

1. glamticipations

Rock Faces the 1970s

The pause of 1970 was a strange moment. It was marked by the absence of creative movement in rock's central core. . . . It was equally due to the dangerous political climate that shattered the youth movement's unity and thus drove rock away from its natural base. The breakup of bands, the deaths, the personal crises, the restless movement of performers, the record companies' insistent attempts to pull out solo acts from ensemble bands so that they could be turned into superstars, all these led to a reconsideration of what constituted the stable unit for rock.

—Philip Ennis (360)

Sociologist Philip Ennis describes the year 1970 as a “pause point” in the development of rock music, which had enjoyed a decade of steady ascendance up to that time (344). But the social, political, and cultural disappointments of 1969 and 1970, including the Rolling Stones' disastrous concert at Altamont; the shootings of student protesters at Kent State University; the dissolution of the Beatles as a group; the deaths of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones; the upheaval surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention and the resulting trial of the Chicago Seven all marked the point at which rock music could no longer serve as the soundtrack of the Vietnam era hippie counterculture. After 1970, rock would have to proceed on different economic, political, social, and cultural bases.

Ennis examines these issues in the American context, but the same disappointment and disaffection with the counterculture was spreading in the United Kingdom. Iain Chambers describes the “moral retrenchment” in British politics and society at the end of the relatively permissive 1960s: “the 1970s open, as they will close, seated on that eternal political work horse: ‘law and order’” (106–7). Chambers indicates how this changing climate was reflected in rock: “The full wave of the alternative politics of the

1960s had now crested. In its wake it had beached a music, now robbed of this central referent, that increasingly sounded ‘loudly within . . . and hollow at the core’ (Joseph Conrad)” (107). This was the backdrop against which glam rock developed as the first post-countercultural rock style to solidify as a genre practiced by a significant number of musicians.

For Ennis, the performance that epitomizes the pause point in rock was Phil Ochs’s appearance at New York’s Carnegie Hall in April 1970. Ochs had made a career as an unremittingly political folk protest singer and was considered one of the least compromising practitioners of that idiom. By his own testimony, Ochs was so disturbed by the political developments of the late 1960s that he “went crazy and didn’t care anymore” (qtd. in Wilson 44). At Carnegie Hall, he appeared on stage wearing a gold lamé suit modeled after one of Elvis Presley’s stage outfits and interspersed rock and roll and country songs from the 1950s with his usual repertoire of folk protest.

Ochs was roundly booed by much of his audience, presumably because they saw his embodiment of Elvis as a retreat from the political engagement of the 1960s back to the conformism of the 1950s against which the counterculture had rebelled. But I shall emphasize a different aspect of Ochs’s performance that may also have set him at odds with the counterculture: wearing the gold lamé suit was clearly a *theatrical* gesture in conflict with a counterculture that was ambivalent, at best, about theatricality, especially in musical performances. Although it has long been conventional to describe the political protests and Yippie manifestations of the 1960s as street theater, I argue that the counterculture’s deep investment in the idea of authenticity entailed a necessary antipathy to theatricality. This antipathy derived from three ideological commitments: the emphasis on spontaneity and living in the present moment, the desire for community, and the suspicion that spectacle served the interests of the social and political status quo.

In both the United States and the United Kingdom, the hippie counterculture placed a premium on personal authenticity, whether in everyday behavior, politics, or cultural expression. Stuart Hall, writing in 1969, interpreted Timothy Leary’s famous hippie slogan, which he renders as “Turn on, tune in and drop out,” as a call “to switch . . . to a more authentic mode of experience” (173).¹ At the

1. To Leary himself, the slogan meant that one should seek “an active, selective and graceful process of detachment from involuntary or unconscious commitments” (qtd. in David Farber 32).

level of everyday life, this meant that “what is real, is total self-expression and authenticity in the here and now. Life is a loosely-organised series of unplanned ‘happenings,’ with the stress on the immediacy, the spontaneous participation and the free-form expressiveness of the response” (Hall 183). Peter Braunstein also takes the happening as the central motif in his summary of the countercultural ethos:²

Youth in the 1960s tended a culture of immediacy that prized such elements as spontaneity, frivolity, and amorphousness, a zeitgeist epitomized by phenomena like “Happenings” that eluded categorization. . . . By the mid-1960s, Happenings became a catch-all term to describe any type of free-form, deliberately improvised event—be it festive, commercial, or . . . romantic. . . . Happenings, along with such—in suffixed events as Be-Ins and Love-Ins, testified to the lure of the unscripted in 1960s pop culture, an aspect of its presentist, immediatist orientation. (255–56)

Theodore Roszak, writing, like Hall, during the countercultural moment, extended the themes of spontaneity and self-expression to the political realm: he describes “the prevailing spirit of New Left politics” as the idea that “at whatever cost to the cause of the doctrine, one must care for the uniqueness and the dignity of each individual and yield to what his conscience demands in the existential moment” (61).³

In “Spectacles and Scenarios: A Dramaturgy of Radical Activity,” an essay of 1969, Lee Baxandall opposed spectacle, which is used by the reigning powers to maintain control, to scenarism, a radical strategy of subversion. Whereas subjection to “the spectacle genre . . . makes you narrow and stupid,” scenarism is a “a free intelligent activity” based on the construction and enactment of scenarios that are “projected and agreed beforehand in part, and in part created as opportunities and fortuities arise in performance” (259–60). The political theater associated with the counterculture, of which the San Francisco Mime Troupe was a prime exemplar, employed a dramaturgy such as Baxandall describes by emphasizing

2. Although the word *happening* referred at one point to a specific genre of experimental art world performance that originated in the 1950s (see Kirby), it became a buzzword of the 1960s: any significant event or state of being was described as a happening.

3. See Doug Rossinow for further discussion of the New Left’s emphasis on authenticity.

ing the spontaneous, unscripted, existential moment. Performing in parks and streets rather than theaters, the Mime Troupe created theatrical events where none were expected. The group's approach to performance was modeled on the improvisatory scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte* (also Baxandall's model for scenarios) that could be adapted on the spot to local conditions and audience response. This kind of theater was called guerilla theater not only because it modeled its revolutionary aspirations on those of Che Guevara but also because it was designed to occur unexpectedly and to disappear suddenly, especially if antagonistic police were to arrive on the scene (Doyle 74). In these ways, the guerilla street theater of the 1960s was theater that aspired to the condition of a happening or be-in. It was antitheatrical in the sense that it sought to undermine the ritual and institutional aspects of conventional theater as a planned event that takes place at a designated time, in a designated theater space, for an audience that is there expressly to see it. Guerilla theater was to be continuous with the life of the streets on which it occurred.

Just as the San Francisco Mime Troupe set out to create a political theater that would reflect the high value placed on spontaneity and improvisation within the counterculture, rock musicians, too, were expected to honor the countercultural ethos in their performances. In a 1974 review of a David Bowie concert that shows the persistence of this ethos after the 1960s, Chris Charlesworth makes clear how theatricality was perceived within rock culture. Charlesworth describes Bowie's show as "a piece of theatre" that "has as much to do with rock and roll as Bob Dylan has with Las Vegas." The reason for this characterization lies in the production's lack of spontaneity: the "show is a completely rehearsed and choreographed routine where every step and nuance has been perfected down to the last detail. There isn't one iota of spontaneity about the whole show." Charlesworth's overall assessment of Bowie's concert is not negative, but he is at pains to insist that what Bowie is doing is *theater*, not *rock*, a "show that belongs on Broadway" rather than before a rock audience (3).

