IDEOLOGY, TRAJECTORY & STARDOM: ELVIS PRESLEY & THE BEATLES

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Abstract — Résumé

Many references to "stardom" and "the star" in popular music fail to recognise the variety of ways in which such a position may be realised. Moreover, the terms are frequently used to describe processes and performers who are evidently and substantially different in terms of their allegiance to the conventional routines and prevailing practices of the popular music industry. A key perspective in any such analysis must therefore be broadly ideological. By using Hollander's theory of "idiosyncrasy credits" to explain the career of the Beatles, and Melly's exposition of "revolt into style" to understand Elvis Presley's success, it becomes possible to comprehend the career trajectories of popular music's two biggest stars in a way which does incorporate the ideological, by concentrating specifically on their musical and professional activities. In the case of the Beatles, their trajectory developed from early conformity to later non-conformity; in Presley's case, from early non-conformity to eventual conformity. Furthermore, the central concepts of these arguments are then utilised in the construction of a typology of star careers, which is relevant across the complex terrain of popular music.

Introduction

The concept of the star is clearly a central one in any explorations of the themes and processes of popular music. Commentaries on the characteristics of performers, audiences and the entertainment industry have tended to utilise the term in a unified and unproblematic way, implying a consensual and consistent mode of recognition that allows some individuals to be identified as stars, and others not to be so identified.

Many references to performers in popular music seem to equate stardom merely with success:
Tommy Steele, Cliff Richard and Britain’s other original rock stars experienced no tension between their skills and their audience, between their music and their success...popularity was the measure of their success as entertainers (FRITH 1978: 164).

Other accounts endeavour to disentangle some of the possible components of such success. Tolleneer’s analysis points to

a small group of professionals...who draw the attention of the passive »consumers« and the mass media by their activities and thus acquire a star status...the star’s power of expression, his personality and his outer appearance...also play an important role (TOLLENEER 1986: 231-233).

Similarly, perspectives on the audiences for popular music comment routinely on the star-fan relationship, whether focusing on the positive psychological and emotional benefits fans can enjoy:

A whole set of identifications...for the most part (in the case of Presley and many other rock stars, though not all) produce in the listeners comfortable affirmations of their sense of themselves (BRADLEY 1992: 141)
or on the darker side of such a relationship:

The rock star is frequently the focus of often unhealthy adulation by fans...In the 1970s the era of the look-alike blossomed, and part of the attraction of attending rock concerts was to look as much as possible like one’s idol, for instance, David Bowie. Some fans even went to the lengths of undergoing plastic surgery to achieve this aim (WILLS & COOPER 1988: 107).

And while analyses of the popular music industry may present alternative ways of assessing the precise roles of the star — as a self-contained commodity, as a marketing device for encouraging the sale of other commodities, or as both — again, the components of the term itself seem not to be part of that discussion. This can be recognised in Buxton’s investigation of the inter-relationship between stars, rock music and consumerism:

from 1964 onward...rock groups too began to be distinguished on the basis of superficial stylistic features. No form of visual overkill was excluded to make the »product« interesting...rock stars, like commodities, move within a totally designed environment (BUXTON 1990: 436).

And it re-appears in Longhurst’s reference to:

wider themes concerning the ways in which stars function as trademarks which generate sales for the music business and the culture industries more widely (LONGHURST 1995: 185).

From all of these commentaries about stardom there seems to emerge an implicit assumption that the meaning of the term is straightforward and uncontroversial, requiring no further elaboration. But it is the absence of any more rigorous analytical pursuit of the concept in these (and many other) examples that diminishes their
reliability. In overlooking the fact that there may be a variety of star types within popular music, these contributions are not so much mis-using the term, but under-using it, inasmuch as they leave unexposed important debates about creativity and control within the music business, about career trajectories followed by performers, and about the links between entertainment and ideology.

Even much postmodernist analysis, which may initially appear to be critical of these traditions, can be seen ultimately to be doing little more than undermining previous attempts at definition or description. In disassembling the concept of the star, such analysis seeks to offer a less coherent, more fluid perspective, characterised by contingency and mobility:

The star is no longer an individual measured by their creativity, their authentic relation to their performance, or even the possibilities of an audience projecting its fantasies on to them. The star is a commodified and mobile sign, moving across the broad terrain of cultural tastes and entertainment (GROSSBERG 1988: 319).

Madonna, in particular, has attracted much discussion of this nature:

Madonna's stardom, from Material Girl onward, has continued by this same means of elaborate self-referral, both to herself as star and to the processes of stardom (SEIGWORTH 1993: 308).

But there is little attempt to re-assemble the concept in a way which admits the validity of any consistent meaning, or which explores the precise way in which these processes act to define and locate the performer.

What I seek to argue in this paper is that the concept of the star within popular music is neither a universally agreed category nor a decontextualised vagrant, and must be re-organised in a manner which permits a more subtle appreciation of the ways in which »the relationship between artist and audience is mediated and articulated« (LONGHURST 1995: 73). I will argue that the primary level at which this relationship exists is the ideological. To achieve this, I will draw from perspectives on the star contained in studies outside popular music, and apply their insights to arguably the most celebrated, and certainly the most successful, of the stars that popular music has yet produced — Elvis Presley and the Beatles. Within that framework, an analysis of the course of their careers will be utilised in the construction of a typology of stars, based around discrete categories, but allowing for movement between them.

**Stardom**

The star is ultimately dependent on technology for the achievement and maintenance of his or her status. As Alberoni has observed that »in public-star relationships, each individual member of the public knows the star« (ALBERONI 1972: 77), a mechanism must exist through which that knowledge can be attained. Over the course of the last hundred years or so, a continually evolving system of mass communications has provided that mechanism.
The star is a recent phenomenon. Music hall singers of the nineteenth century cannot be considered stars in the modern sense of the word. They were rather personalities whose celebrity was rooted in local traditions (BUXTON 1990: 435).

In an important sense, therefore, stars are stars both of the media, in that their stardom is conventionally referred to by invoking the precise media form or forms within which they are most active (television, film, records); and by the media, since these particular forms represent not only the activities in which they are perceived to excel, but, in addition, through which they are known to the public. Popular music, therefore, provides an especially potent location for the creation of stars, because of the regular forays its practitioners are obliged to make from record into other media, including television, radio, video and cinema.

Although the emergence of »pop« is often identified with Elvis Presley...it was Bing Crosby who was the first modern star to be created via the connections between radio, records and film. In many respects, Crosby became the archetypal pop star and had a direct impact on the development of the mass entertainment industry (NEGUS 1992: 24).

Since the impact of Crosby in the 1930s, only a handful of popular musicians have achieved the celebrity or success that he did; a list of those who have might include Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson, Madonna. By concentrating on two of those examples — Elvis Presley and the Beatles — I hope to illuminate the relevance of what seems to be an overlooked facet of studies of stardom within popular music. This is the performer’s adoption of, and identification with, a generally recognised ideological stance in relation to the conventional wisdoms and routine practices of the industry. This is not incidental to stardom, but a crucial factor in its determination.

