale inclusion of smooth jazz into the standard jazz narrative, because I do not believe it is my obligation to persuade readers one way or the other. The purpose of this dissertation is not necessarily to persuade readers to the "rightness" of my own responses or preferences, it is to demonstrate the musical and social richness of a

³¹⁷ Christopher Washburne, "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz: A Case Study," in *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, ed. Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (New York: Routledge, 2004), 143.

marginalized musical style and to exhibit diverse methodologies that can be employed framing discussions of any jazz style.

“Caught Between Jazz and Pop” demonstrates that the study of a marginalized jazz style such as smooth jazz can offer exciting and revealing discoveries, not only about smooth jazz, but about the entire history of jazz. For instance, explorations of the critical discourses that surround Kenny G, the communicative techniques of successful instrumentalists, or the interactions surrounding various performance sites can be applied to any mainstream jazz style. I hope that “Caught Between Jazz and Pop” will inspire other scholars to examine neglected jazz styles and help create a more unbounded and inclusive view of jazz history.

Lastly, I began this dissertation with a story of my failed performance of “Sunny.” Over the last seven years I have attempted to develop and refine my personal approach to smooth jazz, but when “Sunny” is called on the bandstand, I continue to be amazed at the limitless number of interpretations that can be made of this tune. These interpretations are not only contingent on the tune itself, but on the venue, my fellow musicians, my mood, the audience, and any number of other musical situations that can arise. These interpretive challenges are as meaningful and daunting as those posed by performances of jazz standards such as “Windows,” “There Will Never Be Another You,” or “Body and Soul.” The specific stylistic and technical challenges are different, but the overall process of maintaining a personal style while working within the parameters of a musical tradition is essentially the same. Great smooth jazz and crossover artists such as Grover Washington, Jr., David Sanborn, and Ramsey Lewis developed distinctive musical voices that have been appreciated and emulated around the world. While it true

that these musicians have benefitted financially, they have also demonstrated that an improvisatory instrumental music can still touch the lives of millions of people.

Although many critics and scholars criticize smooth jazz for its popularity, smooth jazz artists have *earned* their popularity. This dissertation has revealed some of the complexities of a music that remains caught between jazz and pop, and has suggested some ways of thinking that may enable scholars to shift its position within jazz historiography.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chapter 1: The Origins of Smooth Jazz

Origins

Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Gridley, Mark. *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. 9th ed. New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006.

Kernfeld, Barry. "Soul Jazz." *Grove Music Online*. <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed October 6, 2007).

Milkowski, Bill. "Fusion." In *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, edited by Bill Kirchner, 502-511. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Monson, Ingrid. *Freedom Sounds*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Nicholson, Stuart. "Fusions and Crossovers." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn, 217-254. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenthal, David. *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music, 1955-1965*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Shipton, Alyn. *A New History of Jazz*. 2nd ed. London: Continuum, 2007.

Underwood, Lee. "The Crusaders: Knights Without Jazz." *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976.

Recordings

Morgan, Lee. *The Sidewinder*. Blue Note BN 84157. LP. 1963.

Silver, Horace. *Serenade to a Soul Sister*. Blue Note BLP 4277. CD. 2004.

Chapter 2: Chronological Case Studies in Smooth Jazz (1960s)

Ramsey Lewis

Lewis, Ramsey. Personal website. <http://www.ramseylewis.com/main> (accessed January 1, 2008).

Sidran, Ben. *Talking Jazz*. San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1992.

Stern, Chip. "The Crusaders Lose the Groove." *The Village Voice*, July 30, 1980.

Recordings

Lewis, Ramsey. *Ramsey Lewis's Finest Hour*. Verve 314 543 763-2. CD. 2000.

_____. *Ramsey Lewis Trio: The In Crowd*. Chess CHD-9185. CD. 1990.

Jazz Crusaders

Blumenthal, Bob. "The Jazz Crusaders." Liner notes for *The Jazz Crusaders: The Pacific Jazz Quintet Studio Sessions*. Mosaic MD6-230. CD. 2005.

Buday, Don. "Caught in the Act: The Jazz Crusaders Madison Club, Baltimore, MD." *Down Beat*, December 2, 1965.

