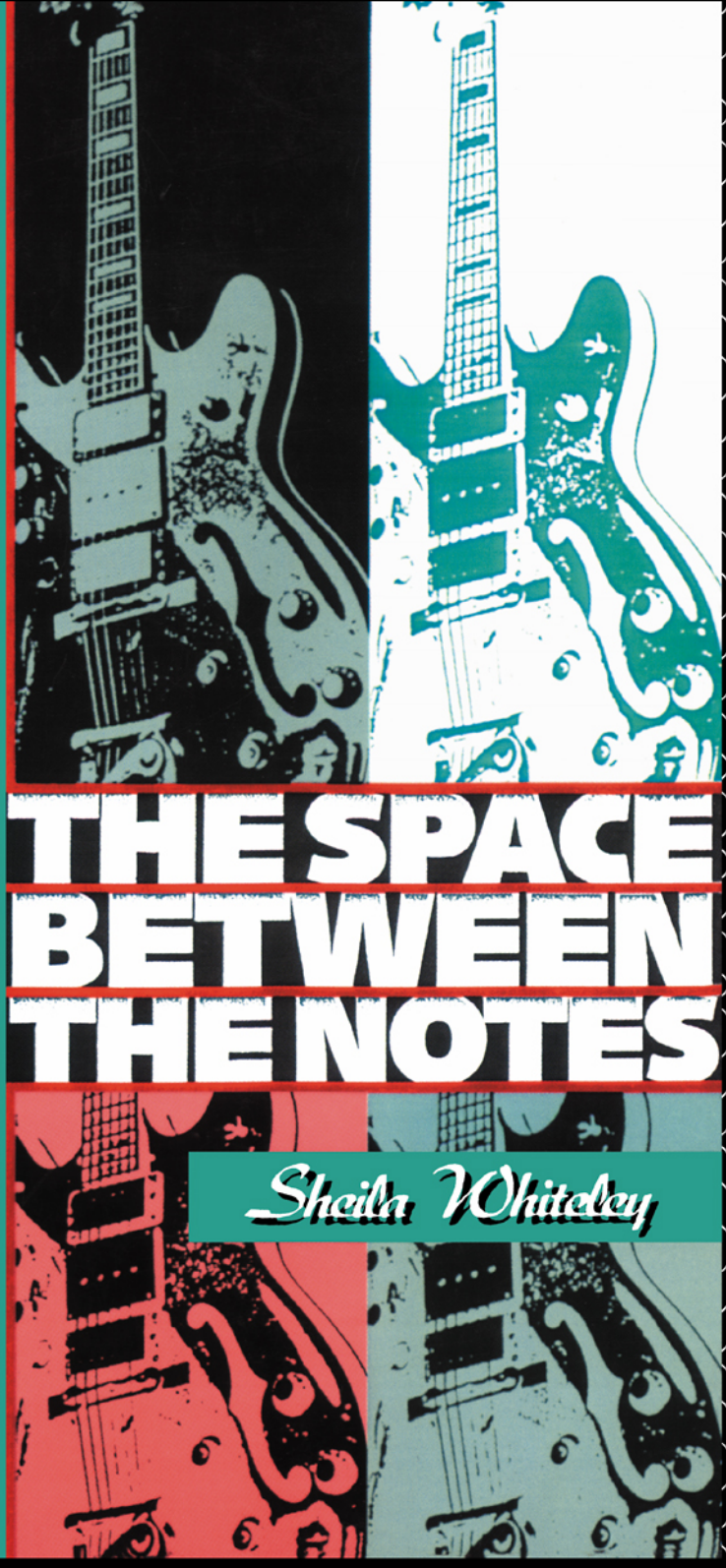

THE SPACE BETWEEN THE NOTES

Rock and the counter-culture

Sheila Whiteley

ROUTLEDGE

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The Space Between the Notes

The Space Between the Notes examines a series of relationships central to sixties counter-culture: psychedelic coding and rock music, the Rolling Stones and Charlie Manson, the Beatles and the 'Summer of Love', Jimi Hendrix and hallucinogenics, Pink Floyd and space rock. Sheila Whiteley combines musicology and socio-cultural analysis to illuminate this terrain, illustrating her argument with key recordings of the time: Cream's *SheWalks Like a Bearded Rainbow,* Hendrix's *Purple Haze,* Pink Floyd's *Astronomy Dominé* and Procul Harum's *A Whiter Shade of Pale,* among others.