In many ways the history of Elvis Presley can be read as a classic re-telling of the American Dream. After initially visiting the Sun Record Company studios in 1953 to record a song as a present for his mother, the nineteen years old truck driver was invited by Sam Phillips to record a song for commercial release. In August 1954, That’s All Right Mama was a success regionally, and was followed by other hit records in the southern U.S.A. In January 1956, shortly after Presley had agreed a managerial contract with former carnival promoter Colonel Tom Parker, Heartbreak Hotel was released on the RCA-Victor label and was a huge success, nationally and internationally, success which continued unabated into the next decade. In November 1956, he starred in Love Me Tender, for Twentieth Century Fox, the first of more than thirty movies he would make and which would elevate him, by the early 1960s, into the film industry’s biggest box-office attraction. In March 1958, he was conscripted into the U.S. army and during his two-year service his records continued to be released. In March 1960, after his discharge from the army, he withdrew from live performances, choosing instead to concentrate on making Hollywood musicals. In May 1967, he married, and in August 1969 returned to live performances with a season at the International Hotel in Las Vegas; still refusing to perform outside the U.S.A., he became a regular cabaret
entertainer. He was divorced in October 1973, and toured the country extensively until his death, from an accidental drugs overdose, in August 1977.

The story of the Beatles began in July 1957 when John Lennon met Paul McCartney in Woolton, Liverpool, and shortly afterwards invited him to join his group (then known as the Quarrymen). In 1958 McCartney introduced Lennon to George Harrison; these three remained the nucleus of the group amidst numerous variations in personnel, changes of name (Johnny And The Moondogs, the Silver Beetles, the Beatles), and a performing history largely confined to Liverpool (with occasional spells in Hamburg) for the next five years. At the beginning of 1962 they agreed to place their management in the hands of local businessman Brian Epstein. In August of that year, having acquired a provisional recording contract with E.M.I.’s Parlophone label, and having replaced drummer Pete Best with Ringo Starr, Love Me Do became a minor British hit. In February 1963, Please Please Me became the first of their records to top the charts in Britain, and in January 1964 I Want To Hold Your Hand was their first record to top the charts in the U.S.A.; for the rest of the decade they dominated popular music around the world. They toured extensively until August 1966 when they elected to abandon live performances in favour of studio work. Epstein died in August 1967, and in 1970, after increasing involvement in individual projects, the Beatles effectively disbanded. John Lennon was shot dead in December 1980 in New York City. The remaining three Beatles still, intermittently, pursue their separate careers.

Elvis Presley: Revolt Into Style

Each successive pop music explosion has come roaring out of the clubs in which it was born like an angry young bull. Watching from the other side of the gate, the current Establishment has proclaimed it dangerous, subversive, a menace to youth, and demanded something be done about it. Something is. Commercial exploitation advances towards it holding out a bucketful of recording contracts, television appearances and world-wide fame. Then, once the muzzle is safely buried in the golden mash, the cunning butcher nips deftly along the flank and castrates the animal. After this painless operation, the Establishment realizes it is safe to advance into the field and gingerly pats the now docile creature which can then be safely relied on to grow fatter and stupider until the moment when fashion decides it is ready for the slaughterhouse. (MELLY 1970: 39).

Melly’s extended metaphor is taken from his analysis of the pop arts (including not only music, but film, television, art, radio, theatre) in postwar Britain, and rests upon a simple central assertion. He suggests that each new musical trend or development becomes attractive and successful precisely because of its perceived radical nature. By ostentatiously opposing the established patterns at any one time, its visibility is increased through consequent media inspection; so too are the opportunities it offers to audiences and performers to adopt a stance which invites attention — the stance of rebel.
Clearly, the audience context in which this takes place is a limited one; the worlds of work, schooling, family remain — initially, at least — unlikely to be directly affected. Even for those audience members who do comprehensively pursue the new enticements of such a role via artefacts such as dress, appearance or vocabulary, it is likely that, for many, such activities remain peripheral and occasional. For the creators of the music, the performers themselves — particularly the leading performers — the relevant contexts of their rebellion are much more diffuse, incorporating income, occupation and personal identity. And because of the centrality of pop music for the young, performers and audiences are often perceived to be engaged in a joint venture in which the performers are characterised not merely as purveyors of entertainment-related products, but as spokespersons for national, even global, cohorts of young audiences.

Rock’n’roll, crude and emotionally limited as it was, established an important principle: the right of the underprivileged young to express themselves with a freedom and directness which until then had been considered the prerogative of their elders and betters...Presley and Haley seemed to speak for them, and out loud (MELLY 1970: 38).

While this perception of certain artists may run counter to the ideology of the popular music industry, for whom its leading performers do primarily remain purveyors of entertainment-related products, it is a perception widely encouraged by the industry, exactly and ironically because of its commercial advantage.

Any pop movement, at least during its initial and most profitable stages, is attractive precisely because it is believed to propose a revolt against the adult mores and, if it is to be milked, it’s necessary to preserve at least the illusion of that revolt (MELLY 1970: 39).

But as the postwar histories of all popular cultural forms have repeatedly demonstrated, this initial, radical phase, which provokes hostility from, and is defined as a threat to, the conventional order, is always a temporary phenomenon. Several factors coalesce to ensure this. Amongst the audience, there will be the emergence of new generations who reject the music favoured by their elder brothers and sisters. Amongst the performers, increased success may lead to dwindling enthusiasm as the rebellious nature of the music and its performance becomes mundane and predictable. And within the popular music industry (like any other industry), the quest to achieve and consolidate a long-term financial success — as opposed to a short-term profit, however handsome — demands routinisation and control:

The entrepreneurs want money, and the best way to make the most money out of pop is to preserve at least the semblance of order (MELLY 1970: 39).

The combination of these forces creates a pattern that can be recognised across the whole range of contemporary artistic and cultural endeavour. What begins as a revolt against dominant themes will soon, in the process of becoming successful, lose much of its impetus and energy, combining with the very edifices it appeared to challenge to become the dominant style itself...which will, in turn, face fresh revolts. Popular music in this respect is distinguished not by its uniqueness but by the clarity with which it illustrates this process.
This analysis has much in common with the Marxist notion of incorporation, which refers to the conscious channeling of radical political or economic activities into existing institutions so as to minimise the threat they might pose to the established order were they to remain outside that order and thus outside its control.

Several observations have to be made, however, about the suitability of this sort of theorising for accounts of popular music. First, within pre-defined parameters of organisational control, the popular music industry does not fear new, potentially disruptive themes, but welcomes them. Blake’s claim that >a single musical style simply cannot encompass the many ways in which music is used within a single culture« (BLAKE 1992: 118) emphasises the importance of the industry’s constant attempts to anticipate and meet the demands of not just domestic but global audiences who are characterised by ever-increasing cultural diversity. This responsibility devolves to the artist and repertoire department of every recording label.