As Paul E. Willis shows in his ethnographic study of British hippies, the hippie audience expected its cultural figures to be direct reflections of its values. As one of Willis's subjects put it, "The bands that are producing music today are coming out of this life-style, they are only projecting what we're thinking. They are coming from this life-style, they are growing from us, and they are com-

municating what we already know” (165). This meant, in part, that rock groups were expected to participate in be-ins and other manifestations of the counterculture and to play in parks and other unconventional venues, often for free. The idea that rock musicians were members of the community from which their audiences were drawn went hand in hand with “the prevailing aesthetic of amateurism . . . in the alternative music scene” of the 1960s that “asserted that everyone could be a star” (Lipsitz 216), the attitude celebrated by Sly and the Family Stone in their song “Everybody is a Star” (1970) and satirized by the Byrds in “So You Wanna Be a Rock and Roll Star” (1967).⁴ This understanding of rock music as an arena in which participatory democracy could be enacted enshrines a paradox: the countercultural audience idolized musical virtuosity (as exemplified by the famous London graffito, “Clapton is god”) but wanted simultaneously to believe that anyone had the potential to become a rock star. This attitude, however fanciful it may have been, was at the base of the counterculture’s antitheatricalism.

Whereas the counterculture wanted to perceive a seamless unity between rock performers and their audiences, the theater is, as Herbert Blau puts it, premised on an “original splitting”—the differentiation of performer from audience. As a collective enterprise, the theater seems to hold out the promise of community, but always ends up asserting the basic fact that “there is no theatre without *separation*” (Blau 10). Because the hippie counterculture sought to resist this separation of performer and audience in favor of an imagined social collective, rock musicians were constrained to perform in ways that stressed their identity with their audiences. The ideology of authenticity mandated that musicians appear on stage as themselves, not as any other persona or character,⁵ and discour-

4. The formation of rock musicians—and the idea that anyone can become a rock star—is a recurrent theme in the music. Two random examples: Chuck Berry’s “Johnny B. Goode” (1958), about a guitar-playing innocent who is tapped for stardom, and Norman Greenbaum’s amusing “The Tars of Inja” (1970, on his *Spirit in the Sky* album), in which he suggests that the best training for a future rock musician is to stay in his room getting stoned and practicing the guitar.

5. In a 1968 interview with Donovan, Jay Ruby suggests that for a psychedelic rock musician, any difference between onstage persona and offstage person is grounds for an existential crisis: “the conflict that the other entertainers have between their public image as an entertainer and their private image of themselves as a person is very frequently in conflict [*sic*]. That is, they have to

aged forms of overtly theatrical performance that would emphasize the differences between performers and spectators. Consequently, the counterculture evinced a general “disdain for rock theatrics . . . [that] came for some to represent inauthenticity” (Onkey 200).⁶

One of the ways that psychedelic rockers demonstrated continuity with their audiences was to present stage personae that were not dramatically different from the people one could see in the streets. Some performers, notably Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane—who performed in a flowing white tunic at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival—were clearly costumed; even Janis Joplin’s relatively informal stage outfits were actually designed.⁷ Nevertheless, the standard onstage attire for psychedelic rock musicians was basically a version of what their audiences might be expected to wear—the informal attire and casual dress wear of the time. Costuming conventions for rock musicians varied somewhat according to their musical commitments. Blues rockers, such as the members of Canned Heat and the Electric Flag, generally favored more proletarian-seeming clothing: tee shirts or work shirts with denim jeans and jackets. Male psychedelic rockers tended to wear casual dress attire onstage, ranging from turtleneck sweaters and blazers to the wide lapels and ties favored at the time, usually accompanied by dress slacks (not jeans).

Performing at Monterey, Andy Kulberg, bassist and flutist for the Blues Project, represented the less formal side of this spectrum by wearing a dark green suede jacket over a shiny, striped blue dress shirt with a dark blue turtleneck under that. Guitarist John Cipollina, of the Quicksilver Messenger Service, offered a more formal version of hippie elegance by wearing a brown fringed leather jacket, white shirt, and black tie with dark slacks. All of the styles visible onstage, including elements of cowboy fashion and the pen-

perform, they have to put on a face, a mask, when they appear in public. . . . you are Donovan whether you’re in Carnegie Hall or whether you’re sitting here in this room” (65–66).

6. One very notable exception to rock culture’s distrust of theatricality is Michael Rosenbaum’s 1968 essay in *Crawdaddy*, “Jimi Hendrix and Live Things.” Using an interview with Hendrix as the pretext for some reflections on rock performance, Rosenbaum champions “the theater aspect of live performance,” going on to say, “visual presentation . . . is as important to a live performance as is the music” (25).

7. Mablen Jones reproduces one of Linda Gravenites’ costume designs for Joplin (82).

chant for big furry hats exhibited by John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas and David Crosby of the Byrds, were also visible in the audience. Even Jimi Hendrix's flashy, Gypsy-inspired garb was only a slight exaggeration of then current Carnaby Street fashion.

Musicians' use of clothing to mark their identification with the hippie community notwithstanding, the counterculture evinced an antiocular bias. Baxandall's linking of the word *spectacle* to the evil machinations of the power structure is symptomatic of the counterculture's distrust of the visual, a distrust that stemmed from the belief that the dominant culture controlled the means of producing socially influential images (e.g., the mass media).⁸ The visual manifestations of the counterculture, such as rock concert posters and underground comix, had to be readily distinguishable from their Madison Avenue counterparts and had to be perceived as unassimilable to the mainstream. As Lawrence Grossberg suggests, this antiocularity was particularly acute with respect to rock performance:

The authenticity of rock has always been measured by its sound. . . . The eye has always been suspect in rock culture; after all, visually, rock often borders on the inauthentic. . . . It was here—in its visual presentation—that rock often most explicitly manifested its resistance to the dominant culture, but also its sympathies with the business of entertainment. (204)

Albert Goldman noted this tension in a 1968 article for *Vogue* in which he describes rock performances at the Fillmore East as “a nascent theater that is squalling already with vigor” (28). He thought that such a theater could ultimately achieve the “catharsis of the most basic instinctual appetites and fantasies” imagined by Artaud in his conception of the Theater of Cruelty (30). But Goldman also acknowledged that this theater could come into being only through collaborations between rock musicians and “the show-biz professionals whose skills they need in the theater” and

8. Baxandall uses the term *spectacle* in much the same way as Guy Debord does in the latter's famous work *The Society of the Spectacle* (originally published in French in 1967). One important difference between their respective understandings of the concept is that whereas Baxandall refers to spectacle as the genre of public display used by the power elite to serve their own interests, Debord characterizes spectacle in more systemic terms “as a social relation between people that is mediated by images” (12).

that such collaborations were unlikely to occur because of the musicians' ideological resistance to show business (31).

The counterculture's antiocularity clearly was not absolute: rock musicians did indeed use visual elements and effects in performance both to distinguish themselves from the dominant culture and to articulate a position toward it (Country Joe McDonald's displaying painted flowers on his face while wearing a parody of a military uniform comes to mind). Many psychedelic rock groups considered the visual aspects of performance so important that some (Pink Floyd and King Crimson among them) had members whose sole function in performance was to run the group's light show, and many psychedelic groups performed against elaborate projected images.⁹ Light shows and projections, however, did not contravene the antispectacle bias of the counterculture, for three reasons. For one thing, the lighting designers and operators presented themselves as members of the counterculture (not "show-biz" professionals from the outside) who specialized in creating atmospheric effects appropriate to psychedelic music and drugs. Some lighting companies, such as Headlights and the Joshua Light Show, became sufficiently well known to merit their own billing at rock concerts. Second, the lighting operators could improvise their effects and respond spontaneously to the musicians, thus manifesting the presentism valued in the counterculture. Finally, the lighting was subordinated to the music: Pink Floyd's light artist Joe Gannon's "slides were based on the underlying rhythm of the music" (Whiteley, *The Space* 28), allowing the aural to dominate the visual. Light shows thus supported the ethos of spontaneity and preserved the primary focus on musical sound. They served chiefly to create the proper mood and ambience around a group's performance and did not involve the musicians, who generally did not interact directly with the light shows, in the creation of spectacle.