The appropriation of progressive rock by young, urban dance bands in the 1990s make this study of sixties and seventies counter-culture a lively intervention. It will inform students of popular music and culture, and spark off recognition and interest from those who lived through the period, as well as for a new generation who draw inspiration from its iconography and sensibilities today.

This is the most sustained attempt yet to explore the complexities and paradoxes of psychedelic music and progressive rock. The strength of Sheila Whiteley's approach lies in her expertise in both musicological and cultural analysis…. Her concept of "psychedelic coding" is sure to prove of immense value to future researchers in the field.'

Dave Laing

Sheila Whiteley is a Senior Lecturer in popular music at Salford College of Technology, Manchester, and a part-time tutor for the Open University.

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Rock and the counter-culture

Sheila Whiteley

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To my daughters Lucinda, Bryony and Anni—and to
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Finally, I make grateful acknowledgement for permission to reprint the following song lyrics: to W/M William M.Roberts © Carlin Music Corp. for *Hey Joe* (Jimi Hendrix); to Westminster Music Ltd © Westminster Music Ltd of Suite 2.07, Plaza 535 Kings Road, London SWIO OSZ, international copyright secured, all rights reserved, for the following used by permission: *A Whiter Shade of Pale* (Gary Brooker/Keith Reid), *I CanHear the Grass Grow* (Roy Wood), *See Emily Play* (Syd Barrett), *We LoveYou* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Astronomy Dominé* (Syd Barrett), *Midnight Rambler* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Satisfaction* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Sing This All Together* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Citadel* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Gomper* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *In Another Land* (Bill Wyman), *2,000 Man* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *She's A Rainbow* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *2,000 LightYears From Home* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *On With the Show* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Street Fighting Man* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard), *Sympathy for the Devil* (Mick Jagger/Keith Richard); to Pink Floyd Music Publishers Limited © 1973 for *Speak to Me* (Mason), *Time* (Waters), *Money* (Waters), *Brain Damage* (Waters), *Breathe* (Waters/Gilmour/Wright), *The Great Gig in the Sky* (Wright), *Us and Them* (Waters/Wright,) *Eclipse* (Wright); to MCA Music Ltd © Northern Songs, all rights controlled and administered by MCA Music Ltd under licence from Northern Songs, for *Good Morning, Good Morning* (Lennon/McCartney), *All You Need is Love* (Lennon/McCartney), *With a Little Help From MyFriends* (Lennon/McCartney), *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* (Lennon/ McCartney), *Getting Better* (Lennon/McCartney), *Fixing a Hole* (Lennon/ McCartney), *She's Leaving Home* (Lennon/McCartney), *Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite* (Lennon/McCartney), *Within You Without You*

(Harrison), *When I'm Sixty-Four* (Lennon/McCartney), *Lovely Rita* (Lennon/ McCartney), *Tomorrow Never Knows* (Lennon/McCartney), *A Day in the Life* (Lennon/McCartney), *Strawberry Fields Forever* (Lennon/ McCartney), *Revolution* (Lennon/McCartney); to Donovan (Music) Ltd and Donovan Leitch for *You Just Gotta Know My Mind* (Leitch), *To Try for the Sun* (Leitch), *Sunshine Superman* (Leitch), *Mellow Yellow* (Leitch); to Warner Chappell Music Ltd for *IFeel Free* (Bruce/ Brown), *Dance the Night Away (Bruce/Brown), Strange Brew* (Clapton/Collins/Pappalardi).

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1
Introduction

> Rock's superiority over previous popular musical forms is simply the result of its existence in a period of expanded and heightened social, political and psychological awareness, a period which made possible and necessary a hip and relevant popular music.

Progressive rock and the counter-culture are often perceived as inseparable. Recognised as a social force, music was thought to say things of cultural and political significance, to have a message. Orientated towards a collective experience, rock appeared to provide the means whereby young people could explore the politics of consciousness, 'love, loneliness, depersonalisation, the search for the truth of the person and the attempt to set up an alternative life style'[2]. The question that arises is why there should have been this emphasis on a 'hip and relevant popular music'.