Nolan, Herb. "The Crusaders: The Sweet and Sour Smell of Success." *Down Beat*, May 4, 1978.

Pekar, Harvey. Review of *Powerhouse*, by The Crusaders. *Down Beat*, May 15, 1969.

Stern, Chip. "The Crusaders Lose the Groove." *The Village Voice*, July 30, 1980.

Townsend, Denny. "The Crusaders: A Retrospective." *Jazz Times*, August 1988.

Underwood, Lee. "The Crusaders: Knights Without Jazz." *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976.

Walker, Chris J. "Next Crusade: The Crusaders & Joe Sample's Sonic Renewal." *Jazz Times*, May 33, 2003.

Recordings

Jazz Crusaders. *The Jazz Crusaders, The Jazz Crusaders: The Pacific Jazz Quintet Studio Sessions*. Mosaic MD6-230. 2005.

Wes Montgomery

Feather, Leonard. "Wes Montgomery: America's In-Group Genius," *Melody Maker*, April 29, 1967.

Gosa, Jim. "Wes Montgomery." *Jazz*, November 1966.

Hennessey, Mike. "Crossover Crusader." *Jazz Journal International*, November 1979.

Jones, Max. "Thumbs Up! The Incredible Wes Montgomery Explains the Technique that Shook the Jazz World." *Melody Maker*, April 3, 1965.

Metheny, Pat. "Wes Montgomery 1965." Liner notes for *Wes Montgomery Live in '65*. Naxos. DVD. 2007.

Morgenstern, Dan. Record Review of *Down Here on the Ground* by Wes Montgomery. *Down Beat*, June 27, 1968.

Pekar, Harvey. Record Review of *California Dreaming* by Wes Montgomery. *Down Beat*, May 18, 1967.

Porter, Lewis. "Wes [John Leslie] Montgomery," *Grove Music Online*.
<http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed December 2, 2007).

Quinn, Bill. "The Thumb's Up or What the View is like from the Top." *Down Beat*, June 27, 1968.

Slawewski, Chris M. "Creed Taylor Incorporated: The All About Jazz Interview." *Allaboutjazz.com*.
<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=21966>
(accessed February 20, 2007).

Taylor, J.R. "Liner notes for Wes Montgomery's *Pretty Blue*." Milestone M-47030. LP. 1975.

Woodward, Josef. "The Softer Side of Genius." *Jazz Times*, July/August 2005.

Recordings

Montgomery, Wes. *Bumpin'*. Polygram 821 985-2. CD. 1984.

_____. *Goin' Out of My Head*. Verve V-8642. LP. 1966.

_____. *Down Here on the Ground*. Polygram 314 520 331-2. CD. 1995.

Chapter 3: Chronological Case Studies in Smooth Jazz (1970s)

Grover Washington, Jr.

Beaudin, John. "Bob James Interview." www.smoothjazznow.com/interviewbobjames .htm. (accessed November 9, 2007)
transcribed by Aaron West.

Bloom, Steve. "Grover Washington Jr. Class Act of Commercial Jazz." *Down Beat*, April 19, 1979.

Doerschuk, Bob. "Bob James: Some Like It Hot." *Down Beat*, January 1982.

Liska, A. James. "Grover Washington Jr.: The Midas Touch." *Down Beat*, April 1983.

Mandel, Howard. "Grover Washington, Jr. No Tricks to Mister Magic's Music." *Down Beat*, July 17, 1975.

Masker, Matt. "Grover Washington: Pop Goes the Jazz." *Rolling Stone*, September 26, 1974.

Morgenstern, Dan. "Record Review of *Inner City Blues* by Grover Washington, Jr." *Down Beat*, April 13, 1972.

Porter, Bob. "Grover Washington, Jr.: Evolution of an Artist." *Radio Free Jazz*, July 1979.

Sweeting, Adam. "The Price of Platinum." *Melody Maker*, July 4, 1981.

Williams, K. Leander. "Prove It: Grover Washington Jr. Flexes Straightahead Chops." *Down Beat*, September 1994.

Recordings

Washington, Grover. *Inner City Blues*. Verve BO011027-02. CD. 2008.

