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Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music

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Philosophers of music have traditionally been concerned with the problems Western classical music raises. But recently there has been growing interest both in non-Western musics and in Western musical traditions other than classical. Motivated by questions of the relative merits of classical and rock music, philosophers have addressed the ontology of rock music, asking if the reason it is held in lower esteem by some is that its artworks have been misunderstood to be of the same kind as classical musical works. In classical music, the production of the sound event that the audience listens to is the result of two quite distinct groups of actions. First the composer creates the work, by writing a score. Then a performing artist or group of artists performs the work, of necessity producing an interpretation of it.¹ Often the composer is closely involved in at least the first performance of a new work, but even then her contributions as a composer are clearly distinguishable from those she makes as a performer. Shortly after the Second World War, some classical composers began focusing on producing works that did not require any performance. Using technology developed to record and reproduce the sounds of

performances, they began creating tapes that when played back produced sound events that could not be considered an accurate record of any performance occurring in the studio, in any sense. Any authentic copy of the master tape produced an authentic instance of the work when played back.² In such ‘electronic music’, the sound of the work, in an important sense, came straight from the composer, without the mediation of a performing artist. The end of traditional compositional techniques was solemnly predicted. In fact, in the classical tradition, electronic music remains a minority culture. It was a different musical tradition that took up the recording studio as its workshop.

I. TWO COMPETING ONTOLOGIES OF ROCK

In the first book-length philosophical aesthetics of rock, Theodore Gracyk argues that *rock music* is the tradition that has cut out the performing middleman, and delivers music straight from the composer to the audience.³ Although he resists the temptation to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for being a rock work, Gracyk does say that he is talking about rock music in a broad sense: not as a style (*rock* as opposed to *heavy metal*), but as a wider artistic tradition (*rock* as opposed to *classical* or *jazz*). He comes close to providing a definition when he says that “rock is popular music of the second half of the twentieth century which is essentially dependent on recording technology for its inception and dissemination”.⁴ He argues for this conception by providing a history of the tradition beginning with Elvis Presley’s early recordings at Sun Studios, and hitting its stride with Bob Dylan’s first electric albums and the Beatles’ shift of focus from live shows to the recording studio.⁵ The ontological thesis that Gracyk develops through the first half of his book is that the primary work of art in rock music is not a ‘thin’ sound structure to be instanced in different performances, as in classical music, but the almost

maximally ‘thick’ sound structure encoded on a recording and properly instanced through playback of a copy of the recording.⁶

In his recent book on musical ontology, *Musical Works and Performances*, Stephen Davies criticizes Gracyk’s view, pointing to important rock practices that Gracyk ignores or sidelines, particularly the importance placed on live performance skill in the rock world.⁷ In summary, Davies says

[t]he facts are these: more groups play rock music than ever are recorded; almost every recorded group began as a garage band that relied on live gigs; almost every famous recording artist is also an accomplished stage performer; [and] although record producers are quite rightly acknowledged for the importance of their contribution, they are not usually identified as members of the band...⁸

Elsewhere he also points to the fact that cover versions and remixes are treated more like new interpretations of existing works – more like *performances* – than like new works in their own right.⁹ Davies proposes an alternative account of rock ontology intended to correct these shortcomings. He argues that rock works, like classical ones, are created for performance, but whereas classical works are for *live* performance, rock works are for *studio* performance, where works for studio performance implicitly include a part for producer and sound engineers.¹⁰ It is important to note that Davies’s claim is not that there are classical works and rock works, of some common ontological kind, and that the classical ones are intended for a certain sort of performance, while the rock ones are intended for a different kind of performance. The claim is that classical works are of the *ontological kind* work-for-live-performance, while rock works are of a different ontological kind: work-for-studio-performance.

While I am sympathetic with Davies's reclamation of the importance of live performance skill for rock, I believe we can find a place for such values in rock without recourse to the notion of a work-for-studio-performance.¹¹ Several of the problems with Davies's account of rock come from a tension between the idea of rock works' being for-studio-performance and the very rock practices he highlights in his criticisms of Gracyk.

First, although many garage and pub bands may hope to be recorded one day, it is not clear that they write their songs with a part for sound engineer even implicitly in mind. When playing in the garage or pub, without those technicians, these bands seem to think they are providing audiences with fully authentic performances of their songs, not with performances missing a part.¹² Of course, even pub bands use amplification, so one might argue that the role of engineer is being played by someone, even if that someone is the bass-player who also does the sound-check at the beginning of the gig. But this much engineering is merely the result of using electric instruments. Live performances of classical works involving electric instruments, from Anthony Ritchie's concerto for amplified acoustic guitar (referred to by Davies), through the weird innovations of the early twentieth century such as the theremin and ondes martenot, to the wind machine in Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia antartica*, require an engineer one way or another.¹³ That does not make those engineers performers of the works (despite there being an 'implicit part' for an engineer to 'play'); nor does it make those works ontologically for-studio-performance. Moreover, as Davies says in the quotation above, in rock music, producers and engineers are not identified as members of the band.