The artist and repertoire department is the repository of knowledge about past, present and future musical trends and stylistic developments. Staff in the A and R department constantly monitor changes among established artists, the new acts that are being acquired by other companies, and attempt to follow developments amongst various audiences and subcultures (NEGUS 1992: 47).

Secondly, it is not at all certain that complete incorporation of what might be seen as oppositional themes into the established order is so straightforward, even if vigorously pursued. Elsewhere, this general point has been discussed, for example, in the context of the emerging working class in nineteenth century Britain:

direct indoctrination into the dominant ideology and the somewhat less direct absorption of dominant values via cultural hegemony were never as successful as some have held (ABERCROMBIE et al. 1980: 111).

And it is a point which is directly applicable to the contemporary entertainment industry, particularly as so much of popular music has, historically and currently, significant associations with social class (and ethnicity).

Thirdly, the process of incorporation assumes an integration of new styles into the dominant ideology, which remains itself relatively unchanged. The processes through which this is achieved may involve a variety of strategies — compulsion, persuasion, appeals to self-interest, indoctrination — but ultimately the result is the retention of the existing system or systems. Melly’s analysis, however, posits a different outcome in which the success of the new theme or style leads to the toppling of the existing dominant style and its replacement...until it, too, is inevitably challenged, undermined and replaced. What emerged as a revolt becomes, temporarily, at least, the style.

Support for the contention that Elvis Presley’s career can be comprehended using this approach is evident in the strategy for commercial success outlined by the founder and head of the Sun Record Company, Sam Phillips, long before he had met Presley or heard his singing:
»If I had a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars!« (HOPKINS 1972: 47).

This in itself was an extraordinary proposal. In the early 1950s, the idea of fusing the commercial appeal of a white performer and the musical tradition of black rhythm’n’blues challenged almost all of the American music industry’s working practices.

Having ignored black music for a number of years, the majors had lost touch with recent developments in the rich and constantly evolving black culture... black musicians based in the South West were developing styles that were much closer to the blues ... described by Baraka as »huge rhythm units smashing away behind screaming blues singers«. This was rhythm and blues. Since it did not lend itself readily to the production styles of the major labels, they decided to ignore the relatively smaller black music (GAROFALO & CHAPPLE 1978: 77).

Assumptions about the desirability (and inevitability) of continuing to regard as quite separate the type of music performed by black/white artists were reflected in similar sentiments about the distinctions between audiences, the record labels producing such music, the record charts in which musical sales were compiled, even the radio stations on which it was played. Although white music stations had gradually begun to broadcast some rhythm’n’blues records to satisfy the potential audience for black music in northern cities, Cohn maintains that generally:

Right through the early fifties...white stations persisted in blocking rhythm’n’blues off their airways, and the biggest names were still people like Doris Day, Perry Como and Frankie Laine (COHN 1969: 15).

Presley’s first record for the Sun label was his cover version of That’s All Right Mama, a song written and recorded in the 1940s by Arthur (Big Boy) Crudup, a black country blues singer. Significantly, Sam Phillips took the record to Station WHBQ’s disc jockey Dewey Phillips (no relation) whose Red Hot And Blue radio show was devoted to the work of black blues artists. When Presley was interviewed on the show, Dewey Phillips thought it necessary to stress that he had attended the all-white Humes High School, since audience responses had clearly shown that many listeners had automatically assumed the singer to be black.

If his vocal performance was perceived as radical, Presley’s physical performances were in many quarters seen as positively obscene. Hopkins has described a typical Presley concert appearance:

Draped in white slacks with a pink stripe down the sides, a pink shirt with the collar turned up catching the ends of his longish hair, and a pink sports jacket with big black teardrops on the front and back...he leaned forward, legs braced, guitar hung around his neck, hands clutching the stand microphone. He looked at the girls in the front row with lidded eyes, eyebrows forming a loving and woeful arch...Now both legs were twitching - jerking and snapping back into that original braced position...his arms flailed the inexpensive guitar, pounding the wood...and snapping strings...The girls began to squirm and move (HOPKINS 1972: 83-84).
Quickly given the nickname Elvis the Pelvis, it soon became apparent that to the entertainment and media establishment, his was a success to be devalued and vilified. His appearance on The Milton Berle Show in January 1956 prompted Jack Gould, television critic of the New York Times to describe him as an "unutterable bore...a rock'n'roll variation of one of the most standard acts in show business: the virtuoso of the hootchy-kootchy...his one speciality is an accented movement of the body...the gyration never had anything to do with the world of popular music and still doesn't." And Jack O'Brien of the New York Journal-American proclaimed that "he can't sing a lick, makes up for vocal shortcomings with the weirdest and plainly planned, suggestive animation short of an aborigine's mating dance."

From 1956 to 1958, Presley's career within the entertainment industry continued to oppose traditional definitions and expectations of its leading practitioners. Rock'n'roll concerts were banned in cities across the U.S.A., from Asbury Park, New Jersey to Santa Cruz, California. Religious leaders, including Cardinal Spellman and evangelist Billy Graham, were overtly hostile to Presley, claiming links between rock'n'roll and juvenile crime. Some radio stations refused to play his records. During his appearance on The Ed Sullivan TV Show in September 1956, he was televised only from the waist up, so as to avoid the possibility of charges of encouraging obscene behaviour being brought against the C.B.S. network. In October 1956, the singer appeared in court in Memphis after being involved in a fight with the manager of a petrol station. And the New York Daily News described his music as a "barrage of primitive jungle-beat rhythm set to lyrics which few adults would care to hear."

But such was the impetus of the manner in which Presley contravened contemporary definitions of the pop star that such reactions only served to encourage more and more radical departures, and to lead to an exponential growth of his success, nationally and internationally. Following his appearance on The Ed Sullivan TV Show, R.C.A. simultaneously released seven of his singles; it was at the time a unique decision, and although in marketing and promotional terms it was considered certainly audacious and probably foolish, each of them sold more than one hundred thousand copies in the U.S.A. alone. At the end of 1956 it was reported in the Wall Street Journal that sales of Elvis Presley merchandise had reached twenty-two million dollars in just six months. And by 1958, at the age of 23, he had achieved no less than twenty separate million-selling singles.

One of the principal components of Melly's exposition is that rebellion is relatively, and necessarily, short-lived. Socio-cultural processes of containment begin to operate, ensuring either that the rebellion is defeated, or, if it is perceived to pose a real threat, finds its way into the existing structures. The conscription of Elvis Presley into the U.S. army in March 1958 provided manager Colonel Tom Parker with the opportunity to avoid the former option by consciously manipulating the latter. In effect, his enlistment was the first and crucial step in dismantling the dangerous and delinquent persona of Elvis the Pelvis, by utilising his army service to depict him as the patriotic boy-next-door, before eventually re-inventing him as the wholesome family entertainer. The strategy soon began to work.
The new Elvis »image« was being accepted. Adults began to accept him because he was going to get his hair cut, start dressing like a human being (in uniform), said he was going to serve like any other boy, and stopped shaking publicly (HOPKINS 1972: 165).