The musicians' performance styles reflected the antitheatrical and antiocular tendencies of the counterculture. Psychedelic music, often fueled by LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs, was intended primarily as an internal, individualized experience for both musicians and audience. All references to psychedelic rock as theatrical and Dionysian aside, psychedelic rock musicians usually appeared

9. For a discussion of how Pink Floyd's lightshow worked with the group's music to produce psychedelic effects, see Whiteley, *The Space* (31–33).

quite introspective on stage.¹⁰ They generally focused their attention on each other or their instruments, especially while playing a solo, and did not play to the audience extensively. At the start of the Jefferson Airplane's morning performance at Woodstock, for instance, Slick greeted the crowd exuberantly. But when she began to sing, she closed her eyes and restricted her attention to the stage. (It was not unusual, in fact, for psychedelic rockers to turn their backs to their audiences during their performances.) Even performers whose styles involved intense physicality, such as Joplin and Joe Cocker, appeared to be directing their energies inward. In the performances documented in the film *Woodstock* (1970), both Cocker and Joplin seem to be completely wrapped up in the sound created by their backing musicians and more or less oblivious to the audience. With Joplin and Cocker, it often seemed that their physical performances resulted more from their own internal experiences of powerful emotion than a desire to communicate with their audiences.

Unlike their contemporaries in soul music and Motown, psychedelic rock musicians usually did not dance on stage. They sometimes moved or swayed rhythmically and they engaged in histrionic gestures with their instruments, but they did not dance (though members of their audiences often did). Willis points out that hippie culture generally deemphasized dance, arguing that "little of the hippy's general identity was expressed through autonomous bodily movement, so there was no demand that the music should parallel rhythmic bodily movement in a regular clear beat or encourage dancing. Beat was not a way of encouraging and reflecting physical action, but a way of demanding attention in the head" (156–57). It is also the case that the irregular, shifting rhythms of much psychedelic rock make it very difficult to dance to in any patterned way.

10. This and similar observations, and all of my generalizations about the performance behavior of psychedelic rock musicians, are based on close examination of documentary films, particularly Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* and D. A. Pennebaker's *Monterey Pop*; I have also drawn on my own experience as a concert-goer in the 1960s and 1970s. *Monterey Pop*, especially in its current incarnation as a multi-disc DVD set, is a particularly good source, in part because it includes performances by musicians in a variety of different genres—including psychedelic rock, blues rock, folk rock, pop, soul, and jazz—at the same moment in time, thus permitting comparisons of performance conventions across musical genres.

The primary impression psychedelic rockers apparently wished to create was of seriousness and concentration—in keeping with the counterculture’s valorization of virtuosity, they appeared to be focused on musicianship above all, which they implied to be more important than acknowledging their audiences or creating visually interesting effects. (Blues rockers, by contrast, tended to be more ebullient—on stage, the members of both Canned Heat and the Electric Flag moved and responded to one another in ways that emphasized their pleasure in the music and one another’s skills.) During the Jefferson Airplane’s performance of “Somebody to Love” at Monterey, for example, lead guitarist Jorma Kaukonen looked only at his own left hand on the fretboard while playing his solo. As the song neared its end, he turned his back to the audience to conduct the band and stayed in that position until the song was over. Several psychedelic rock groups typically played a portion of their set in total darkness, as if to suggest that a visual environment conducive to meditative concentration on the sound was desirable.¹¹ As a member of the Paupers, a Canadian group that played at Monterey, put it, “We are trying to create a total environment with sound alone. Sound is enough. We don’t use lights or any gimmicks” (qtd. in Lydon 26). The glaring, rule-proving exception to psychedelic rock’s typically low-key performance style, of course, was Jimi Hendrix, who engaged his audiences directly with performances that were flamboyant, excessive, and overtly sexual, though even he often performed with his eyes closed and seemed oblivious to the presence of his audience.¹² Although many in his audiences were thrilled by his performances, other observers were put off by his theatricality, and Hendrix himself ultimately disowned the spectacular side of his performances, saying, “I never wanted it to be so much of a visual thing” and expressing the desire that “people come to listen rather than to see us” (qtd. in Waksman 205).¹³

11. These groups included the Doors, the Jefferson Airplane, and Eric Burdon and the New Animals. Scenes of the latter two groups performing in the dark appear in *Monterey Pop*.

12. I offer a brief analysis of one of Hendrix’s performances in chapter 3.

13. See also Lauren Onkey’s discussion of Hendrix’s reception by audiences and critics in both the UK and the United States (197–200). Onkey points out that the showy performance techniques Hendrix perfected while playing on the American South’s “chitlin circuit” were perceived as wild and exotic (though not specifically African-American) in the UK and by some U.S. critics as overly theatrical and as reinforcing racial stereotypes.

It is in the context of the counterculture's antitheatricalism and rock's antiocular bias that Phil Ochs's appearance in a gold lamé Elvis suit must be understood. Ennis sees Ochs's performance in 1970 as "emblematic of this moment of dissolution" of the rock culture "and the courage of some parts of the rock life to fight it" (354). In Ennis's estimation, Ochs was trying to restore vitality to rock at its moment of crisis by returning to its roots and rediscovering Elvis's originally subversive energy. But Ochs's performance can also be seen as premonitory rather than retrospective. Ochs may have received a mixed response at Carnegie Hall not only because he, the most political of folk singers, played the kind of ostensibly apolitical rock and roll that the counterculture thought it had surpassed, but also because of the overt theatricality of his performance. Unlike psychedelic rockers or the protest folkie he had been, Ochs did not present himself as an extension of his audience: the Elvis suit—obviously a *costume*—clearly set him apart as a performer. The appeal of Ochs's gesture was to the eye: to understand what he was doing, one had to *see* him dressed as Elvis; his visual performance was not secondary to his aural one. His use of the suit also brought an element of role-playing into his performance: belying the ideology of authenticity, he did not appear simply as himself. Although Ochs may have thought that his decision to appear as Elvis expressed his own emotional upheaval at the time, it is likely that at least a portion of his audience read his performance as planned and calculated (he had to obtain the suit, after all) and therefore antithetical to the countercultural ethos of spontaneity and presentism. In all these respects, Ochs anticipated aspects of rock performance after the counterculture; his performance at Carnegie Hall foreshadowed the emphasis on characterization, self-consciousness, and spectacle in the rock of the 1970s, particularly in glam.

Ochs was not the first American artist whose performances anticipated glam; there had already been intimations of the new dispensation in 1968 and 1969. I will devote the remainder of this chapter to discussing two American rock groups whose performances implied a move beyond the counterculture, Sha Na Na and Alice Cooper. (Whereas Alice Cooper is usually included among the ranks of American glam or glitter artists, Sha Na Na is not.) Each of these discussions centers on a contrast: I will contrast Sha Na Na's performance of 1950s music at Woodstock with John Lennon's performance of similar music at the Toronto Rock

Revival to show that while Lennon performed 1950s revivalism in countercultural rock terms, Sha Na Na—like Phil Ochs—looked ahead to something else. In my discussion of Alice Cooper, I will contrast the group’s portrayal of a madman in “The Ballad of Dwight Fry” with a pre-glam-era song by David Bowie also on the theme of madness. This contrast reveals that whereas Bowie’s treatment of the theme at that point was consistent with a countercultural perspective, Alice Cooper’s recorded performance exemplified some of the crucial characteristics of glam.