Second, Davies maintains both that rock songs are works for studio performance, and that "works for studio performance...cannot usually be played live".¹⁴ Any account

of rock music that makes live concerts an unusual phenomenon is surely misguided. At rock concerts, even by bands that have produced studio albums, neither the musicians nor the audiences suppose that those bands do not simply perform their songs. This intuition is admittedly defeasible in the face of a theory with more explanatory power, but Davies thinks that his account fits our intuitions about live rock *better* than mine (to be outlined below).¹⁵ This cannot be so if it virtually rules out live rock shows.

Davies has suggested (in private communication) that rock musicians and fans might be acquiescing in the inferior simulations of recordings that go on at rock concerts simply as the result of contingent current technological shortcomings. More and more equipment is making the move from the recording studio to the stage, as its size decreases and its flexibility increases. Perhaps one day all that is achievable in the studio will be achievable onstage. At that point there will be no reason to withhold the label ‘studio performance’ from ‘live’ rock concerts.

There are three relevant responses to this suggestion. First, as noted above, although rock musicians may use on stage some of the same technology they use in the studio to produce the same sounds, they are still expected to *perform* their songs. There is already technology available to reproduce the sound of a recording on stage – your home CD-player and amplifier will do that. But rock audiences want to hear musicians play their instruments and sing, just as do classical and jazz audiences, as the occasional lip-syncing scandal shows.¹⁶

Second, when performers *do* attempt to emulate the sound of a studio recording, this does not by itself imply anything about the ontological status of the works performed. A choir may attempt to recapture in live performance the accuracy of

intonation, tight ensemble, and even passion of a particular recording of theirs without this implying that the work they are performing is for-studio-performance. (I will revisit these issues when I present my positive account below.)

Third, no matter what studio technology becomes available for live shows, the most salient feature of what goes on in the studio can never be exported to the stage. In the studio one can take one's time to pick and choose which of the sounds that get on tape should go into the mix. One can always in principle go back and change something until one is happy with the result. So it is not mere current technological shortcomings that make studio and live performances different. They are different in a fundamental *metaphysical* way.

The last problem with Davies's ontological account of rock that I will address here is a process/product ambiguity in his use of the term 'studio performance'.¹⁷ Sometimes it is used to refer to the final *product* – the seamless whole you hear when you play the recording. For example, in the summary of his chapter on performance, Davies says “[s]tudio performances...are identified with the simulated or virtual performances encoded on a master, or its clones”.¹⁸ But elsewhere 'studio performance' is used to refer to the set of all the actions – playings, tapings, electronic manipulations, editings, etc. – that go into the production of a record. This is evident in Davies's label for his proposed category: works 'for studio performance' are works for which a particular kind of action is appropriate, a particular *way of performing*. Some things he says earlier in the chapter just quoted capture this *process* sense of 'studio performance': “This is not to say things are always easier for the studio *performer*...studio performances depart from the normative conditions applying to live performances...A [studio] performance is *finished*

when it is ‘in the can’¹⁹. These quotations imply that the studio performance is what *results in* a virtual performance, rather than being *identified with* that virtual performance.

This ambiguity is problematic, for while anyone should accept that a finished recording, when played back, gives rise to a phenomenal unity, this does not require that the production of a recording is some kind of performance. For instance, Davies does not think of classical electronic works as for performance. They are of the ontological kind that Gracyk thinks rock works are members of; they are for-playback. So Davies must allow that classical electronic works are studio performances in the *product* sense; but he clearly thinks they are not the results of studio performances in the *process* sense.²⁰ If Davies is conflating these two senses of ‘studio performance’, then the usefulness of his proposed ontological category (work for-studio-performance) is thrown into question.²¹ In my positive account below, I find different uses for both the process and product senses of Davies’s conception of ‘studio performance’. Since the product sense simply refers to the track or recording, I will not use the term ‘studio performance’ in that sense. Nor will I use the term in the process sense for traditions, such as classical electronic music and (I argue) rock, where the process of creating the recording is not usefully conceived of as a performance. Only in classical music (and relevantly similar traditions) is the process of creating a recording usefully thought of as a performance, and thus only in those traditions will I refer to the process of producing a recording as a performance, though I label it a ‘recorded performance’ to distinguish my concept from Davies’s. In discussing rock and other traditions which produce works for playback, I use two new terms – ‘track’ and ‘track construction’ – for the two senses of Davies’s term ‘studio performance’.