The public outpourings of his grief at his mother's funeral in March 1958 and regular, positive and carefully choreographed media coverage of the activities of Private Presley on active service in Germany contrasted sharply with the hostile media attentions of previous years, and contributed to the public confirmation of this new identity. Estimated earnings of two million dollars in 1958 indicated that the strategy was successful in commercial terms, too.

The definitive gesture marking the shift in trajectory of Presley's career can be seen to be the decision to select Frank Sinatra's A.B.C. television show in May 1960 as the vehicle through which to re-introduce him to the viewing public, once his army service had been completed. It was Sinatra who, in 1957, had described rock’n’roll as »phoney and false, and sung, written and played for the most part by cretinous goons.« That Presley should consent to appear on television in a formal dinner jacket, swapping songs, and duetting with Sinatra, would have been unthinkable prior to his conscription. But the impact was remarkable. »Just like that, Elvis became an entertainer.« (FLIPPO 1993: 41).

More evidence of the repudiation by Presley of his pre-military career followed swiftly. After the ballad Stuck On You, which was the first single he recorded and released on his return from Germany, the subsequent few singles were contextually inimical to the style of his early rock’n’roll recordings. It's Now Or Never (July 1960) was a re-working of the popular Italian aria O Sole Mio, recorded by, among others, Caruso and Mario Lanza, and composed by Di Capua & Capurro. Are You Lonesome Tonight (November 1960) was written by Dave Dreyer, whose other compositions included Me And My Shadow, and was originally recorded by Al Jolson in the 1920s. Surrender (February 1961) was Presley's version of Torna A Surriento, another classical Neapolitan song, composed by Ernesto de Curtis. In addition, Wooden Heart (December 1960), which was only released in Europe, was based on a traditional German folk song from the eighteenth century. Far from undermining his success, these records spectacularly increased it, as he began to recruit fans from a wider and more conservative musical audience; It's Now Or Never became, in fact, his most successful single, selling more than twenty-two million copies worldwide, and, in commercial terms, vindicated absolutely the career shift.

The song remains in many listeners' minds as a conscious choice by Elvis to finally transcend the limitations of being labelled a rock’n’roll singer, and to establish his own middle ground, from which he could easily move in any musical direction (FLIPPO 1993: 41).

Just as significant were the comparisons made by film director Norman Taurog, when working with Presley on G.I. Blues in 1960, and who went on to direct several more of his movies through the decade: »This is the most relaxed boy you could want. He reminds me of Crosby and Como.« (HOPKINS 1972: 198).
The certainty with which all commentators have agreed on the implications of this radical disruption to Presley's career trajectory — and the connections with his perceived ideological stance — is recognised by Hammontree:

In fact Elvis was more popular when he returned from the army than he had been before...Elvis's willingness to serve as an ordinary soldier in the U.S. army had somehow legitimized him to many adults, and he was viewed as a more traditional young man...It was his music which had been unorthodox — the music and his uninhibited behaviour while singing. His time in the army served as a symbol to many that Elvis was just an all-American boy, and he became the new Huck Finn of America (HAMMONTREE 1985: 39).

Having thus embarked on a new career phase, characterised by demonstrations of reassurance rather than rebellion, the decision was quickly made to withdraw from all live performances. In February 1961, he was the main attraction (on a bill which included comedians and jugglers) at two benefit concerts in Memphis which raised fifty-two thousand dollars for charities in the city, and for which, in gratitude, he was invited to an official endorsement of his charitable activities before both houses of the Tennessee state legislature. In March of the same year he performed in Hawaii, raising sixty-seven thousand dollars for the memorial fund of the U.S.S. Arizona, the battleship sunk by Japanese bombers during the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941. His patriotic duty done, Presley ended his musical performances for the rest of the decade to become, in effect, a Hollywood movie star. While the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, the Doors, the Beach Boys invested the 1960s with the same sort of musical and cultural energy which had characterised Presley himself in the 1950s, he retired to his Bel Air mansion to make twenty-seven films between his release from the army and his subsequent return to performing. Very few attracted any positive critical responses.

His films settled into predictable, pallid productions...requiring little intellectual participation, they adhered to a strict code, avoiding excessive violence and sexual suggestiveness; and the story lines showed life as simple and optimistic in tone... Most of the songs, unfortunately, were inane numbers written to suit a part of the film and were hopelessly dull if heard outside that context (HAMMONTREE 1985: 43-44).

In archetypal terms, much of Presley's musical output through the 1960s can be defined as the style against which the Beatles and others concentrated their revolt. Widely accused of squandering his talent, in fact Elvis Presley was both victim and accomplice of a process which deliberately and specifically involved a containment of his abilities within parameters which stressed the association between music and ideology. Some final examples clarify this.

In August 1969, while five hundred thousand young Americans were celebrating in the mud of Woodstock their fusion of music, drugs, opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, sexual liberation and political confrontation, Presley chose the same month to make his long-awaited return to live performance at the International Hotel Show Room, Las Vegas — the definitive symbol of affluent middle America, and the global capital of the marriage between show business and
gambling. His award of Entertainer Of The Year at Las Vegas in 1969 identified and corroborated his status.

The following year he visited President Richard Nixon at the White House, claiming to have carried out »an in-depth study of drug abuse and Communist brain-washing techniques« (HUTCHINS & THOMPSON 1994: 164) and offering himself as an undercover Federal Agent for the Bureau of Narcotics & Dangerous Drugs. Shortly afterwards he visited F.B.I. Headquarters in Washington where he described the Director, J. Edgar Hoover, as »the greatest living American«, and again offered his services as an undercover informant against what he described as:

»persons in the entertainment industry...(who)...have a lot to answer for in the hereafter for the way in which they have poisoned young minds by disparaging the United States in their public statements and unsavoury activities.« (HUTCHINS & THOMPSON 1994: 172).

In August 1971, the National Academy Of Recording Arts & Sciences bestowed upon Presley its highest honour - the Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is not an annual event; the only previous recipients (and the musicians with whom he was now being artistically and symbolically bracketed) were Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and Irving Berlin.

In the same year, an even more remarkable set of companions awaited Presley’s participation at the ceremony for »the award that meant the most to him« (FLIPPO 1993: 54). The United States Junior Chamber Of Commerce proclaimed him one of »The Ten Outstanding Young Men Of The Nation«. The others were Walter S. Humann, an executive of the U.S. Postal System; White House aide Ron Ziegler; Harvard biophysicist Dr Mario Capecchi; Medal of Honor winner and West Point professor Captain William Bucha; radio station magnate Jim Goetz; National Cancer Institute scientist Dr George Todaro; Thomas Atkins, the first black city councilman in Boston; Wendell Cherry, part-owner of the Kentucky Colonels basketball team; and Thomas Coll, the founder of the Revitalization Corps. There could be no more emphatic demonstration of the success with which the young rock’n’roll singer from Memphis, who had so threatened the established order just fifteen years earlier, had sought entry and been admitted to the very establishment that had previously dismissed and scorned him.