Although one might assume otherwise, Sha Na Na’s performance at Woodstock had much in common with John Lennon’s performance with the Plastic Ono Band at the Toronto Rock Revival. Both events took place in 1969, less than a month apart—Sha Na Na performed at Woodstock on August 18, while Lennon appeared in Toronto on September 13. Both groups were quite new at the time of their respective performances. Sha Na Na was formed at Columbia University in 1969; their performance at Woodstock was only their seventh gig. For Lennon, who had not played live in three years, the Toronto concert was a first step in establishing a musical identity apart from the Beatles. The Plastic Ono Band, with whom Lennon had issued the single “Give Peace A Chance” two months earlier, had never performed in public. Both groups focused their repertoire on rock and roll songs from the 1950s: Sha Na Na were captured for posterity in the documentary film *Woodstock* performing Danny and the Juniors’ “At the Hop” (1958) while the Plastic Ono Band opened their set with Carl Perkins’s “Blue Suede Shoes” (1956).

Sha Na Na’s and John Lennon’s respective performances in 1969 reflected the surge of interest in the rock and roll of the 1950s in both the United States and the United Kingdom that lasted from about 1968 until at least 1974. (Glam rock, too, participated in this revival, and I shall have more to say about the relationship between glam and the 1950s in the next chapter.) During these years, veteran rock and roll musicians from the 1950s gained a youthful new audience, and a great many rock musicians performed and recorded their songs. This interest in the past was not a monolithic phenomenon: rock musicians performed rock and roll in different ways to convey different meanings.¹⁴ Here, I will discuss the ways Lennon’s

14. See Auslander, “Good Old Rock ’n’ Roll.”

performance of similar materials reflected the countercultural emphasis on authenticity and Sha Na Na's performance of 1950s music prefigured glam's celebration of artifice.

Lennon conveyed a strong sense that by playing rock and roll songs, he was digging down to the bedrock of his own artistic identity. At Toronto, Lennon introduced the Plastic Ono Band by saying, "We're only gonna play numbers we know, you know, 'cause we've never played together before." Lennon thus implied that rock and roll songs like "Blue Suede Shoes," "Money," and "Dizzy Miss Lizzie" are so basic to the vocabulary of rock that any randomly assembled group of rock musicians should be able to play them without rehearsal. (He also seemed to be evoking the amateurism prized by the counterculture by suggesting that his group of very accomplished musicians would be bashing out informal versions of well-known songs like any average garage band.)

On his album *Rock 'N' Roll*, a collection of cover versions of well-known songs from the 1950s recorded in 1973–74 and released in 1975, Lennon describes his relationship to rock and roll in explicitly autobiographical terms by associating the songs with his own youth and formation as a musician. Among the many credits listed on the album's back cover is the statement: "Relived by: JL." The front cover reproduces a photograph of Lennon in Hamburg, Germany, taken when he was twenty-two years old. Lennon is seen leaning against the side of an arched entryway, looking at passers-by through hooded eyes. He's dressed in the uniform associated with the British working-class subculture of Rockers: black leather jacket, black jeans, and leather boots. This photograph evokes the historical moment in the very early 1960s when many British groups, including the Beatles, found work as cover bands, churning out versions of rock and roll songs in the disreputable clubs on Hamburg's Reeperbahn.¹⁵

Jon Wiener, one of Lennon's biographers, describes the significance of the song selection on *Rock 'N' Roll* in detail:

The songs John decided to cover on *Rock 'n' Roll* were not just any old oldies. They represented his own personal musical history. John sang Buddy Holly's "Peggy Sue" on *Rock 'n' Roll*. The name "Beatles" had been inspired by Buddy Holly's Crickets and

15. It is interesting in this connection that Lennon counted the beat in German at one point during the Toronto concert, surely a holdover from those early days.

“That’ll Be the Day” was the first song John learned to play on the guitar in 1957. He had sung many other Buddy Holly songs: “It’s So Easy” as Johnny and the Moondogs in his first TV appearance in 1959, and “Words of Love,” which the Beatles recorded in 1964. (268–69)

Wiener continues in this vein, explaining the specific associations of songs by Gene Vincent, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Larry Williams in terms of Lennon’s history before and with the Beatles. As if to hammer home the importance of these biographical associations, Lennon himself provides a disc jockey–like spoken introduction to “Just Because,” the last song on the album. He waxes nostalgic, saying, “Ah, remember this?” and tries to recall how old he was when the song was first recorded.

By performing his relationship to rock and roll as a relationship of authenticity grounded in a deep personal connection to the music of the 1950s, Lennon sought to close the gap between his performance persona and his real identity by suggesting that they were one and the same, that his audience should perceive his performances of rock and roll songs as emanating from his life experience. In strong contrast, Sha Na Na’s performed relationship to the same music did not assert the same connection.¹⁶ To the contrary: whereas Lennon presented himself as having lived and absorbed the music of the 1950s in the 1950s, the performers in Sha Na Na constructed themselves as entities without biographies. Whereas Lennon framed his performances of rock and roll as artifacts of his own history, Sha Na Na performed rock and roll as history without claiming it as their own, personal history. We are meant to take the picture of the twenty-two-year-old Rocker on the cover of the *Rock ’N’ Roll* album as a point of reference for understanding the older Lennon’s relationship to rock and roll music. Sha Na Na advanced no such claim about the greaser image they presented. There was no implied biographical relationship, for instance, between the preening, spitting, obnoxious Bowzer, the popular persona of Sha Na Na’s bass singer, and Jon Bauman, the performer who portrayed him.¹⁷

Although Lennon’s Rocker image and the greaser image por-

16. As of this writing, Sha Na Na still exists as a functioning group (see <http://www.shanana.com>). I refer to them in the past here because I am focusing on their appearance at Woodstock.

17. In fact, Bauman (who joined the group after their appearance at Woodstock) and Bowzer were originally presented as different people. In the liner

trayed by Sha Na Na are sartorially similar, there are important differences between their respective performances of these subcultural icons. By presenting himself as a Rocker, Lennon aligned himself with a specific, historically class-based social experience of which rock and roll had been a part. As Stanley Cohen has shown, to be a Rocker in early 1960s Britain was to adopt a particular social identity. Whereas the Mods, another working-class youth subculture of the same period that I discuss further in chapter 2, were considered exciting and newsworthy, “the rockers were left out of the race: they were unfashionable and unglamorous just because they appeared to be more class bound” than the seemingly more upwardly mobile Mods (156). Insofar as Cohen suggests that the early British pop groups also represented upward mobility through “success stories of being discovered and making it” (152), Lennon’s assertion of his Rocker past was an act of symbolic downward mobility, as if he were undoing the Beatles’ phenomenal rise to assert solidarity with his former working-class self.

Sha Na Na also enacted personae based on subcultural identities with overtones of class and, in their case, race and ethnicity, but in a spirit very different from Lennon’s. Although Sha Na Na played the music of such African-American rhythm and blues artists as the Coasters and there was an African-American performer (Denny Greene) in the group’s original lineup, their performances revolved primarily around two stylistic reference points: the rock and roll purveyed by white southerners such as Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis, and East Coast doo-wop as practiced by working-class Italian-American singers. Although several members of Sha Na Na typically wore gold lamé suits associated with Elvis onstage (the same outfit to which Ochs resorted), their visual image otherwise did not correspond to those of the earlier performers they emulated. The other main costume Sha Na Na used was an outfit of black leather jacket, jeans, and T-shirt comparable to British Rocker attire but associated in the United States primarily with the greaser.¹⁸ (Sha Na Na emphasized that association by referring to the “grease” they used to maintain 1950s-style hairdos, which they

notes to *Sha Na Na* (1971), the group’s second album, Jon Bauman is credited as playing piano and Bowzer is credited with production assistance. Somewhat later, Bauman would be identified only as Bowzer: a trading card featuring Bauman’s image that accompanied the 1974 album *Hot Sox* is signed “Bowzer.”