Finally, I believe a case can be made for the primacy of tracks as objects of critical attention in rock by looking at the asymmetric dependence of live on recorded rock practices. There are at least two ways in which live and recorded rock are related in this asymmetric fashion. The first is that in which live rock performances ‘look to’ rock tracks in some sense, as opposed to the relationship in the classical world, whereby recordings attempt to capture, or simulate, what happens in a live performance situation. I discuss the relations between live and recorded rock in more detail below. The second asymmetric dependence applies at a higher level. If, due to a highly infectious plague, say, all rock musicians were confined to their studios, the production of rock tracks would continue in much the same way it has for four or five decades. If, on the other hand, a Luddite revolution wiped out all the recording technology, concerts would become the only way of attending to rock music and hence the recreation of a pre-existing record’s sound could no longer be part of what is aimed for (or rejected) in a live performance. In short, live rock practice is dependent upon recorded rock, but not the other way around. Comparison with classical practice is again helpful. Classical music is a tradition wherein live performance was the only option for accessing the music for centuries. The destruction of recording technology would result only in a return to the old days, with all their good and bad aspects, whereas in a Gouldian paradise where all the concert halls have been razed, the tradition would be in danger, at least, of transforming into something quite different.

Of course, these thought-experiments drastically oversimplify matters, leaving out untold possible developments in the two traditions I discuss that might result from the radical changes in their environments, and more importantly, the effects of their long

histories on what would happen given these unlikely changes. But rather than consider them hopelessly speculative as a result, I would rather they be taken as parables. For surely the morals I draw from them are reasonable claims about the traditions as they now stand. Classical music is primarily, as it has always been, a live performance tradition, and its recordings assimilate themselves to that tradition. Rock music is primarily a recording tradition, and its live performances depend partly on that tradition for their value. Thus, live rock performances, while undeniably an important part of the rock world, are not the primary focus of critical attention in that tradition.

II. TRACKS THAT MANIFEST SONGS: A SYNTHETIC VIEW

What position is available, then, to someone who sympathizes both with Gracyk's arguments that the primary work in rock music is the ontologically thick recording, but also with Davies's counter-arguments that rock is importantly a performance art, like classical music? I think that Davies is right in seeing rock *songs* – the very thin structures of melody, harmony, and lyrics – as pieces of music that may be performed, that is, instanced in live performances. But these pieces of music are not the, or even a, primary focus of critical attention in rock, and thus are not musical *works*.²² Given their thinness, and their creators' awareness that they may be both performed live and used in the construction of tracks, I think it is wrong to consider these pieces of music, these sound structures, ontologically *for* anything in particular, be it performance *simpliciter*, or a particular kind of performance. Gracyk, on the other hand, is right in seeing rock *tracks* – the recordings that rock musicians create on the basis of, or more often along with, their songs – as musical works in their own right – the kind of thing that is the primary focus of critical attention in rock.

The view I defend is this: Rock musicians primarily construct *tracks*. These are ontologically thick works, like classical electronic works, and are at the center of rock as an art form. However, these tracks also manifest *songs*. Rock songs, like jazz songs, but unlike classical songs, tend to be very thin ontologically, allowing of alterations in instrumentation, lyrics, melody, and even harmony. But while classical and jazz songs are works for performance *simpliciter*, rock songs are not works, nor are they *for* anything in particular. Rock tracks are not special kinds of performances of the thin songs they manifest, as Davies would have it. Rather, they are studio *constructions*: thick works that *manifest* thin songs, without being *performances* of them.²³

I draw on Gracyk's terminology in talking of rock tracks 'manifesting' songs without being performances of them.²⁴ Davies criticizes this talk as "awkward and obscure",²⁵ since if something is of a kind for performance, fully authentic instances of that thing must be performances.²⁶ I have argued that rock songs are not for performance. Thus, for me, rock songs are simply instanced in tracks and live performances. But I believe there is useful work for the concept of manifestation as opposed to instantiation. A rock track might manifest a work for performance, without being an instance of that work. Take Jeff Buckley's track 'Corpus Christi Carol' (1994), for instance. It is a rock version of Benjamin Britten's 'In the Bleak Mid-Winter' from his choral variations *A Boy Was Born*, manifesting that work without being a performance of it. (A performance of this work requires a choir, at least.) Or suppose that I am wrong, and that rock songs *are* of an ontological kind for performance. In that case, it would seem, if a recording authentically instances a rock song, the recording must be a performance of some sort. But one person's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. I would argue in that case that

in rock the recording does *not* authentically instance the song for performance, but rather *manifests* it.