_____. *Mister Magic*. Motown MCDO9002MD. CD. 1989

_____. *Winelight*. 6E-305 Elektra. LP. 1980.

George Benson

Albertson, Chris. Record Review of *Goodies* by George Benson. *Down Beat*, June 26, 1969.

Charlesworth, Chris. "Breezin' with Benson." *Melody Maker*, February 5, 1977.

Feather, Leonard. "The Good Life." *Melody Maker*, February 11, 1978.

Fitzgerald, Helen. "The Lion's Den." *Melody Maker*, August 27, 1983.

Giddins, Gary. "Bensonality." In *Riding on a Blue Note*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Kalbacher, Gene. "George Benson: The Road to Fame." *JazzTimes*, March 1984.

Lake, Steve. "Benson's Flight of Fashion." *Melody Maker*, February 26, 1977.

Levy, Adam. "George Benson: Roots Revisited." *Guitar Player*, July 2000.

Lyons, Len. "Benson." *Musician Player and Listener*, September-October, 1978.

McDonough, John. "Record Review of *Breezin'* by George Benson." *Down Beat*, June 17, 1976.

Mieses, Stanley. "High-Flying Benson." *Melody Maker*, May 21, 1977.

Morgenstern, Dan. Record Review of *The Other Side of Abbey Road* by George Benson. *Down Beat*, June 11, 1970.

Sidran, Ben. *Talking Jazz: An Oral History*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1995.

Thompson, Art. "Soul Man: George Benson on Balancing the Demands of Being a Pop-Jazz-Vocalist-Guitar Icon." *Guitar Player*, April 2004.

Sievert, Jon. "George Benson: Platinum Jazz." *Guitar Player*, July 1979.

Yelin, Robert. "George Benson: Playing White Man's Music, But Playing it Black." *Guitar Player*, January 1974.

Recordings

Benson, George. *Body Talk*. CTI 6033 CTI Records. LP. 1973.

_____. *Breezin'*. BS 2919 Warner Bros. LP. 1976.

_____. *Standing Together*. GRP Records. CD. 1998.

_____. *Weekend in L.A.* 2WB 3139 Warner Bros. LP. 1978.

Chapter 4: Chronological Case Studies in Smooth Jazz (1980s & 1990s)

David Sanborn

Berg, Chuck. "David Sanborn's Alto Spectrum." *Down Beat*, January 29, 1976.

Cioe, Crispin. "Pop-Jazz Instrumentalists." *Musician, Player and Listener*, March 1981.

Cook, Richard. "David Sanborn: Pushing to the Limit." *Wire*, September 1988.

Gabel, Lars. Record Review of *Hideaway* by David Sanborn. *Down Beat*, July 1980.

Gilbert, Mark. Record Review of *A Change of Heart* by David Sanborn. *Jazz Journal International*, March 1987.

_____. Record Review of *Backstreet* by David Sanborn. *Jazz Journal International*, May 1984.

Gilmore, Mikal. Record Review of *David Sanborn*. *Down Beat*, February 10, 1977.

Glasser, Brian. "Crossing the Line." *Jazzwise*, May 1999.

Gridley, Mark C. *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. 9th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006.

Jeske, Lee. "The Genuine Article." *Jazziz*, July 1999.

- Mandel, Howard. "Sanborn Swings Back." *Down Beat*, February 1993.
- Micallef, Ken. "David Sanborn: Evolution of the Sound." *Down Beat*, March 2007.
- Moon, Tom. "David Sanborn's New Direction." *JazzTimes*, October, 1991.
- Nicholson, Stuart. "The Sound." *Jazzwise*, July 2003.
- Sutherland, Sam. "Crossing the R&B Bridge to Melodic Jazz: David Sanborn." *Billboard*, May 2, 1981.
- Tomkins, Les. "After the Concert with the Alto Stylist Dave Sanborn." *Crescendo International*, April 1978.
- Tolleson, Robin. "David Sanborn Interview: The Voice of Emotion." *Down Beat*, March 1983.

Recordings

- Sanborn, David. *Hideaway*. 3379-2 Warner Bros. CD. 1980.
- _____. *Straight to the Heart*. 1-25150 Warner Bros. LP. 1984.
- _____. *Taking Off*. BS 2873 Warner Bros. LP. 1975.