18. Examples cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggest that in the UK, *rocker* and *greaser* can be used interchangeably to designate the same

combed continuously during their performances.) Neither the greaser outfit nor the gold lamé suit has any specific relationship to the doo-wop that makes up the largest part of Sha Na Na's repertoire since doo-wop singers, both black and white, generally wore evening wear when performing.

Unlike Lennon's Rocker image, Sha Na Na's greaser look referred neither to the performance practices associated with the music they performed nor to the typical appearance of its audiences but to a stereotypical "Italian-Americanity."¹⁹ Members of the group whose own names suggested a variety of ethnic heritages, including Irish and Jewish, adopted such Italianate stage-names as Tony Santini, Gino, and Ronzoni.²⁰ Unlike Lennon, Sha Na Na never suggested that they chose these images because they corresponded to their own social or cultural identities. If Lennon stressed the continuity between his performance persona and his real identity, Sha Na Na knowingly drove a wedge between those

working-class subculture. In the United States, however, the term *greaser* most often has specific ethnic, as well as class, implications. It seems to have originated around the middle of the nineteenth century in California, where it was used as a highly derogatory slang epithet to describe a person of Mexican or Spanish heritage. On the east coast of the United States, the term was applied to Italian and Puerto Rican immigrants. By the mid-1960s in California, the term lost some of its ethnic specificity when it was applied to motorcycle enthusiasts: in subcultural terms, greasers (bikers) were distinguished from surfers. A few years later, during the rock-and-roll revival period under consideration here, the term *greaser* was used in the United States to evoke an image that combined the biker reference with Italian-American identity: Henry Winkler's character on the *Happy Days* television program, Arthur (The Fonz) Fonzairelli, exemplifies this image. This is the version of the greaser image taken up by Sha Na Na, a version that evokes an ethnic stereotype in more benign terms than its exclusively derogatory application to Mexican-Americans on the West Coast. See Heather Altz for a very complete account of the etymology and usage of *greaser* and related terms in both the United States and the UK.

19. I refer here to Roland Barthes's famous 1964 essay "The Rhetoric of the Image" in which he describes a French advertisement for Italian food products as evoking "Italianness," an identity "based on a familiarity with certain tourist stereotypes" rather than direct cultural experience (17).

20. Continuing this tradition of stage names and personae, Screamin' Scott Simon, Sha Na Na's longtime stand-in for Jerry Lee Lewis, also performs in Los Angeles as Eddie "Hong Kong" Tailor with a blues trio called Eddie "Hong Kong" Tailor and the Prom Kings. This latter group is a synthesis of two important backward-looking musical simulations of the 1970s: Sha Na Na meets the Blues Brothers. See <http://www.eddiehongkongtailor.com>.

two signifieds. In a 1972 interview, group member Rich Joffe defined Sha Na Na's performance style by saying, "We try to create a reality on stage but also to indicate that we're not in it really. It's definitely a theatrical thing" (qtd. in Steve Turner, "Moving History"). Fundamentally, the difference between Lennon's performance of rock and roll and Sha Na Na's is the difference between *inhabiting an identity* and *playing a role*. (It should be clear that I am not speaking ontologically here—I do not mean that Lennon really did inhabit an identity while the members of Sha Na Na merely played roles. I refer, rather, to two different modes of performing identity, neither of which is necessarily any more objectively "real" than the other but that make different truth claims.) While Lennon's performance was thus aligned with the hippie counterculture's valorization of authenticity, Sha Na Na's challenged that value by foregrounding the kind of theatricality the counterculture rejected.

Except for the presence of Yoko Ono, who busied herself with performance art interventions during an otherwise straightforward musical event, the first half of the Plastic Ono Band's performance, captured in D. A. Pennebaker's documentary *Sweet Toronto* (1988), was absolutely typical for a late-1960s rock band with countercultural affiliations. Long haired and fully bearded, Lennon wore the white suit he favored at the time. Eric Clapton dressed in denim jacket and pants; his jeans had a large appliquéd patch at the crotch of the sort favored in hippie fashion.²¹ The musicians looked at each other only when necessary; Clapton, in particular, darted furtive glances at Lennon and the audience, preferring to close his eyes in concentration when playing. Since Lennon functioned as master of ceremonies, he talked directly to the audience and exhibited a little bit more showmanship than Clapton. While playing "Blue Suede Shoes," Lennon pulled his guitar up toward him and bobbed his head on the beat, but barely moved otherwise. In a telling moment at the start of "Money," Lennon suddenly "Charlestoned" his legs for a brief moment, perhaps in emulation of Chuck Berry, then immediately became more introspective, tilting his head

21. Dick Scheuring elucidates the ideology of patched jeans in the 1960s: "brightly patterned cloth remnants had to be found to decoratively patch the various holes in the trousers. Holes had to be there, as a beacon of resistance to the addictive extravagance of capitalism. The idea was to make a brand-new and fashionable pair of jeans look as if one had already been wearing them for five years without a break" (229–30).

down toward his guitar with his eyes closed, moving his head in rhythm. In an apparent act of self-censorship, Lennon reined in his rock-and-roll enthusiasm in favor of presenting the serious, musicianly image favored by psychedelic rockers.

The Plastic Ono Band came on at the end of a daylong bill that also featured such veteran 1950s rock and rollers as Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard (all of whom are also included in Pennebaker's film). Although the Plastic Ono Band's repertoire included the same kinds of songs performed earlier in the day by their elders, their performance style could not have been more contrasting. Bo Diddley danced flirtatiously with his female backup singer, while his bass player played his instrument behind his head; Jerry Lee Lewis played piano with his booted foot; Chuck Berry played a guitar solo while holding his instrument down between his legs and only a few inches off the floor; and Little Richard appeared in a mirrored vest and an enormous bouffant pompadour. Despite the raucous rhythms and lyrics of the rock-and-roll songs they played, the Plastic Ono Band's performance eschewed showmanship in favor of the kind of restrained, pensive performance style favored by psychedelic rockers.

Whereas the members of the Plastic Ono Band barely moved when they played, Sha Na Na not only danced on stage at Woodstock but made dance the main focus of their performance of "At the Hop." At the start of this performance, three gold lamé-clad figures ran out on stage to a drum roll and stood with heads bowed like circus performers about to attempt a stunt. When the song began, one of the gold-suited men retired to a microphone at the back of the stage while the other two remained front and center to engage in intense, high-energy dancing. It is important that these two men *did not sing* on this occasion; they performed solely as dancers, while the others doing the singing stood to either side and behind them. The dance they performed was not at all the spontaneous, freeform style of dancing associated with psychedelic rock audiences—it was, rather, a highly choreographed set of symmetrical, unison steps. Some of the steps were adapted from well-known social dances of the 1950s and early 1960s, including the pony, the frug, and the twist. The movements of the backup singers were also clearly choreographed as they alternately leaned their mike stands forward and back.

Sha Na Na did not use an instrumental break in the song as an opportunity to show off their playing ability, as did Eric Clapton

with the Plastic Ono Band and most of the acts at Woodstock. Instead, the break also featured dance, not only by the gold-clad performers but by the lead singer and guitarist as well—each exploded into exaggerated dance steps. The guitarist did not play his instrument, but held it in front of him and used it as a prop or dancing partner. At the end of the performance, the entire band ran offstage together, pumping their arms in the manner of a sports team.