The concept of *manifesting* a work (or non-work object, such as a rock song) is supposed to be intermediate between that of *authentically instancing* a work and that of having *no relation* to it. A manifestation of a work represents the work, displaying many of its properties, without necessarily being an instance of it. A few examples should illustrate the idea. One might say that a photograph of the Mona Lisa in an art-history book manifests that work by being an accurate photograph of the painting. But it cannot be an authentic instance of the painting, since oil paintings are singular works – they have only one ‘instance’, the original. One might say that a classical score manifests the work it is of. Anyone working within the classical tradition can ‘read off’ the score every element of the work’s sound structure. Indeed, it is often *easier* to extract the work from a manifestation (for example, a score) than an instance (that is, a performance). Even someone well versed in contemporary classical music might not be able to tell, say, how many, and which, of the notes one hears in a performance of a contemporary piece are work-determinative rather than the result of a requirement in the score to improvise, or engage in some aleatoric procedure. But this will be clear in the score. Yet scores are not authentic instances of classical works, because they are not performances. In my view, rock tracks bear the manifestation relation to rock songs. Someone knowledgeable in the tradition can ‘read off’ a track the song that is manifested by it. But the track is not thereby a performance of the song. Unlike in the classical case, however, since the rock song is a sound structure, but not for-performance, the track manifests the song by

instanciating it, while the sheet music of the song might manifest it, but could not instance it.

Why not simply use the term ‘representation’ instead of ‘manifestation’? Partly because ‘representation’ brings along with it connotations of interpretation, making rock tracks look more like interpretations, and thus performances, of songs. This is not merely a rhetorical move, however, since, as the preceding examples make clear, we have such a notion of manifestation without performance, or interpretation, or representation in this thick sense.

On the other hand, there is something to Davies’s notion of a ‘virtual performance’. When we listen to a recording, whether rock or classical, we do think of it *in some way* as continuously caused, to the extent that we experience it as a phenomenal whole.²⁷ However, this does not require us to believe that all recordings are the result of performances of some sort.²⁸ Davies must agree, because he does not think classical electronic works are works for studio performance, though they provide a unified phenomenal experience. I am arguing that the situation is the same in rock.

Someone might argue that I am willfully ignoring the important role of performance skill in the production of rock recordings. After all, respect for, and valorization of, the ability to sing and play instruments – particularly electric guitar, bass, and drums – seems just as central in the rock world as the same respect for instrumental skill in the classical world. And rock audiences expect the guitar solos on the Pixie’s studio recording of ‘Where is My Mind?’ (1992) to be just as much the product of Joey Santiago’s playing his instrument in real time as the classical audience does in the case of a John Williams recording of a Bach lute suite.²⁹ Doesn’t this suggest that rock

recordings should occupy a place on the ontological spectrum between the recorded works of classical electronic music and the recorded performances of classical works for performance – a place Davies is trying to locate with his notion of ‘studio performance’?

I would argue that such a middle position is unnecessary. Think again of classical electronic music. Historically, that name (originally in German – *Elektronische Musik*) was given to works for playback produced without any actually recorded sounds as input; only synthesized sounds were used. Pioneers of this school were Werner Meyer Eppler, Hubert Eimert, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. A rival tradition, begun by Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henri, created works for playback by manipulating pre-recorded sounds in various ways, and went by the name of *musique concrète*. In under ten years, however, even the leaders of these schools had come to see that these different modes of production were “twin facets of one genre”.³⁰ That is, I would say, they had come to realize that they were producing the same kind of artwork in two different ways, as two sculptors might differ in their preference for marble or granite. Now, as in the sculpture case, the different means of production of this kind of work might be aesthetically relevant. Two sculptures of exactly the same dimensions might differ in their aesthetic properties were one made of marble and the other granite. Similarly, two sonically identical works for playback might differ in their aesthetic properties if one was produced from pre-recorded sounds and the other completely synthetically. (The verisimilitude of the baby’s cry will be much more impressive in the case of the synthesized recording, for instance.) Or two such works might differ aesthetically if each were constructed out of *different* pre-recorded sounds. (The verisimilitude of the baby’s cry will be much more impressive in the work made entirely out of manipulations of a recording of a ringing

telephone.) These considerations can be transferred directly to the rock case. The acknowledgement that rock works are recordings for playback – neither songs, nor studio or recorded performances – need not demote the importance of the instrumental skill that goes into the production of many of them.