Spyro Gyra and Fourplay

- Aikin, Jim. "Tom Schuman and Jeremy Wall: Synthesizers and Smokebombs with Spyro Gyra." *Keyboard*, August 1981.
- Bloom, Steve. "Second Generation of Fusion." *Down Beat*, August 9, 1979.
- Erdmann, Thomas. "Jay Beckenstein." *Saxophone Journal*, March, 2002.
- _____. "Larry Carlton." *Jazz Player*, October/November 2001.
- Flans, Robyn. "Harvey Mason: Drummer, Percussionist, Solo Artist, Session King and now, Band Member?" *Modern Drummer*, March 1992.
- Gill, Chris. "Lee Ritenour." *Guitar Player*, May 1992.

- Grey, Hilarie. "Spyro Gyra: Perfect Quest." *JazzTimes*, May 1995.
- Hunt, John H. "Spyro Gyra." *Down Beat*, April, 19, 1979.
- Milkowski, Bill. "Last Band Standing." *Jazziz*, August 2001.
- Rothbart, Peter. "Spyro Gyra: Relaxin' at 30,000 Volts." *Down Beat*, October 1981.
- Russell, Rusty. "The Return of Mr. 335: Larry Carlton's Sojourn Through Sessions, Smooth Jazz, and Solo Work." *Guitar Player*, October 1999.
- Spyro Gyra. "General History of Spyro Gyra."
<http://www.spyrogyra.com/generalinfo.php?type=history> (accessed May 2, 2008).
- Widran, Jonathan. "The New Math." *Jazziz*, November 1998.
- _____. "Unsuspecting Legends." *Down Beat*, September 1997.

Recordings

- Spyro Gyra. *Spyro Gyra*. Amherst Records. LP. 1978.
- _____. *Morning Dance*. MCAD-37148. MCA. CD. 1979.
- _____. *Good To Go-Go*. Heads Up International. CD. 2007.
- Fourplay. *Fourplay*. 9 26656-2 Warner Bros. CD. 1991.
- _____. *X*. 82876 86399-2 Bluebird. CD. 2006.

Kenny G

- Bordowitz, Hank. "Songbird Syndrome: The Triple Platinum Dilemma of Kenny G." *Jazziz*, December/January 1988/1989.
- Harding, Cortney. "Kenny G Explores Latin 'Rhythm.'" <http://kennyg.com/news.php> (accessed May 2, 2008).
- Harris, Jerome. "Jazz on the Global Stage." In *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, edited by Ingrid Monson. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

- Olson, Catherine Applefeld. "Kenny G: The Billboard Interview." *Billboard*, September 14, 2002.
- Palmer, Richard. Record Review of *Classics in the Key of G* by Kenny G. *Jazz Journal International*, December 1999.
- Panken, Ted. "G WHIZ: Kenny G Is Still the Smooth Jazz King." <http://music.barnesandnoble.com/features/interview.asp?NID=598266&z=y> (accessed May 1, 2008).
- Ratliff, Ben. "Jazz Can Take Itself Too Seriously." Arts and Leisure Desk. *New York Times*. July 16, 2000.
- Roberts, Michael. "The Kenny G Experiment." *Jazziz*, May 2001.
- Snider, Eric. "Stiff follow-up LP has him looking like a one-hit wonder." *St. Petersburg Times*. October 30, 1988.
- Stein, Stephanie. "Kenny G: Songbird in Full Flight." *Down Beat*, January 1988.
- Walser, Robert. "Ten Apothegms and Four Instances." In *Analyzing Popular Music*, edited by Allan F. Moore, 36-37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Washburne, Christopher. "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?" In *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, edited by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno, 123-147. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Watrous, Peter. "His Critics Don't Get It. But Kenny G.'s Fans Do," Arts & Leisure Desk. *New York Times*. March 21, 1993.
- Zwerin, Michael. "Kenny G." In *The Parisian Jazz Chronicles: An Improvisational Memoir*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Recordings

- Kenny G. *Duotones*. ARCD 8427 Arista. CD. 1986.
- _____. *Classics in the Key of G*. Arista. CD. 1999.
- _____. *Miracles: The Holiday Album*. Arista 07822-18767-2. CD. 1994.