The most important thing that the award represented for Elvis was the acceptance — the recognition — by the American social establishment. It was a validation of his life and work. (FLIPPO 1993: 54).

The Beatles: Idiosyncrasy Credits

Idiosyncrasy credits...may be considered to be the positive impressions...held by others. These credits represent accorded status. They have the property of allowing non-conformity, innovation, and the assertion of influence. Basically, credits accumulate as a result of perceived conformity and competence (HOLLANDER 1976: 485).
Hollander's theory of idiosyncrasy credits, developed as an explanation of patterns of leadership, has much to offer when utilised to provide an analysis of the career trajectory of the Beatles. Within the context of small groups, Hollander contends that regular and unambiguous demonstrations of conformity to prevailing norms and expectations are a crucial component in enabling an individual to create favourable impressions, and thus to secure a place within the group. The greater the degree of conformity displayed by the individual, the greater the status he or she subsequently enjoys; conformity and status are in this sense mutually dependent. This may be particularly true for newcomers striving to establish entry and maintain membership.

In addition, an individual's adherence to group norms needs to be accompanied by evidence of agreed levels of competence or performance of central group activities. Competence and conformity are, then, in Hollander's model, used to acquire credits in the eyes of other members of the group; credits reflect respect and are symbolically exchanged for increased status. Those individuals who have amassed most credits in this way (i.e. those who enjoy the greatest status) may become leaders.

It is here that the importance of the idiosyncratic element of these credits becomes apparent. Persons possessing a store of such credits are permitted to deviate, to exhibit non-conformist or idiosyncratic behaviour without risking the disapproval of the group. Acquired credits represent a balance or investment against which such transgressions can be safely enacted. Each transgression can only be tolerated to the extent that the individual holds sufficient credits to cover such behaviour; by definition, affiliation with the group...ceases when the individual's credit balance reaches zero (HOLLANDER 1958: 121)

But for those who have become leaders, the significance of engaging in idiosyncratic or innovative behaviour is much more emphatic. Such behaviour is not only tolerated, or even encouraged; it becomes a formal requirement if they are to maintain their status.

With a constant level of competence, the person's early non-conformity to procedural norms should depress his or her influence. On the other hand, late evidence of non-conformity, after credits are accumulated, should produce the reverse effect. Once having attained higher status, there should be a shift in expectancies, which actually makes procedural non-conformity a confirming feature of status, thereby increasing influence (HOLLANDER 1976: 485-486).

According to Hollander's analysis, therefore, it would appear that once a certain number of credits has been accumulated by the individual, the group's expectations of him or her change. Whereas before, non-conformity was not tolerated and might be penalised, now it is expected and rewarded; risk-taking, departure, innovation are obligatory; they become the major ways in which aspiring or actual leaders can maintain their status and add to their influence. Leaders who fail to engage in such activities may in fact face the very penalties they would have incurred had they chosen to engage in those activities when their store of credits was lower. Indeed, Hollander draws attention to the fate of a leader who...adopts a
passive and ostensibly safe course, but loses status« (HOLLANDER 1958: 126). The fact that a newcomer to the group, whose credit balance is relatively low, will gain status by adopting a passive and ostensibly safe course serves to emphasise what Hollander judges to be:

the key consideration in the idiosyncrasy model...that behaviour perceived to be non-conforming for one group member may not be perceived as such for another (HOLLANDER 1976: 485).

These then are the principal components of Hollander’s theory, one of the major attractions of which is undoubtedly its simplicity. However, a number of points require clarification. First, as discussed by Donelson R. Forsyth (1983), the acquisition of a large balance of credits does not grant the individual unrestricted freedom to deviate wildly from the group’s ideology. Individuals can go too far, their behaviour can be too extreme, such that it immediately exhausts their credit balance. A second, related issue centres on ways in which the motivation for radical behaviour is evaluated by group members. Ridgeway (1978, 1981) has pointed out that behaviour perceived as self-oriented, rather than co-oriented, is less likely to be rewarded with increased status; there is a real risk that acts of non-conformity, if interpreted by others as generated by selfish motives, will lead to substantial deficits in an individual’s credit balance and a loss of his or her status.

Thirdly, it should be emphasised that a person who possesses a large store of credits will not automatically or inevitably emerge as a leader; he or she merely has the opportunity to do so. Similarly it is not guaranteed that those persons who become leaders will engage in innovative or radical behaviour; again, they merely have the opportunity to do so without fear of sanctions:

It should not be supposed that an abundance of credits must lead perforce to influence. While an individual thus endowed has the potential to display more idiosyncratic behaviour than others, he might not do so, nor would he of necessity become a leader thereby (HOLLANDER 1958: 125).

A fourth point relates to the failure by Hollander to distinguish adequately between what I would term authentic conformity, where commitment to the group is genuine and «motivation to belong is both high and sincere» (HOLLANDER 1958: 126); superficial conformity, where false demonstrations of loyalty may be made in order to secure membership and make additional gains; and erroneous conformity, where (rather like the conditions in adolescent delinquent subcultures discussed by Matza) individuals are actors in a comedy of errors, each mistakenly believing that all other members are truly committed to group norms, and who therefore act in a like way themselves (MATZA 1964). However, since the theory rests upon the recognition and evaluation of behavioural outcome rather than behavioural intent, there is an argument that these may be relatively unimportant distinctions.

I believe that in a general sense, Hollander’s theory can be transferred from the study of small, task-specific groups into the useful analysis of patterns of radical and innovative behaviour within the entertainment industry; and that in a particular and precise way, it can help in the understanding and explanation of the musical career of the Beatles.
When Brian Epstein acquired the management of the Beatles in 1962, he did so at a time when the structures and cultures of the British popular music industry offered little hope of accommodating such groups. The reason given by Decca’s Head of Artists & Repertoire, Dick Rowe, to Epstein when rejecting the Beatles, typifies succinctly the industry’s concern to persevere with what it perceived as appropriate practices:

»Not to mince words, Mr Epstein, we don’t like your boys’ sound. Groups are out, four piece groups with guitars particularly are finished. The boys won’t go, Mr Epstein. We know these things. You have a good business in Liverpool. Stick to that.« (EPSTEIN 1964: 51).

As a result of this and other rebuffs, Epstein quickly decided that in order for the Beatles to realistically contemplate careers in popular music, it was essential that they should begin to create favourable impressions within the industry. By agreeing to conform to many of the routines and expectations prevalent within that environment, the group thus can be seen to have embarked on a stage in their career which would result in an increasing acquisition of idiosyncrasy credits. Thus it was that Epstein forbade certain forms of behaviour - smoking, eating, drinking, swearing - on stage. Their leather jackets and jeans were replaced by mohair suits, shirts and ties. He insisted they bow to the audience at the end of each song. He went to great lengths to conceal Lennon’s marriage to a pregnant Cynthia Powell, lest it damaged the group’s image. He rationalised and re-structured their live performances, insisting on a set routine planned in advance. And although, years later, John Lennon was scathing about that strategy, he was nonetheless ready to admit his complicity:

»We began to sell out when we let Brian begin to manage us. He put us into uniforms — suits — and we would go on and smile and do twenty-minute acts of our hits...All the rough edges were being knocked off us. I knew what we were doing and I knew the game. So I let it happen.« (CONNOLLY 1981: 52-53).