Through their presentation of rock-and-roll songs, the Plastic Ono Band performed their allegiance to the counterculture just as surely as Sha Na Na issued a challenge to the counterculture through their presentation of doo-wop. The Plastic Ono Band dressed in a way that was coherent with countercultural fashion and created continuity with their audience: Clapton's patched jeans and Lennon's white suit typified different aspects of countercultural fashion. Although the music they performed provided ample opportunities for showmanship, especially in the context of a rock-and-roll revival concert, the Plastic Ono Band offered the kind of visually and physically restrained performance favored by psychedelic rockers, emphasizing seriousness and authentic musicianship over spectacle. Sha Na Na's performance, by contrast, was clearly costumed and choreographed; the group's appearance distinguished them from the spectators and marked them as performers. They did not present their performance as spontaneous and self-expressive, but as a tightly scripted, theatrical event.

The Plastic Ono Band's performance in Toronto suggested historical continuity between countercultural rock and the rock and rollers with whom they shared the bill. Lennon and the band (including Clapton) implicitly positioned themselves as heirs apparent to rock and roll, as rock musicians who remembered the past, acknowledged their debt to it, and were able to carry the tradition into the present. In a way, Yoko Ono's wailing, avant-garde, very un-rock-and-roll-like piece "Don't Worry Kyoko" (performed in the second half of the concert) was the band's strongest statement of historical continuity, for the instrumental accompaniment to Ono's unconventional keening and ululating vocal was based on the opening chord sequence from the Everly Brothers' "Wake Up Little Susie" (1957). This gesture suggested that even Ono's highly experimental approach to music making was ultimately grounded in and continuous with the rock-and-roll tradition.

Although it would be reasonable to suppose that Sha Na Na's

appearance at Woodstock also represented historical continuity by reminding the audience there of rock's precedents, their performance has been interpreted, correctly I think, not as a sign of continuity between past and present—between rock and roll and rock—but as an anticipation of historical discontinuity between countercultural rock and what came after it. Geoffrey Stokes sees Sha Na Na's appearance at Woodstock and their subsequent popularity as marking the beginning of the end for the rock counterculture of the 1960s:

Their success was real, but . . . nonmusical. Theirs was, deliberately, a music of nonsignificance, a break from the moral and political freight that rock was bearing. Though it took nearly a decade for them to translate their live popularity to the real stardom that came when they began a syndicated TV show, they planted the seeds of rock's rejection at the site of its greatest triumph. (433)

Stokes deftly marks the historical irony of Sha Na Na's presence at Woodstock, but it is important to recognize that his comment is itself a product of the ideology of countercultural rock. As Grossberg observes, rock ideology "draws an absolute distinction between rock and mere 'entertainment'" (201); clearly, Stokes positions Sha Na Na on the wrong side of that divide. By suggesting that Sha Na Na found their true medium in television, Stokes implies that they never really belonged in rock culture.²² (It is presumably this perception of Sha Na Na that has kept the group out of most histories of rock and rock reference books.)

French historian of rock Alain Dister also sees Sha Na Na's appearance at Woodstock as a harbinger of crucial changes in popular music culture, though he presents the moment in more positive terms by describing its relationship to subsequent developments:

The tone [of post-countercultural rock] was established at Woodstock with the unexpected appearance of Sha Na Na. Exhausted, rock returned to its origins while making fun of itself. At first parodic, this attitude became more serious with the Flamin' Groovies, who . . . established the connection between the popular music of the 1960s and the minimalism of the 1980s for legions

22. See Auslander, *Liveness* (87–88) for a brief discussion of the uneasy relationship between television and countercultural rock.

of punk groups. The decadent New York Dolls provoked surprise in 1973. An archetypal garage band, like the later Ramones, they emphasized look and attitude without worrying too much about musical precision—a remarkable theatricalization of rock that others, such as Alice Cooper and David Bowie, exploited with much greater care and technique. (111–12; my translation)

Dister sees Sha Na Na as anticipating two distinct, though related, trends in rock in the 1970s: glam and punk.²³ Sha Na Na's artificial personae foreshadowed the theatrical aspects of punk rock exemplified by Johnny Rotten's sneering actorly presence and the Ramones' overtly synthetic group identity, uniform of leather biker jackets, and adopted Italian-Americanistic surname. Sha Na Na's emphasis on show bizzy performance techniques that were anathema to the counterculture anticipated glam rock, as did their construction of an obviously artificial (and, incidentally, somewhat homoerotic) image. Joffe, the member of Sha Na Na whom I quoted earlier, noted this similarity in 1972, citing David Bowie and Alice Cooper as other performers who were "definitely back into the show biz thing" and arguing that Sha Na Na were "just another facet of the modern rock scene" (qtd. in Steve Turner, "Moving History"). I am not suggesting that Sha Na Na directly influenced glam or punk, only that they anticipated these developments in certain respects. But the fact that Sha Na Na were well known in New York and had performed to acclaim in London in 1971 makes it possible that the early avatars of glam and punk took notice.

In 1969, the same year that Sha Na Na was formed, Alice Cooper, another American group of similar premonitory importance that had existed in one form or another since the early 1960s, began to find its niche. Like Sha Na Na, Alice Cooper²⁴ was intentionally anomalous in relation to the counterculture, though they cultivated an image very different from that of the cheerfully atavistic doo-wop enthusiasts. Rather than a group of refugees from the 1950s,

23. There is also a connection to disco here: the distance from Sha Na Na to the Village People is not great!

24. Originally, Alice Cooper was the name of the whole group. Vincent Furnier, the group's lead singer, eventually assumed the name for himself and retained it as his stage name when the group disbanded. Furnier supposedly discovered the name during a Ouija board session in which he learned that he is the reincarnation of a seventeenth-century witch.

Alice Cooper presented themselves as a band of trashy transvestites. The cover of the group's first mature album, *Love it to Death* (1971), shows Vincent Furnier, the lead singer who eventually took the name of Alice Cooper himself, and the other members of the group dressed in a style that combined tight-fitting leather, satin, or gold lamé pants with lacy, see-through lingerie, fringe, floor-length wraps, and copious mascara. (The now familiar, highly stylized, streaky eye makeup that Furnier still uses when he performs as Alice came later.)

If Sha Na Na's theatricalism flew in the face of countercultural values, Alice Cooper's transvestism—which explicitly anticipated glam rock's central performance strategy—prodded the counterculture at an ideologically vulnerable spot. Although it is generally conceded that the feminist and gay liberation movements were inspired by the antiwar movement, the counterculture's approach to sex and sexuality was complex and self-contradictory. Parts of the movement made a point of flouting sexual convention as a way of antagonizing the dominant culture and conceptualizing a new sexual politics (Beth Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)" 255–57). But the sexual politics of the hippie counterculture were basically quite conservative: "The attitude to women in the culture was far from progressive. They had a place which was certainly different from, and usually inferior to, men. . . . Generally, the hippies distrusted the women's movement, and contrasted its ideals with their notion of the *natural* female and her organic role" (Willis 128). Countercultural representations of women and sex often spilled over into misogyny, as Beth Bailey shows in her analysis of the underground comix of the 1960s ("Sex as a Weapon"). Even Roszak, otherwise a very sympathetic observer of the youth counterculture, was dismayed by what he saw as "elements of pornographic grotesquery" in the underground press (74). The relationship of women to the hippie brand of "liberation" was therefore frequently ambivalent.

Although the counterculture professed openness about sexuality and some gay people were attracted to its centers (especially San Francisco), the counterculture's actual sexual practices were generally conventional.