Nonetheless, one consequence of my view is that it makes rock seem a somewhat dichotomous tradition, with one type of activity at its core – the production of rock tracks, non-performance artworks – and with another type of activity less central, but still important – live performances of songs. These two realms are linked in various ways of course. The songs rock musicians perform live are usually those manifested by the non-performance tracks those same musicians produce; and the skills displayed in their live performances are usually drawn upon in the production of those tracks. But the view of rock music I am proposing is nonetheless bipartite.³¹

III. LIVE ROCK PERFORMANCES

Davies criticizes my view on this account, calling it “unacceptably schizoid”.³² His view of rock is more unified, in that the same artwork is at the center of both the recorded and live rock worlds – the song-for-studio-performance. In the studio, of course, this song simply receives an authentic studio performance. But what of live performances, on Davies’s view? One option open to him is to gloss ‘studio performance’ as ‘electronically mediated performance’. That is, he could back off the sharp metaphysical distinction between studio and live performance, allowing any performance primarily using electric instruments or apparatus as a studio performance. On this suggestion, live rock performances would count as authentic studio performances, since they are, almost without exception, electronically mediated. There would thus be no sharp distinction on

metaphysical grounds between rock performances (literally in the studio, or on stage) and live performances of classical works calling for electric instruments, such as ondes martenot or wind machine.

But Davies does, in fact, want to hold on to the metaphysical divide between studio and stage. When he expands on what he takes ‘studio performance’ to denote, he says that

a clumsier but more accurate specification [than that given in *Musical Works and Performances*] would have contrasted live with electronically mediated performance in which it is normative that some processing, adaptation, or sequencing is not achievable in real time, and in which multiple takes may be recorded, mixed, and edited as part of the production process.³³

Thus, live rock performances cannot be authentic studio performances, since whatever is achieved during a rock concert is necessarily “achievable in real time”. But live and studio rock practices are nonetheless as unified as the corresponding classical practices, on Davies’s view. As he says,

the rock musicians’ live performance is a mirror image of the classical musicians’ recording. Whereas the latter simulates a live performance, the former simulates the (or a) recording. This is because the performances’ ontological commitments face in different directions – one to the live setting presupposed by the work and the other to the studio, with its technological resources...[T]he standard target of the live [rock] performance is the recorded track, not the thin song, of which most rock musicians and fans would be unaware.³⁴

Before discussing my main objection to Davies's view of the relation between live and recorded rock, let me pause to note the oddness of this last claim. Davies's view is that rock tracks are studio performances of thin songs. Yet he claims that the song is an entity of which most rock musicians are unaware. It seems odd that musicians in a tradition of performances of songs would be unaware of those songs.

The symmetry of Davies's views of the relations between live and studio practices in the classical and rock music worlds is aesthetically appealing, but it is unfortunately based on a misunderstanding of what goes on at a rock concert. Rock musicians often do employ a 'sound' for a particular song in their live shows similar to that of their recording of the same song. That is, they use what a classical musician might call similar instrumentation. But this should not be construed as an attempt to simulate the sound of the recording in a narrow sense, that is, as an attempt to produce a sonic doppelgänger of the recording. For there are almost always obvious structural differences between live performances of a rock song and the 'virtual performance' encoded on the track. Typical differences include an extended introduction, often during which the identity of the song being performed is concealed as long as possible; alternative lyrics, including interpolated verses; improvisatory instrumental breaks; and an extended coda. These are not the results of the musicians' being bored of playing the same material night after night. Audiences expect, even *require* this kind of performance. It is not surprising that the overall sound chosen for the performance of a song is that of the recorded track, any more than it is surprising that a classical performer's live shows should exhibit the same interpretation of a work as her recordings, since the rock track, like the classical recording, is the considered and enduring result of a long process of artistic

experimentation. If the band has decided that these particular timbres, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and lyrics sit well enough together to produce an infinitely repeatable addition to their oeuvre, it is unsurprising that they should choose a similar combination when performing live. It is clear, too, that bands *could* produce live sonic doppelgängers of their tracks, if they so chose, since there are bands that produce nothing but such doppelgängers – of *other* bands' tracks – exclusively. 'Cover bands' attempt to simulate on stage, often with remarkable success, the sound of particular tracks by more famous bands. Someone unfamiliar with the peculiar pleasures of karaoke might call this 'slavish imitation'.³⁵