In fact, such was the extent of the Beatles’ compliance with that strategy, they were prepared on occasion to allow Epstein some say even in their choice of music, despite an understanding that that should be solely their concern; in January 1962 at their audition with Decca Records, they reduced the blend of rock’n’roll and self compositions which characterised their live performances in favour of a safer, more familiar selection, including September In The Rain, The Sheikh Of Araby and Till There Was You. Although Decca rejected the group, it was this same tape which when heard by George Martin in May 1962, sufficiently impressed him to arrange a recording session with Parlophone. When, five months later, Love Me Do, the first song from that session became a hit, it was a clear vindication of Epstein’s policy and the group’s willingness to conform. When television appearances, radio broadcasts, press interviews, photo sessions and the demand for live shows began to increase as a result, the Beatles were more than happy to oblige. They were beginning to accumulate credits — credits which were already paying dividends. Liverpool friend Pete Shotton’s verdict on Lennon applies equally to the group as a whole:
In 1962 and 1963, the number one priority on John’s agenda was to become rich and famous, and tidying up his image seemed at the time a relatively small price to pay for the attainment of that goal (SHOTTON & SCHAFFNER 1983: 73).

As discussed above, conformity must incorporate competence, and is intimately linked with status in the acquisition of idiosyncrasy credits. From the beginning of 1963 until mid-1966, the achievements of the Beatles, and the consequent status they accrued, departed relatively little in substance from the experiences of other leading performers in popular music or from the conventional ideology of the music industry. The difference lay in the size and scale of their success, framed within the phenomenon which became known as Beatlemania.

Each country witnessed the same scenes of mass emotion, scenes which had never been thought possible before, and which are unlikely to be repeated...it is impossible to exaggerate Beatlemania because Beatlemania was in itself an exaggeration (DAVIES 1968: 194).

In fact, the successes of the Beatles in this period were so pronounced that it is possible only to provide examples as an indication of their volume. In Britain, they have spent longer in the Number One position in both the singles charts (75 weeks) and the album charts (167 weeks) than any other performer; they had six million-selling singles and three million-selling albums. In the U.S.A., they had twenty-eight million-selling singles, one million-selling E.P. and twenty-one million selling albums; in the week of March 31, 1964, they held the top five positions in the singles charts plus an additional seven entries lower in the Top 100. Their appearance on the *The Ed Sullivan TV Show* on February 9, 1964, was watched by an audience of seventy million, or sixty per cent of all American television viewers; as has passed into mythology, »on that one night, America’s crime rate was lower than at any time during the previous half century« (NORMAN 1981: 218). In September 1964, they were paid 150,000 dollars for a 35-minute show in Kansas, the highest fee then paid to any entertainer. In August 1965, their appearance at Shea Stadium, New York, attracted what was at the time the largest audience (56,000) ever to attend a live concert. In 1964 alone, Beatles-related merchandise generated more than fifty million dollars in the U.S.A. In Australia, they held the top six positions in the singles chart of March 31, 1964, with a total of ten in the Top Twenty. In June of that year, 300,000 fans surrounded their hotel in Adelaide, 250,000 in Melbourne. In Japan, during a four-day visit in June 1966, they were guarded by 35,000 security men. The Lennon-McCartney composition *Yesterday* is the world’s most recorded song, with more than 2,500 versions.

Each event within their career during these years conformed — precisely and triumphantly — to the demands of the popular music industry; and they were rewarded accordingly. Their appearance on *The Royal Variety Show* in 1963, their selection in 1964 as the Variety Club of Great Britain’s *Show Business Personalities Of The Year*, the award to the group of the M.B.E. in 1965, demonstrated and consolidated the overwhelmingly positive response to their behaviour from the entertainment industry. The group’s entry into films (*A Hard Day’s Night* in 1964, *Help!* in 1965) and their reliance on touring as the principal contact between artist and
performer (from 1963 to mid-1966 the Beatles gave around five hundred live performances) also showed solid signs of reliability and commitment to the prevailing ethos. The enthusiasm with which the media and entertainment establishment embraced the Beatles can be discerned from the sentiments contained in a lead editorial in the *Daily Mirror* in November 1963:

> You have to be a real sour square not to love the nutty, noisy, happy, handsome Beatles...If they don’t sweep your blues away — brother, you’re a lost cause. If they don’t put a beat in your feet — sister, you’re not living. The Beatles are whacky. They wear their hair like a mop — but it’s washed, it’s super-clean. So is their fresh young act (NORMAN 1981: 192).

In sum, the cumulative effect of the Beatles achievements during this stage of their career was that they enjoyed an unparalleled distinction. This was true among the fans who purchased their records in unforeseen quantities and generated record ticket applications with every new set of performances. It was true within the popular music industry which feasted and honoured them repeatedly; in 1964, for example, they received two *Carl Allen Awards*, five *Ivor Novello Awards* from the Songwriters’ Guild of Great Britain, and two *Grammy* awards from the American National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. And it was true among fellow performers whose evaluations of the Beatles’ contributions to popular music were — and remain — staunchly positive:

> Graham Nash: ...the Beatles had it all. They not only had the music, they had the looks, and more importantly, they had the vibe.
> Chris Hillman: The Beatles influenced all of us, vocally, and songwriting, and everything else.
> Todd Rundgren: ...of course the biggest influence of all was the Beatles...it involved much more than music. It was a whole connection with your peers. (SOMACH & SHARP 1995)
> Brian Wilson: The Beatles hit the music business so hard...I love the Beatles. I’ve always loved them.
> Jimmy Page: If it hadn’t been for the Beatles, there wouldn’t be anyone like us around. (SOMACH, SOMACH & GUNN 1989).

Having achieved (via competence and conformity) a status which had elevated them to an unrivalled position of authority within popular music, the Beatles were at this stage in their career able to actively consider innovation and departure from the dominant ideology that the acquisition of idiosyncrasy credits makes possible. Locating the precise point at which they began to utilise these credits is impossible, but from mid-1966, one can detect an abandonment of many of the traditional facets of a pop star’s career, the emergence of several new strands in their career, and a willingness to involve themselves in activities and debates that went far beyond conventional assumptions about what was considered appropriate for young musicians. In practice, what they began to do was to dislodge the foundations upon which the structure of the popular music industry had been built during the previous two decades.
Perhaps the first indication that the Beatles were set to depart from familiar patterns was in the interview Lennon gave to London journalist Maureen Cleave in March 1966, where he predicted:

»Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue with that; I’m right and I will be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now; I don’t know which will go first — rock’n’roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary.« (Evening Standard: March 4, 1966).