Chapter 5: Criteria and Concepts

Borsky, Arthur. "‘Ripplin’ Rhythm, Yes; But Why Apologize For Legitimate Jazz?" *Down Beat*, October 15, 1941.

Delaunay, Charles. "Delaunay in Trenches, Writes ‘Jazz Not American.’" *Down Beat*, May 1, 1940.

DeVeaux, Scott. "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography." *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 525-560.

Dexter, Dave. *Jazz Cavalcade: The Inside Story of Jazz*. New York: Criterion, 1946.

Gabbard, Krin. "The Jazz Canon and Its Consequences." In *Jazz Among the Discourses*, edited by Krin Gabbard, 1-27. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Gendron, Bernard. "‘Moldy Figs’ and Modernists: Jazz at War (1942-1946)," In *Jazz Among the Discourses*, edited by Krin Gabbard, 31-56. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Gennari, John. *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

_____. "Jazz Criticism: Its Development and Ideologies." *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (Fall 1991): 449-522.

Hammond, John and James Dugan. "Program Notes from *From Spirituals to Swing*. 1938" In *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, edited by Robert Walser, 101-105. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Keepnews, Orrin. "Jazz and America (1952)." In *The View From Within: Jazz Writings, 1948-1987*, 36-47. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Merriam, Alan P. "The Jazz Community." *Social Forces* 38 (March 1960): 211-222.

Morgenstern, Dan. "In Defense of ‘Commercialism,’" In *Living with Jazz*, edited by Sheldon Meyer, New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.

Nicholson, Stuart. *Jazz-Rock: A History*. New York: Schirmer, 1998.

Sargeant, Winthrop. *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946.

Tirro, Frank. *Jazz: A History*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993.

Ulanov, Barry. *A History of Jazz in America*. New York: Viking Press, 1952.

_____. "What's Hot and What's Not." *Metronome*, July 1949.

Walser, Robert. *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, edited by Robert Walser. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Wheaton, Jack. "Jazz as Folk, Commercial, and Fine Art." In *NAJE Research Papers*, edited by Dr. Charles T. Brown. Michigan: Saginaw Valley State University, 1989.

Williams, Martin. "How Long Has This Been Going On?" In *Jazz In Its Time*, 45-58. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

_____. *The Jazz Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

True Jazz vs. Commercial Music

Feather, Leonard. *Encyclopedia of Jazz*. New York: Horizon, 1960.

Goffin, Robert. "Hot Jazz." In *Negro Anthology Made by Nancy Cunard: 1931-1933*, edited by Nancy Cunard, 378-379. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.

Hampton, Lionel. "The Public is Square, But It Rocks!" *Metronome*, October, 1942.

Morgenstern, Dan. "In Defense of 'Commercialism.'" In *Living with Jazz*, edited by Sheldon Meyer, 671-674. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.

Panassié, Hughes. *The Real Jazz*. Translated by Anne Sorelle Williams. New York: Smith and Durrell, 1942.

Tristano, Lennie. "What's Right with the Beboppers." *Metronome*, July 1947.

Exclusion of Jazz

Jones, James. "Lee Ritenour." *Down Beat*, May 1980, 16.

Moon, Tom. "David Sanborn's New Direction." *Down Beat*, October 1991, 27.

Shipton, Alyn. *A New History of Jazz* 2nd ed. New York: Continuum, 2007.

Chapter 6: Sites of Music Production

Style and Genre

Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking In Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Byrnside, Ronald. "The Formation of a Musical Style: Early Rock." In *Contemporary Music and Music Cultures*, edited by Charles Hamm, Bruno Nettl and Ronald Brynside, 159-192. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Dahlhaus, Carl. *Foundations of Music History*. Translated by J.B. Robinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Fabbri, Franco. "Browsing Music Spaces: Categories and Musical Mind," paper delivered at IASPM (UK) conference 1999.
<http://www.tagg.org/others/ffabbri9907.html> (accessed August 1, 2008).

Frith, Simon. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Green, Lucy. *Music on Deaf Ears*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.

Hamm, Charles. "Genre, Performance, and Ideology in the Early Songs of Irving Berlin." In *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, edited by Richard Middleton, 159-192. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Jameson, Frederic. "Towards a New Awareness of Genre." *Science Fiction Studies* 28 (1982): 322-348.