Was it, as Richard Neville wrote at the time, just symptomatic of an 'intense, spontaneous internationalism'?[3] 'From Berlin to Berkeley, from Zurich to Notting Hill, Movement members exchange a gut solidarity, sharing common aspirations, inspirations, strategy, style, mood and vocabulary. Long hair is their declaration of independence, pop music their esperanto and they puff pot in their peace pipe.'[4]

Roszak also draws attention to the international dimensions of the movement. Throughout the West (as well as in Japan and parts of Latin America), it is the young (qualified as perhaps only a minority of the university campus population) who find themselves cast as the only effective radical opposition within their societies.'[5]

Both Neville and Roszak, in common with most counter-cultural theorists, also discuss the divisions within the counter-cultural movement, the New Left, hippies and yippies. At the same time, Roszak points to the similarity of sensibility which united student and graduate activists and the drop-out hippies,

> the continuum of thought and experience among the young which links together the new left sociology of Mills, the Freudian Marxism of Herbert Marcuse, the Gestalt-therapy anarchism of Paul Goodman, the apocalyptic

> body mysticism of Norman Brown, the Zen-based psychotherapy of Alan Watts and finally Timothy Leary's impenetrably occult narcissism, wherein the world and its woes may shrink at last to the size of a mote in one's private psychedelic void.[6]

What is especially interesting is that contemporary analysts should draw attention both to the divisions within the movement and to the broad consistency in their antagonistic position towards the dominant culture. As Roszak points out, 'What makes the youthful disaffiliation of our time a cultural phenomenon rather than a political movement, is that it strikes beyond ideology to the level of consciousness, seeking to transform our deepest sense of the self, the environment.'[7]

It is, perhaps, this involvement with the self that has been particularly relevant to the progressive rock musician in that it shifted the emphasis away from the external constraints of the easily accessible, defined here as known styles associated with particular bands, towards a more personalised expression of musical exploration. With the recognition of musicians as significant both to and within the counter-culture, who could not only voice its concerns but also provoke reaction through their own musical and personal confrontation with the mainstream culture, there was both a support system and space to innovate. *Their Satanic Majesties Request* may have appeared to move in a somewhat unlikely direction for a hard core r&b band like the Rolling Stones, it may have been dubbed cynically a quick and overall badly thought through response to the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album, but it reflected, nevertheless, the general trend towards a changed state of musical consciousness. Musicians did not have to abandon a particular rock style, but instead could add to it, select elements that continued to express their own personal styles and incorporate techniques or spatial dimensions which resonated with the new vocabulary of psychedelic rock[8] that had come over from the West Coast of America.

Clearly this was not a new phenomenon; rock music is eclectic by nature. What was new, however, was the emphasis on *meaning* in music which was not simply tied to the lyrics, but spilled over into the sound itself. As Neville wrote at the time: 'All the relevant sounds seemed somehow associated with acid and universal love. The Beatles, Donovan, Cream, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, The Grateful Dead, The Doors, Country Joe and the Fish all celebrated the acid experience and revived our faith in each other.'[9]

This lumping together of so many diverse groups and the association of acid and universal love with sounds in the music suggests that there was a homology between musical and cultural characteristics. Progressive rock was acknowledged as the major communicative organ of the counter-culture. Its experimental nature mirrored concern for an alternative society. Stylistic complexity, the elements of surprise, contradiction and uncertainty suggested alternative meanings which supported the hippies' emphasis on timeless

mysticism. It appeared that the counter-culture and musical innovation were inseparable.

With progressive rock standing in a contradictory position to mainstream pop conventions, the question that arises is how it can be read as oppositional. How does progressive rock, from within its musical structures, articulate the socially mediated subjective experiences of the different groups within the counter-culture? Is it a simple contestation of existing musical frameworks, and how can a musical language express an alternative 'progressive' viewpoint? To what extent does this rely on personalised intuitional breaks, inflections and the breakdown of structure?

My initial analysis addresses the problem of the music itself—how it is arranged, instrumentation, style, and so on—but the question remains of how it provides social and cultural meanings. At one level it could be argued that music refers symbolically to such notions as physical space and movement. Musical shape and articulation are often accompanied by vocal and physical gestures. Pitch and timbre correlate with a sense of physical space and colour. Basic body rhythms (heartbeat, breathing) relate in turn to musical rhythms, while the tension/release patterning in melodic and rhythmic structures have associations with the pulse and breathing. Yet it is difficult to correlate these general connections with specific cultural contexts.