Hippies, due to their long hair and more "feminine" appearance, may have been conflated with gay men in the popular imagination, but this conflation did not necessarily mean that the counterculture explicitly endorsed or participated in homosexual activity. On the contrary: despite the abstract rhetoric of love and

sexual freedom that dominated the movement, the privileging of masculinity through an emphasis on “groovy” heterosexual performance meant that the counterculture was often homophobic as well as sexist. (McRuer 217)

If this was true of the counterculture at large, it was particularly pronounced in the realm of psychedelic rock. During the 1960s, the number of prominent rock performers who were female or of color was observably very small, and no rock performer publicly claimed a homosexual identity.²⁵

As part of its sexual politics, the hippie counterculture advocated new definitions of masculinity and femininity and embraced androgyny, especially in fashion, but androgyny of a very specific sort. In 1969, Stuart Hall took note of the “standing joke that young men and women are steadily coming to look more and more like one another,” and imputes to the hippie counterculture “a greater fluidity between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” than in the dominant culture (181–82). Later in the same essay, in a chart that counterposes hippie values to mainstream ones, Hall proposes that the male/female dichotomy had been conflated into one term: youth (195). He thus suggests that the fluidity of hippie androgyny flowed in the direction of eliminating masculine and feminine in favor of a new third term thought to transcend the dichotomy. That third term, however, was to be enacted sartorially, not sexually. As George Mosse observes, the hippies’ “clothes and appearance tended to blur [gender] distinctions, and yet they were not meant to question a basic heterosexuality” (263).

Although Alice Cooper’s image bridged the gap between conven-

25. The “whiteness” of rock is one of the things that distinguish it from its precursor, rock and roll, a majority of whose performers were African-American. White rock and rollers like Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley were often said to have imitated black vocal and performance styles. The fact that a few very successful and popular psychedelic rock musicians, such as Carlos Santana, Sly Stone, and Jimi Hendrix, were not white should not be allowed to obscure the more salient fact that people of color were actively discouraged from seeking high visibility as rock musicians—see my discussion of the Chambers Brothers in *Liveness* (67) for a case in point. In chapter 6 of the present study, I discuss some of the issues surrounding the participation of women in rock. On a purely statistical basis, some number of psychedelic rock musicians must have been homosexual, yet none ever declared a gay identity publicly. Whiteley speculates that Janis Joplin never publicized her bisexuality because “the risk was too high” even within a counterculture that “outwardly embraced a freedom of sexuality” (*Women and Popular Music* 67–68).

tional notions of masculinity and femininity, hippie gender fluidity was not at all what the group's transvestism was about. The group's look constituted a discordant collision between masculine and feminine gender codes, not a quest for a third, transcendent gender identity. When asked in 1969 about Alice Cooper's sexual image, Furnier's response both echoed and challenged the counterculture. His claim that "biologically, everyone is male and female" could easily have been offered as an explication of the hippie unisex look. But Furnier went on to link this idea to the sexuality that had no comfortable place in the counterculture: "Why is everybody so up tight about sex? About faggots, queers, things like that. That's the way they *are*" (qtd. in Quigley). The next year, speaking in a more political vein, Furnier aligned himself with the identity movements that evolved, in part, out of frustration with the counterculture: "One of the things I'd like to do would be to play for Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation since so many people are trying to liberate themselves from the roles our society has imposed on them" (qtd. in Cagle 122). Furnier was also known to respond affirmatively to hecklers who would yell out "Queer!" during his performances (Senelick 445). This suggests that part of Alice Cooper's project was to question the basic heterosexuality taken for granted by the hippies even as they pursued unconventional gender roles.

It is critically important to consider the implication of Alice Cooper's undertaking this project specifically in the cultural context of rock music. There were arenas within the counterculture in which homosexuality was acknowledged and transvestism was performed before approving audiences—the San Francisco troupe the Cockettes, who performed LSD-infused drag fantasies between 1970 and 1972, was a major example. It is significant, however, that Laurence Senelick, chronicling theatrical cross-dressing in *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*, places the Cockettes in his chapter on alternative cabaret, not the chapter on rock music. The audience for theater or cabaret, even as subcultural a cabaret as the Cockettes, was simply not the same as the audience for rock music (which is not to say there was no overlap at all). Whereas the Cockettes' audience clearly was comfortable with the troupe's polymorphous sexuality and drag antics, the audience for a hypothetical concert of psychedelic rock across the street at the same time would not have been. And vice versa. As Senelick points out, "no distinct gay male contingent could be discerned at rock con-

certs. Gay youths . . . tended not to congregate conspicuously where the performers aggressively announced their heterosexual preference and the hysteria generated by the crowd was likely to be conspicuously boy-girl” (447).

Cooper was not the first rocker or rock and roller to perform a queer persona, of course. Perhaps because it has always been predicated on the spectacular display of male bodies, effeminacy and transvestism have always been present in rock performance, tendencies that first became highly visible, perhaps, with Esquerita and Little Richard in the mid-1950s. In 1973, *Creem* magazine, an American rock publication that championed Alice Cooper and many of the British glam groups, ran an article entitled “Androgyny in Rock: A Short Introduction,” which both outlined the genealogy of androgynous rock performance and recognized that homosexuality and transvestism, while always present, were generally suppressed in rock culture in favor of displays of heterosexual machismo. As a consequence of rock’s unwillingness to deal directly with anything other than representations of heterosexuality, cross-dressing, drag, and effeminacy functioned as markers of iconoclasm within rock culture and were usually confined to isolated gestures by mainstream figures—as when the Rolling Stones famously posed in drag for a publicity photo in 1966—or associated with such eccentrics as the Mothers of Invention, who wore dresses on the cover of their album *We’re Only In It for the Money* (1967), and Captain Beefheart, the members of whose Magic Band wore dresses and lipstick on stage as early as 1968. Alice Cooper was probably the first rock band of the 1960s to build their entire image around transvestism, intentionally confronting the rock audience with a visual practice—and intimations of a sexuality—that preyed on its insecurities.

Alice Cooper also questioned some of the counterculture’s most deeply held values. Whereas psychedelic rock was inner-directed and pacific, the image and music of Alice Cooper was an openly aggressive antithesis to the countercultural ethic of “peace/love.”²⁶ Both Alice Cooper and Sha Na Na included moments in their respective performances that apparently expressed violent disdain for the counterculture. Sha Na Na were frequently introduced at concerts by an announcer declaiming: “Greased and ready to kick ass—Sha Na Na!” as if to emphasize the violence implicit in the

26. This shorthand formulation of the hippie ideology appears in David Bowie’s song “Wild Eyed Boy from Freecloud” on *Space Oddity* (1972).

greaser image. Similarly, the group often taunted their audiences with such lines as “We gots just one thing to say to you fuckin’ hippies and that is that rock ’n’ roll is here to stay!” (*Sha Na Na*). This staged antagonism between the greasers on stage and the presumed “hippies” in the audience mimed real subcultural conflicts among such groups. The hippies in the audience knew, however, that they were not really going to get their asses kicked, in large part because *Sha Na Na*’s theatrical performance of the greaser provided no reason to suppose that the people onstage really belonged to that subculture.

Alice Cooper enacted their aggression against the counterculture in harsher terms:

As the band performed, Cooper [Vincent Furnier] pranced about the stage sporting greasy shoulder-length hair, his face accented by macabre black makeup that darted from his eyes and mouth. At times, Cooper donned a pink ballerina dress, topped off with a black leather jacket.²⁷ . . . Cooper would prowl the stage, contort his body, and spit newspaper directly onto incensed hippie onlookers. (Cagle 108)²⁸

Although Alice Cooper’s aggression might have seemed more genuine to the audience than *Sha Na Na*’s, it was no less theatrical. As early as 1969, Furnier referred to Alice Cooper’s stage show as “a theatrical piece” (qtd. in Quigley), as the group’s use of costume and makeup clearly suggested. Furnier also attempted to establish a distance between his onstage persona and offstage life. As he later told an interviewer, he saw himself as an actor playing a role:

It would’ve been a lie to have said I’m really Alice all the time, that I live in a big black house, and have boa constrictors everywhere. I thought it was much more interesting that there were two of us. Alice had a life of his own that existed only on stage, and I totally let him have the run of the stage. But then my other life was my own, and it had a lot more aspects to it than Alice’s did. I did other things. I could play golf, I could act, I could write, I could be a husband. (Qtd. in Russell Hall 15)

27. It is worth noting, if only in passing, that this outfit was taken up much later by Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders.