In Britain, the interview attracted little comment, but in the U.S.A. it led to radio bans, anti-Beatle demonstrations and the threat of concert cancellations. Forced to apologise, Lennon’s retraction of his statement — »I never meant it to be a lousy anti-religious thing; I apologise if that will make you happy« (COLEMAN 1989: 320) — did little to correct the impression that the group were evolving from recognisable pop stars into something more autonomous.

A similar reaction greeted McCartney’s admission in June 1967 that he had taken L.S.D. Unrepentant, he, the rest of the Beatles and Brian Epstein were among the signatories to a full-page advertisement in The Times of July 24, 1967, calling for the legalisation of marijuana. When in October of that year, Lennon was convicted at Marylebone Magistrates Court of unauthorised possession of 219 grains of cannabis, and in March 1969, Harrison was convicted at Walton-on-Thames Magistrates Court of possession of 570 grains of cannabis and a quantity of cocaine, the events were as instrumental in placing the topic of drugs on the agenda for public discussion as were the deaths (drug-induced or drug-related) of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Brian Jones and Jim Morrison.

The Beatles’ decision in August 1966 to stop touring can be interpreted as both cause and effect of many of the changes that were occurring contemporaneously within their careers. Seen as effect, it came about because of a growing dissatisfaction with the conditions of touring and a deep frustration with the constraints that such routines placed upon their musical development; it reflected the group’s growing disillusionment with the traditional role of pop star. Harrison was the most disillusioned:

»We got in a rut, going round the world. It was a different audience each day, but we were doing the same things. There was no satisfaction in it. Nobody could hear. It was just a bloody big row. We got worse as musicians, playing the same old junk every day. There was no satisfaction at all.« (DAVIES 1968: 232).

Seen as cause, the space it created within each of their lives provided the opportunity for them to engage in debates, projects and relationships that could not have been contained beforehand; the four Beatles felt increasingly free to confront the assumption that members of a pop group only had relevance or validity within the boundaries of that group. Ringo Starr took screen-acting roles in Candy (1968) and The Magic Christian (1969). McCartney wrote the soundtrack for The Family Way (1966) and recorded with the Black Dyke Mills Band (1968). Lennon appeared in How I Won The War (1966), and his one-act stage play In His Own Write was performed at the National Theatre (1968). Harrison composed the soundtrack for
Wonderwall (1968) and produced and recorded with the Radha Krishna Temple (1969). While these, and other, projects were little more than temporary excursions, they are nonetheless important because of the manner in which they demonstrated the fallacy of the belief that group members had nothing to do or say outside the group. In doing so they began to move towards the construction of four recognisably individual identities rather than one corporate identity; at the same time they were developing a behavioural model for other musicians to comprehend and adopt.

The rate at which the group were allowed to utilise the credits they had amassed in order to sanction such diversions from the prevalent expectations of their role did not weaken, but in fact strengthened their status; at this stage in the idiosyncrasy credit model, it is non-conformity that serves to increase the influence of leaders. Thus, «the speed at which the Beatles were not only outdistancing but lapping the public» (SALEWICZ 1986:189) was in itself a source of new credit accumulation.

The end of touring also coincided with a fundamental shift in the nature of their music. The archetypal pop song has always been — and arguably still is — the love song: either a celebration of genuine and mutual love, a comment about the nature and meaning of love, or a lament for lost or unrequited love. From 1966 onwards the Beatles ceased to follow these conventions as they had before, as an examination of their musical output reveals. Of the twenty-two songs featured on their first eleven singles — from Love Me Do/P.S. I Love You (October 1962) to Day Tripper/We Can Work It Out (December 1965) — all can be described as love songs. Of the twenty-two songs featured on their last eleven singles — from Paperback Writer/Rain (June 1966) to Let It Be/You Know My Name (March 1970) — no more than six can be considered in this way. Their album tracks reveal the same distinctions. Of the tracks on their first six albums — from Please Please Me (March 1963) to Rubber Soul (December 1965) — 91 per cent are love songs. Of the tracks on their last six albums — from Revolver (August 1966) to Let It Be (May 1970) — only 16 per cent are love songs.

The Beatles incursion into film-making with Magical Mystery Tour (1967), which was conceived, written, produced and directed by the group, and the opening of their Apple boutique in London in the same year were the precursors to their decision to establish a production and management company (Apple Corps Ltd). The death of Brian Epstein in August 1967 had represented the disappearance of the last tangible constraint on their career. With offices in Savile Row and an initial investment of £800,000, the new company’s ambitions were very much broader than those of previous organisations established by performers seeking greater control of their own output, such as Frank Sinatra’s Reprise record label. Boasting five separate divisions (electronics, films, publishing, records, retailing) and a declared policy to discover new talent, assist struggling artists and market inventions, Apple failed, and its protracted and unwieldy demise coincided with the eventual dissolution of the group.

If the award of the M.B.E. to the Beatles had represented an idealised ideological relationship between pop star and country, then Lennon’s decision to re-
turn the medal in 1969 symbolised its irrevocable fracture. Coupled with the group's claims that they shared a joint in the toilets of Buckingham Palace just before their investiture (COLEMAN 1984: 246), the medal's return and the reasons given for it measured conclusively the space that now lay between the Beatles and the conventional pop stars they had once been:

Your Majesty: I am returning this M.B.E. in protest against Britain's involvement in the Nigeria-Biafra thing, against our support of America in Vietnam, and against Cold Turkey slipping down the charts. With love, John Lennon of Bag. (COLEMAN 1984: 324).

In retrospect, much of the Beatles' significance for the development of popular music centres around their willingness to question and overturn many of the conventional wisdoms within one institution - the entertainment industry - and their subsequent participation in the critical scrutiny of other institutions too. That they were able to this depended on a consensual acknowledgement of their status, which had at first been attained by their conformity to agreed patterns of behaviour and activity. Once this had been achieved, their position was enhanced by actions which departed from existing norms and which established new ones. Such a process is rare - primarily because those in a position to wield influence for change are those who are most rewarded by a maintenance of the status quo; innovation and risk-taking carry with them, by definition, the danger of failure. The Beatles' guarantee against the penalties of failure was provided by their accumulation of idiosyncrasy credits which permitted them, as high-status members of the popular music industry, to deviate from its dominant ideologies without fear of sanctions.

**Stardom Within Popular Music: A Typology**

At this point, I wish to combine the above observations with insights offered by Klapp (1969) and discussed by Dyer (1982) to propose a model of star types within which the progression of the careers of Elvis Presley and the Beatles can be located. Klapp's contention is that the relationship of a star to the prevalent norms must be recognised as essentially ideological, and can be distinguished in terms of one of three behavioural categorisations - reinforcement, seduction and transcendence.

The category of reinforcement equates directly with demonstrations of conformity which act »to reinforce a person in social roles - encourage him to play those which are highly valued - and to maintain the image of the group« (KLAPP 1969: 219).