On the other hand, more radical departures from the sound on a band's studio recordings are possible live. This often happens with older material, and thus *can* be seen to some extent as a result of boredom, or, considered more positively, as springing from a desire to explore as yet untapped potential in a song. (But note that it is *extremely* uncommon for a band to record a new studio version of the same song – to cover their own tracks, as it were.³⁶) Often, also, a song can be performed in an extremely simple fashion, being sung to the sole accompaniment of an (amplified) acoustic guitar. An example is Radiohead's 'True Love Waits',³⁷ notable for being just such a simple performance, but at a concert by a studio band *par excellence*.³⁸

These considerations suggest that Davies is wrong to view live rock performances as simulations of the recordings of the bands performing, even when they are established studio artists. My view, that live rock shows consist of performances of thin songs, while studio recordings are electronic works in their own right, is admittedly dichotomous, but

its dichotomy reflects rock practice, and thus, *contra* Davies, is not fairly characterized as “schizoid”.

IV. COVER VERSIONS

A *prima facie* question for my view is: What makes one rock track a ‘cover’, or new version, of some previous track, if it is not some kind of performance of the song ‘covered’?³⁹ Gracyk does not have much to say on the topic of covers.⁴⁰ He discusses different versions of a track such as the CD re-release of an originally vinyl track, alternative cuts, and remixes, but does not talk about recordings of the same song by different artists. On Davies’s view, the rock case parallels the classical: a recording is an authentic (studio) performance of a particular song iff the necessary conditions for (studio) performance of a work are met: “(1) [T]he performance matches the work’s content, more or less; (2) the performers intend to follow most of the instructions specifying the work, whoever wrote them; and (3) a robust causal chain runs from the performance to the work’s creation”.⁴¹ Since I argue that a rock track is *not* a performance of the song it manifests, I cannot group covers together as different studio performances of the same song. But since I have defended the notion of a track’s manifesting a song, I can just as easily group covers together as tracks (successfully) intended to manifest the same song.

Davies would doubtless respond that rock musicians and fans talk of covers as if they are new performances of old songs. But a comparison with film is helpful here. Films occasionally get ‘remade’: a new film is produced that shares many important properties with a pre-existing film. The plot, the way the plot is presented, and the title are the most commonly transferred properties. But much can be altered. The action can

be moved from the Midlands to the Midwest, from the '60s to the '90s, the dialogue can be completely rewritten, so long as it presents broadly the same story. But even here, relatively major changes can be made. For instance, in the remake of *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), what was a happy ending only for Steve McQueen's womanizing Thomas Crown becomes a happy-couple ending for Pierce Brosnan's more sensitive Crown and Rene Russo's Catherine Banning with the addition of a new final scene.⁴²

Now, audiences, of course, compare the original and the remake.⁴³ Directors, knowing this, insert into remakes (or sometimes lard them with) subtle references to the original – a cameo by the aged star of the original, the theme song from the original used intradiegetically, and so on. But there is an important difference between comparisons of an original film with its remake, and comparisons of two performances of a symphony, for instance. When one performance is preferred over another for, say, its sensitive handling of tempo changes in a certain section, the two are being compared as performances, or presentations, *of the same work*. One listener might agree with another that, in itself, the first performance of the section is more exciting, but that ultimately the second is truer to the work as a whole. But similar judgments are not made in the comparison of an original film and a remake. Two critics might disagree about whether the chase scene in the remake is more exciting, or better edited, than the parallel sequence in the original. One might grant that although the original chase scene is less exciting in itself, it is better suited to the pacing of the movie taken as a whole than the remade chase scene is to the pacing of the remake. But there is no talk of which movie is truer to 'the work' – for there is no obvious referent for this term in cinema, other than a given movie.

It would be odd to say the remake is a better representation of the *script* or screenplay for several reasons. First, we are not used to thinking of scripts as works in their own rights, to be ‘performed’ or instantiated in various ways by various sets of directors, actors, designers, cinematographers, etc. Second, even when an ‘original’ movie is being made, the script is an extremely fluid entity – it can be, and is frequently, changed (that is, ignored) in accord with how the director (typically) wants the resulting film to look. Third, when a movie is being remade, it is not the original script the director or writers turn to (though this may, of course, be one source they use). Rather, it is the original *movie*.