28. For a chapter-length discussion of Alice Cooper’s theatrical tactics, see Cagle (117–27).

As Cagle observes, rock journalists were typically confused by Furnier's double identity, which they could not square with the dominant concept of rock authenticity: "most reporters had never witnessed this kind of rock and roll duality: a performer who both did and did not take responsibility for his actions on stage" (122).

In place of psychedelic rock's emphasis on love, sex, and pastoral bliss, Alice Cooper's music dealt in sonic and verbal images of violence, death, and madness. These elements were not foreign to rock culture, to be sure: "Drinks, drugs, ecstatic loss of self in illusion of every kind (especially drink and madness) . . . as a summary of sixties rock, Dionysus could not be bettered" (Padel 186). It is also true that Alice Cooper was associated in the late 1960s with a rock scene in Los Angeles (before the group moved to Detroit) that was thought to represent the darker side of the psychedelic moment (as opposed to the true hippies in San Francisco). Other groups on this scene included the Doors and the ironically named Love, who were reputed to have murdered their own roadies.²⁹ But Alice Cooper was different from these other groups in one crucial respect. The Dionysian mystique of the Doors and Love was underwritten by a version of the ideology of authenticity: the mystique depended on the idea that their madness was *real*—that one could see it and hear it in Jim Morrison's alcoholic ravings when on stage with the Doors and the violent rumors swirling around Love, whose lead singer, Arthur Lee, was later arrested and served prison time on gun charges. Unlike Morrison and Lee, Furnier always represented himself as an actor portraying a frenzied persona—Alice Cooper—who, in turn, portrayed a number of violent and mad characters in various songs. He did not present himself as someone spilling his own guts while in thrall to Dionysus as Morrison, in particular, so explicitly did.

The distance between Furnier and Alice Cooper is maintained even on the group's recordings. "Ballad of Dwight Fry" on *Love It to Death* provides an example. The song, whose lyric is in the first person, traces the character's descent into madness and incarceration in a mental hospital. It is probably based on Furnier's experi-

29. This is only one side of sixties rock in LA, the other side being the folk rock of groups like the Byrds and Buffalo Springfield that were much more in harmony with the counterculture. For a useful overview of the rock scene in LA, see Barney Hoskyns, *Waiting for the Sun*.

ence while being treated in an addiction rehabilitation facility. The reference to Dwight Frye (whose name is misspelled in the title) works against hearing the song purely as a recounting of personal experience, however. Frye was an actor who played secondary roles of madmen in a number of classic Hollywood horror films of the 1930s, most notably *Dracula* (1931), in which he played Renfield, the real-estate agent driven mad by vampiric blood lust after he is bitten by the count. The title thus makes it clear that the song is the ballad of someone who habitually *plays* a madman, not necessarily someone who is mad himself. The song's instrumental arrangement and style evoke the atmosphere of gothic melodrama that pervades the films in which Frye appeared. Furnier screams, "Let me out of here"; an electric guitar replicates a wolf's howl; the drummer imitates the sound of a ticking clock to indicate both the protagonist's status as a time bomb about to go insane (there is also an explosion sound effect when he does) and his whiling away the hours while incarcerated; an exaggeratedly childish female voice asks, "When's daddy coming home?"

It is instructive to contrast "Ballad of Dwight Fry" with another song also released in 1971 that conveys the first-person reflections of a mad protagonist, David Bowie's "All the Madmen," from his album *The Man Who Sold the World*, made when Bowie still exhibited some allegiance to the counterculture and before he perfected his glam rock persona and style.³⁰ Bowie's song, too, may be based in personal experience: not Bowie's own, but that of his half-brother, Terry Jones, who had been an important influence on the young Bowie but was permanently institutionalized in the 1960s (Cann 12). Whereas the Alice Cooper song focuses entirely on the protagonist's internal experience of going mad with no indication that his mental condition is caused by anything outside of himself, Bowie's song blames the protagonist's condition on the actions of a mysterious "they": "Day after day / They take some brain away."³¹

30. "All the Madmen" also had been released as a single in the United States in 1970.

31. Cagle's description of Alice Cooper's staging of this song is interesting in this context: "Toward the end of the number, a 'nurse' walked onto the stage and led a confused Cooper to the sidelines. Minutes later, he returned, this time wearing a straitjacket. As he darted from one side of the stage to another, he begged for the audience's mercy" (123). Cooper thus implicated the audience in his staged incarceration without implying the superiority of madness to sanity or criticizing society's treatment of the insane, as Bowie does in his song.

It becomes clear that for this singer, madness is a choice in a way that is not in the Cooper song: “I’d rather stay here / With all the madmen / than perish with the sadmen roaming free.” A text spoken in the middle of the song clarifies the basis for this choice: “Where can the horizon lie / When a nation hides / Its organic minds / In a cellar . . . dark and grim.” The suggestion here is that the madmen are wise but that their wisdom is not recognized by the society that keeps them incarcerated. The song’s consistent verse and chorus structure and the lyrics’ adherence to varied but regular rhyme schemes suggest the actual clarity and orderliness of the protagonist’s mind. Here, Bowie seems to echo the ideas of the radical British psychotherapist R. D. Laing: “The madness we encounter in ‘patients’ is a gross travesty, a mockery, a grotesque caricature of what the natural healing of that estranged situation we call sanity might be. True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality” (qtd. in Nuttall 124). This view of madness as a social construct used by the mainstream to repress the “organic minds” in its midst is much more in keeping with the counterculture’s social perspective than is Cooper’s theatrical, sensationalistic, and apolitical depiction of madness, fear, and isolation in the histrionic style of a horror movie.

Although Sha Na Na and Alice Cooper were very different groups, they can be seen, in retrospect, as having participated in a common project of redefining rock in ways that challenged the counterculture at its very height in the late 1960s. In musical terms, both Sha Na Na and Alice Cooper stressed straightforward styles—1950s rock and roll and unadorned hard rock, respectively—over psychedelic rock’s emphasis on virtuoso instrumental improvisation. Alice Cooper deserves credit for anticipating glam’s use of transvestism in rock performance—and thus pointing up the counterculture’s actual conservatism in matters of sex and gender—but the group’s introduction of self-conscious theatricality into rock music and its performance in the late 1960s, a strategy they shared with Sha Na Na, may be even more important as a harbinger of glam rock spectacle in the 1970s.

In performance, both groups stressed visual presentation as much as—perhaps even more than—the music, an emphasis that defied the counterculture’s suspicion of the visual as a locus of inauthenticity. Both groups presented clearly staged spectacles and

opened a gap between the figures on stage and the “real” people performing them, foregrounding constructed performance personae that denied the spontaneity, sincerity, and authenticity expected of rockers by their hippie audiences. Rich Joffe, of Sha Na Na, defined the group’s desired effect by saying, “We know we’ve succeeded if people go around saying ‘Are they for real?’” (qtd. in Steve Turner, “Moving History”). Although Alice Cooper and the glam rockers of the 1970s could easily have said the same thing, psychedelic rockers wanted their audiences to believe, without question, that they were “for real.” Whereas Phil Ochs may have resorted to spectacular performance as an act of desperation that marked the end of the counterculture, Sha Na Na and Alice Cooper enthusiastically embraced theatricality and spectacle as the beginning of a new chapter in rock performance.