Lewis, George H. "Who Do You Love?: The Dimensions of Musical Taste." In *Popular Music and Communication*, edited by James Lull, 134-151. London: Sage Publications, 1992.

Moore, Allan F. *Rock: The Primary Text*. 2nd ed. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

Pascall, Robert. "Genre and The Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony." *Music Analysis* 8 (1989): 233-246.

Stefani, Gino. "A Theory of Musical Competence." *Semiotica* 66 (1987): 7-22.

Walser, Robert. *Running with the Devil : Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993.

Bakhtin

Bakhtin, Mikhail. "The Problem of Speech Genres." In *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, edited by C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Translated by Vern W. McGee, 60-102. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

_____. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated by R.W. Rotsel. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973.

_____. "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences." In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, edited by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Translated by Vern W. McGee, 159-172. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Clark, Gregory. *Dialogue, Dialectic and Conversation: A Social Perspective on the Function of Writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.

Fabbri, Franco. "Browsing Music Spaces: Categories and Musical Mind." Paper delivered at IASPM (UK) conference, 1999, <http://www.tagg.org/others/ffabbri9907.html> (accessed August 1, 2008).

_____. "A Theory of Music Genres: Two Applications." In *Popular Music Perspectives*, edited by D. Horn and P. Tagg, 52-81. Göteborg and Exeter: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1981.

Hawkins, Stan. *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2002.

Huron, David. *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006.

Kallberg, Jeffrey. "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor." *19th-Century Music* 11 (Spring 1988):238-261.

Middleton, Richard. "Introduction." In *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, edited by Richard Middleton, 1-19. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Shields, Carolyn M. *Bakhtin Primer*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

Discussion of Smooth Jazz Recordings

Beaudin, John. "Allen Kepler Interview."

http://www.smoothjazznow.com/interview_allen_kepler.htm (accessed September 13, 2008).

_____. "Frank Cody Interview."

http://www.smoothjazznow.com/interview_frank_cody.htm August 2, 2004 (accessed September 11, 2008).

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Davis, Fred. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: The Free Press, 1979.

Kennett, Chris. "Is Anybody Listening?" in *Analyzing Popular Music*, edited by Allan F. Moore, 196-217. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Lewis, George H. "Who Do You Love?: The Dimensions of Musical Taste." In *Popular Music and Communication*, edited by James Lull, 134-151. London: Sage Publications, 1992.

Middleton, Richard. "Introduction." In *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, edited by Richard Middleton, 1-19. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Santesso, Aaron. *A Careful Longing: The Poetics and Problems of Nostalgia*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006.

Stocken, Frederick "Musical Post-Modernism Without Nostalgia." *Musical Times* 130 (September 1989): 536-537.

Recordings

Benson, George. *In Flight*. Rhino/Warner Bros. 1976.

Braun, Rick. *Kisses in the Rain*. Warner Bros. 2001.

Brown, Norman. *Celebration*. Warner Bros. 1999.

_____. *West Coast Coolin'*. Warner Bros. 2004.

Dulfer, Candy. *For the Love of You*. Encoded Music, 1997.

_____. *Right in My Soul*. Eagle Records. 2003.

James, Bob and David Sanborn. *Double Vision*. Warner Bros. 1985.

James, Boney. *Seduction*. Warner Bros. 1995.

Kenny G. *At Last . . . The Duets Album*. Arista 2004.

Sanborn, David. *Straight to the Heart*. CD. Warner Bros. 1984.

Live Performances

Brackett, David. *Interpreting Popular Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Butterfield Matthew W. "Music Analysis and the Social Life of Jazz Recordings."
Current Musicology 71-73 (Spring 2001-2002): 324-352.

Casino Lights '99, DVD, 38528-2 Warner Bros. 2000.

Jarrett, Michael. "Cutting Sides: Jazz Record Producers and Improvisation." In *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, edited by Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble, 139-349. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.

Rasula, Jed. "The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History." In *Jazz Among the Discourses*, edited by Krin Gabbard, 134-162. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Conclusion

Washburne, Christopher. "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz: A Case Study." In *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, edited by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno, 123-147. New York: Routledge, 2004.