Seduction involves rule-breaking or an infringement of the norms, »but in a charming way« (DYER 1982: 27). There is no attempt to create new rules or undermine existing ideologies, and while it might appear to question particular components of a culture, this role confirms the general relevance of its conventions.

Transcendence demands innovation. Traditional assumptions are challenged and replaced, fresh practices are introduced, new philosophies elevated. »This is
more than just getting away with something, as in the previous category, since it does redefine and recreate standards by which experience is to be judged« (DYER 1982: 28). 

In addition to this ideological dimension of a star’s career, I wish to include a second relevant dimension, which is its duration. Clearly the division between temporary and permanent stardom is much more contentious than the divisions between the ideological categories (although they themselves are not fixed). But however difficult it might be to define the point at which the categories separate, there do undoubtedly exist differences, which are more than merely intuitive recognitions, between transient and enduring celebrity; this dimension might be best comprehended by conceptualising it as a continuum rather than as two distinct categories. In all, therefore, the model is composed of six types.

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<td><strong>Seduction</strong></td>
<td>Arriviste</td>
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<td><strong>Transcendence</strong></td>
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*The Idol.* An apparently endless supply of young (predominantly male) singers and musicians have formed the nucleus of much of the popular music industry’s central figures. Their careers can range from just one hit record to success over months or years. While the precise conventions they are required to reinforce obviously vary over time, their relationship to the industry’s dominant ideology remains firm — in terms of sexuality, appearance and professional activities. Donny Osmond, the Bay City Rollers, Bros, Jason Donovan are examples of this category.

*The Perennial.* At some point it may become evident that the idol’s career has evolved into something more lasting, and that his or her celebrity is no longer solely dependent on hit singles or concert appearances. Rod Stewart, Cher and Tom Jones are among those who have made this transition. They continue to reinforce the conventional expectations of what a popular musician is permitted to do. Their success depends not only on the ability to retain an audience, but to recruit new ones.

*The Arriviste.* Defined by his or her ambition, and a willingness to utilise whatever devices are considered appropriate to the satisfaction of that ambition, the arriviste often presents a charming, surprising or bizarre persona. This serves to distinguish such a performer from the conventional idol, and is valuable in that it encourages a concentration of media attention. In their different ways, Freddie & the Dreamers, Gilbert O’Sullivan, Tiny Tim, Adam Ant, the Beastie Boys made use of this strategy; in contemporary classical music, Nigel Kennedy provides a singular example.
The Eccentric. The ability of the arriviste to elongate his or her career cannot be planned with any certainty, which accounts for their sporadic or transient nature. Such attempts are contingent upon continual sequences of new audiences, ready to be shocked, entertained, seduced. Gary Glitter and Boy George are among the small number of British musicians who constantly strive to re-invent and represent themselves for consumption by audiences not yet bored with the essentially predictable nature of their activities.

The Rebel. By ostentatiously and dramatically defying conventional expectations, the rebel actively generates controversy and hostility. By posing a threat to the existing order, he or she ensures that those excluded from its ranks or disaffected with its operations are likely to be enticed into a consideration of the new possibilities the rebel espouses, be they constructive or nihilistic. Many of the punk bands in the mid-1970s — notably the Sex Pistols — gave a temporary voice to those audiences and artists to whom the excesses of glam-rock were offensive and irrelevant. Similarly the growth of rap music through the 1980s has provided performers such as Snoop Doggy Dog the appropriate context in which to proclaim their rebellion.

The Innovator. The articulation of radical explanations, the undermining of seemingly secure conventions and the capacity to depart from existing modes of behaviour — successfully and repeatedly — are as rare within popular music as elsewhere. Genuine innovation derives from a unique combination of artistic and political passions. Bob Dylan is perhaps the finest example of an innovator who has remained competent and active within popular music; and although their careers were shorter, Jimi Hendrix and Bob Marley merit inclusion in this category.

If this model is now imposed on my analyses of the careers of Elvis Presley and the Beatles, then the possibilities for shifts in career trajectory become apparent. In accumulating a large stock of credits, through conforming to the expectations of the popular music industry, the Beatles were, in effect, fulfilling the role of idol; indeed, that is how they were widely perceived in their early career. When, at a later date, they began to utilise that stock of credits to sanction behaviour which did radically depart from normal practice, the Beatles were able to become innovators; and this is how their overall contribution to music has been evaluated. It was, therefore, their competence as, and success in, the role of idols which permitted them to subsequently move into the role of innovators.

By contrast, the history of Elvis Presley is best approached by ideologically referencing the beginnings of his career in the category of transcendence. While the Beatles were idols who became innovators, Presley was the rebel who became the perennial, happy to exchange his gold suit and fleet of pink Cadillacs for seasons at Las Vegas and visits with Richard Nixon. That Presley not only allowed this to happen but seemed to deliberately pursue it, indicates that although there are comparisons in terms of magnitude and duration between his and the Beatles’ careers, there are substantial contradictions in terms of their relationships to the prevailing ideologies of popular music, their career trajectories, and the significance of these for the nature of their stardom.
Conclusion

The paths followed by Elvis Presley and the Beatles are not the only available routes, nor even those most frequently undertaken. Indeed, it is probable that the majority of successful popular musicians develop a career trajectory which stays firmly within a particular ideological category. Thus, for example, Cliff Richard has never strayed from the category of reinforcement; over time, he has merely evolved from idol to perennial, always displaying and confirming the conventionally approved modes of behaviour, as his award of a knighthood in 1995 amply demonstrated. The career of Michael Jackson might be best understood by utilising the category of seduction. The undoubted novelty of his appeal as a child performer with the Jackson Five can be seen as a fore-runner to the bizarre and confused nature of Jackson today. But in moving from arriviste to eccentric, he has done little to fundamentally challenge the familiar assumptions of the popular music industry. And Frank Zappa, initially with the Mothers Of Invention, and then as a solo artist, constantly worked within the category of transcendence. He remains the early West Coast rebel who later accomplished much as a genuine musical innovator.

Two factors prompt a comparative analysis of Presley and the Beatles — the extent of their success and the extent of their mutation. Even here, they may not be unique. In his transition from an all-American surfer boy to a reclusive and tormented musical perfectionist, Brian Wilson demonstrates a similar career trajectory to the Beatles. And the opulence and familiarity of the Rolling Stones in the 1990s suggests that the route they have followed from their beginnings as long-haired, anti-Establishment rebels in the 1960s is not dissimilar from that taken by Elvis Presley.

Nevertheless, it is the contrast between the Beatles and Presley that provides the most pertinent comparison; their career trajectories do not simply display varying patterns, but are in contra-distinction to each other. Based on those two examples, my argument has been that attempts to fully comprehend their success must not only take account of the very distinct ideological foundations upon which the different phases of their careers were constructed, but need to place an examination of those foundations at the heart of an analysis which recognises the specific form of stardom, and deviations from it, as inherently ideological.
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