Progressive rock was located where particular sociological, cultural and musical developments crossed. It could therefore be argued that as the music was actually created in concrete cultural situations these orientated its received meaning in particular ways.[10] In reality, however, progressive rock was a particularly heterogeneous genre and while the variety of musical styles may have reflected the variety of radical movements and concerns within the counter-culture, the area of signification presents problems. In particular, the level of denotation seems lacking or, at best, unclear. Apart from some very clear references to the outside world (such as animal noises in the Beatles' *Good Morning*; clocks and alarms in Pink Floyd's *Dark Sideof the Moon*), there is no system of objective reference to concepts and perceptions. On the other hand, it is possible to discuss connotations, since music was recognised as a symbolic act of self-liberation and self-realisation in which reality and musical experience were fused: the sound-shape, together with the socio-cultural element superimposed upon it, consolidate to form a distinct form of communication. At this point the diversity of musical styles within the genre of progressive rock becomes significant in establishing particular codes of behaviour through common musical codes.

For example, the counter-culture was largely concerned with alternative modes of living which involved, to a great extent, the use of drugs as a means of exploring the imagination and self-expression. Focused by a reading of Joel Fort's *The Pleasure Seekers: The Drug Crisis, Youth andSociety,*[11] my analysis explores the way in which the different styles of progressive rock have common codes which convey a musical equivalent of hallucinogenic experience. These

include the manipulation of timbres (blurred, bright, overlapping), upward movement (and its comparison with psychedelic flight), harmonies (lurching, oscillating), rhythms (regular, irregular), relationships (foreground, background) and collages which provide a point of comparison with more conventionalised, i.e. *normal* treatment.

Yet it is recognised that such associations quickly become conventionalised. As Middleton and Muncie point out,

> psychedelic elements in musical style are typically interpreted as such by reference to a sub-culture of drug usage; in other words, they are defined in this way primarily because hippies said they should be. A whole group of connotations, arising from our knowledge of the drug culture, then settles on the music. But this culture has already been defined in this way partially because of the existence in it of this particular kind of music. The meaning of drug usage is affected by the meaning of the associated music… The system is perfectly structured internally…but has no necessary *purchase* on it from without.[12]

While my consideration of the music has been influenced to some extent by this awareness of intra-cultural interpretations, I have tried to establish the meaning of psychedelic elements through an examination of the musical codes involved and, more important, their interrelationship. This has also made possible an identification of whether or not a group has simply 'lifted' the more general psychedelic musical codes (e.g. blurred overlapping timbres, bright tinkly sounds) in an attempt to capitalise on the popularity of acid rock.

Although the initial analysis at first focuses on the music of Cream, Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd, who were considered by contemporary commentators to be influential progressive rock musicians and of interest to the counter-culture, it is apparent that the counter-culture was by no means their total audience. Similarly, while the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album was considered especially influential in setting the agenda for the counter-culture in Britain, and in particular in focusing attention on hallucinogenics, its general popularity points to the conclusion that even in the presence of a sharply delineated relationship between progressive rock and the counter-culture, musical styles are rarely the exclusive property of one specific group. This point was borne out in my analysis of 1967 chart singles which dealt with psychedelic experience, and Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon,* which topped the LP charts for three years from 1972 to 1974. Conversely, while the Rolling Stones' role as anti-establishment musicians reverberated with the counter-culture's stand against mainstream society, there is little to suggest that the group specifically identified with counter-cultural ideology. This is equally true of Hendrix, whose refusal to be associated with the Black Panther party is well documented.

So there is little to suggest that progressive rock was the exclusive property of the counter-culture. Rather, it seems that there were correspondences between

musical practices and social relationships and the way in which these were lived out at the level of cultural symbols. Progressive rock, like all music, relied on communication and positive identification. As such, it had an intrinsically collective character which suggested that it was capable of transmitting the affective identities, attitudes and behavioural patterns of the group(s) identifying with it.

Finally, while it is recognised that progressive rock (in common with other popular forms of music) is primarily an aural experience, that it is performed, stored and distributed in a non-written form and that musical notation is not, therefore, the only key to analysis, I have nevertheless found it helpful to use manuscript as a graphic way of leading the reader through selected areas of the text. In particular, my analysis of psychedelic coding in Jimi Hendrix relates musical notation to haliucinogenic experience and as such should be read in context. Clearly, it could not be assumed that the use of a particular chord sequence, for example, always carries with it the same connotations.