Of course, the remakers do not attempt to make a visual doppelgänger of the original. Instead, it is customary to take over, adapting where necessary, those basic structural elements I listed above: the plot (story, *histoire*, *fabula*) and the way the plot is presented (discourse, *récit*, *syuzhet*), though, as we also noted above, even these can be altered in quite major ways. Let us call this thin structure of plot-plus-way-of-presenting-it, the ‘narrative’, for want of a better term. Clearly the narrative is a better candidate than the script for the ‘work’ ‘performed’ in both the original and remade films. The original and remake rarely have the same script in common, while the narrative is, virtually by definition, the abstractum they share. The narrative is what filmmakers and viewers recognize as that which must be preserved in order for one film to count as a remake of another. But none of this implies that the two films are usefully viewed as performances, of any sort, of the narrative they have in common.⁴⁴ One can speculate on the reasons why this is so – the narrative is so slight a structure, admitting of such various embodiments, that there is simply not enough to it to warrant interpretations thereof. But

this is not the evidence for my claim that a remake and original are two separate works while the narrative they share is not. The evidence is the fact that people knowledgeable about cinema treat the two films as works in their own right, comparing them directly, advertent to their internal properties, rather than comparing them by reference to a third, different kind of entity – the narrative – to which both are related in some representational fashion. The two films are the kind of thing that is the primary focus of critical attention in cinema. The narrative is not.

How does this digression into the philosophy of film relate to our primary concern, the work of art in rock music? Just as we compare film remakes with their originals, yet do not think of films as performances of the narrative they have in common, so we compare cover versions without thinking of them as performances of the songs they manifest. The parallels between the way films and rock tracks are created are relevant here. A film may begin as a script and the artistic vision of a director, but we do not think of the script as the primary focus of critical attention in cinema. Similarly, a track may have its genesis in someone's writing a song with pen and paper at the piano, but this does not show that the resulting recording is a performance of a thin song. Rock tracks, like films, are works in their own right, not performances of other, independent works.⁴⁵

A final point worth noting, having focused for so long on film remakes and rock covers, is that remakes and covers are quite uncommon in the worlds of cinema and rock. Almost all films and tracks released are original material. This further suggests, I would argue, that rock, like film, should not be seen as a performance tradition like classical music.⁴⁶ It might be countered that it is unfair to compare, in this respect, rock music and

film, two art traditions very much alive, with classical music, which is arguably an enfeebled if not quite dead tradition. Even if one were not to go that far, the fact that classical music has hundreds of years' more history to draw on than rock or film might suggest that there would be more recycling of material in the classical world.

But such an objection betrays a superficial understanding of the traditions under discussion. Even if in Beethoven's milieu one might have encountered more works that were new to one, even more premières on the average concert program than one would in the classical world today, nonetheless everyone in the audience would have understood that the performance they were hearing was of a work that was intended to receive multiple performances instantiating different interpretations. The contemporary classical composer intends exactly the same thing, though with perhaps less hope of having her intention fulfilled. On the other hand, when listening to a rock track, one does not focus on the thin song manifested in it, nor wonder what another rock band would have done with it; rather, one listens to the track as an entity complete in itself, not as one among many possible representations of a further entity it instantiates.

V. GOODMAN'S ZIG-ZAG REDIVIVUS?

My proposal that covers should be grouped together as tracks successfully intended to manifest the same song may disinter an old musical-aesthetics chestnut that most people believe has been successfully put to rest. I refer to the 'wrong-note paradox' that arises from the notorious constraints Nelson Goodman places on the relations between traditional classical scores and performances. Goodman claims that scores and performances must be carefully choreographed in what Nicholas Wolterstorff calls a "zig-zag ballet".⁴⁷ This is because, according to Goodman, "[a] score...has as a primary

function the authoritative identification of a work from performance to performance”.⁴⁸

Immediately upon making this claim, Goodman notes that

[t]his is by no means true of everything commonly called a score;...systematic use involves a specialization from ordinary use.... Obviously, what is commonly called but does not by the above criterion qualify as a score is not thereby disparaged but only reclassified.⁴⁹

The zig-zag ballet is successfully choreographed when “[i]dentity of work and of score is retained in any series of steps, each of them either from compliant performance to score-inscription, or from score-inscription to compliant performance, or from score-inscription to true copy”.⁵⁰ The danger of allowing more freedom in the dance is made clear by

Goodman:

The innocent-seeming principle that performances differing by just one note are instances of the same work risks the consequence – in view of the transitivity of identity – that all performances whatsoever are of the same work. If we allow the least deviation, all assurance of work-preservation and score-preservation is lost; for by a series of one note errors of omission, addition, and modification, we can go all the way from Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* to *Three Blind Mice*.⁵¹

Finally, Goodman reminds us that he is not “quibbling about the proper use of such words as ‘notation’, ‘score’, and ‘work’”. That matters little more than the proper use of a fork. What does matter is that [a score should provide a] means of identifying a work from performance to performance...”.⁵²