2
Cream, Hendrix and Pink Floyd

Commentaries on 'progressive rock' are generally framed in terms of *becoming*. 'Rock became progressive',[1] 'Underground music' became 'progressive music'.[2] The mid-sixties letters page of *Melody Maker* highlights the 'emergence' of rock in which *progress* is measured in terms of musical ideas and techniques: 'Hendrix: Progressive and beautiful in his ideas'; 'Clapton: Progressing with ideas and techniques'.[3] Musicians such as Cream, Pink Floyd, Hendrix and the Beatles are credited with liberating rock from pop[4] in terms of qualities of 'art' and 'genius'. Equally there is a focus on 'relevant sounds' which, in the summer of 1967, were tied to the psychedelic,[5] thus raising the question of whether rock, acid rock and progressive rock are interchangeable terms.

Middleton and Muncie's observation that 'progressive rock (which we can take roughly as the music of the counter-culture) is a particularly heterogenous genre'[6] also points to the problem of categorisation, of whether it is possible to arrive at a definition which can satisfactorily describe its range of musical styles. Definition is further problematised by the importance attributed to rock by the counter-culture itself: 'it was thought to say things of cultural and political significance, to have a message'.[7] This would suggest that there is a relationship between the musical form and its cultural use with the implication that the *meaning* of progressive rock cannot fully be understood without a consideration of extra-musical factors.

During the late sixties, three groups considered to be of particular significance in the development of British progressive rock were Cream, the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Pink Floyd, all formed in 1965–66. As they were just as influential in the development of psychedelic rock their music will also be analysed for psychedelic coding to determine the extent to which acid rock and progressive rock are comparable terms.

Cream was formed by Eric Clapton (guitar), Ginger Baker (drums) and Jack Bruce (bass and most of the vocals). Baker and Bruce were originally in the Graham Bond Organisation, a group whose virtuoso jazz and blues format was inherited by Cream when they recruited Eric Clapton from John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, a group famous for their accurate recreation of the sound and style of such contemporary Chicago blues players as Buddy Guy, Otis Rush and Magic Sam.[8] According to Clapton, Cream was originally planned as a blues trio

which 'aimed to extend the expressive potential and aesthetic quality of blues-based rock music',[9] through an emphasis on improvisational technique based on individual virtuosity.

Cream's pedigree was impeccable and any doubts about the three musicians' ability to play as a group were initially dispelled after their début appearance at the 1966 Windsor Festival and the release of their first album, *Fresh Cream*. The group's second UK single success, *I Feel Free,* entered the charts in January 1967, moving up to No. 12 in February. Written by Jack Bruce and Pete Brown, *I Feel Free*[10] draws heavily on the blues tradition in the basic falling shape of the vocal, the strong use of repetitive phrases and short motifs and the declamatory vocal style of the chorus. The song is based on two contrasting styles: the first gentle and floating around the beat, the second more didactic with a strong emphasis on the vocal and the walking bass line. A sense both of freedom and of continuity is achieved by the subtle interplay of the basic motifs established in the introduction.

Preceded by an electronically distanced guitar chord, the opening riff of *IFeel Free* immediately establishes a sensitive interplay between the three musicians. The 'bom bom bom ba bom bom' of the vocal riff is neatly dissected by clapping on the second and fourth beat before the vocal entry 'I feel free' on the third beat of the third bar with the hummed 'ah' addinga feeling of fluid movement which feeds the meaning of the title 'I Feel Free'.

The two verses, while based on the same harmonies as the opening riff— (E-E/D), feature a new rhythmic ostinato. The double-tracked vocal picks up on the original hummed melody line, following the inflection of the words with accents between beats as well as on them to continue the aural sensation of fluid movement generated in the opening riff. The effect is of rhythmic subtlety as each player expands on the small motifs. The use of the two-chord harmonic unit works towards a continuous sense of motion which is accentuated by the overlaying of the off-the-beat guitar riff against the rhythm of the vocal. Yet a feeling of continuity is created as the verses expand on the opening riff and the concept of freedom is opened up both musically and lyrically.

The harmonic structure beneath the verses is simple and concise. The six four-bar phrases are based on E-E/D and this constant repetition moves against any sensation of completion. The mood generated is one of a gently floating high,[11] which is complemented by the feeling of unfettered space suggested by the lyrics:

> You, you're all I want to know
> I feel free…

The chorus again makes use of the same harmonies, thus establishing both a sense of continuity and a common structural framework capable of infinite variation. This time, for example, the mood is far more positive, with the walking