Most commentators have found themselves in a dilemma with respect to the application of the principle of charity to Goodman’s zig-zag ballet. On the one hand, one

can take seriously his eschewing of the ordinary usage of such terms as ‘work’, ‘score’, and ‘notation’, but then one is forced to note that, however interesting the formal apparatus he assembles is in itself, he cannot make any interesting claims about the nature of musical works, scores, and notations. On the other hand, one can read his disclaimers more weakly, whereupon one is forced to criticize his theory as wrong-headed from the start, since his opening claim, that the primary purpose of scores is the identification of works from performance to performance, seems indefensible.⁵³

I make no such disclaimers about my ontology of rock music. It is fully intended to capture how people think about rock, and thus explain, among other things, why they say some of the things they do in connection with it. But it might be argued that I am thus open to a criticism closely related to the wrong-note paradox. The original paradox is that if we reject Goodman’s unintuitively stringent criterion that performances of works must be note perfect, we are forced to acknowledge that all performances are of the same work, because of the possibility of transformation from Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* to *Three Blind Mice*, referred to above. Most philosophers of music have resolved this paradox by arguing that scores do not function the way Goodman describes them as functioning. My view, following Davies,⁵⁴ is that performances are not linked just to some score or recent performance. The classical world is set up so that each performance is supposed to reach back *through* the score to the work as it was originally constituted by the composer’s act of composition. Thus each performance of a work is related in the same way to the same work, and no slow quasi-transitive transformation can take place through a series of performances and/or score tokens.⁵⁵

But the case of rock covers seems importantly different. A band will usually learn a song by listening to a track that manifests it, and many tracks may manifest the same song. But because the song is so thin in the rock tradition, it runs the risk of being lost in the mix, as it were. For instance, in 1987, the Pet Shop Boys released a cover of ‘Always on My Mind’. “Quite why we ever agreed to perform one of Elvis Presley’s hits on a tribute TV show is lost in the mists of time[,] but this was the song we chose and recorded in a version that was meant to sound as unlike Elvis Presley as possible.”⁵⁶ Two aspects of this quotation are relevant for our present purposes. First, the Pet Shop Boys (Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe) talk of recording “one of Elvis Presley’s hits”, even though they know that the *song* was written by Wayne Thompson, Mark James, and John Christopher (as evidenced by other parts of the liner notes). This indicates once more that the primary work of art in rock, what, in this instance, the Pet Shop Boys want their track to be measured against, is *Elvis’s recording* of the song, rather than the thin song itself. Second, the Pet Shop Boys wanted to construct a track that sounded as different from Elvis’s as possible. In this they surely succeeded. Elvis’s track is a slow ballad, with the King’s lugubrious rendition of the melody accompanied by piano, male backing singers, and a mawkish slide guitar. The Pet Shop Boys’s cover is an energetic dance track, pulsing with electronic beats and clean synthesizer chords. Neil Tennant’s vocal is characteristically emotionally disengaged, lending an arch air to the somewhat ambiguous lyrics. Moreover, the Pet Shop Boys’s track is more interesting harmonically. Where the transition from chorus to verse or bridge in Elvis’s version is effected by a simple iv-v-i in the bass, the Pet Shop Boys spice things up with a fully harmonized IV-V-III^b-IV-I progression (synthesizer faux-orchestral timbre!).

The potential problem for my account of rock covers – call it the ‘striking-cover paradox’ – is this: If rock songs are so thin that they admit of ‘thickenings’ as varied as Elvis’s and the Pet Shop Boys’s versions of ‘Always on My Mind’, we can imagine a chain of tracks, A through Z, where B is a cover of A, differing in some significant properties (such as the harmony and instrumentation of the Elvis–Pet Shop Boys example); C is a cover of B, differing from it as significantly, though perhaps along different dimensions; D is a cover of C; and so on, until we reach Z, a track which, though it is a cover of a cover of...a cover of ‘Don’t Be Cruel’, sounds for all the world like ‘Pop Goes the Weasel’. The problem, of course, is that if I am right in asserting that covers can be grouped together as tracks intended to manifest the same song, then the successful intentions of B’s artists to manifest A’s song, C’s to manifest B’s, and so on, should imply that Z manifests A’s song, while *ex hypothesi* this is not the case.

One thing it is important to get straight on before attempting to solve the paradox is the status of the striking divergences between an original track and its cover. For we are in danger here of making claims about the relationship between cover versions as implausible as those Goodman makes about the relationships between scores and performances. Take again, for example, the Pet Shop Boys’s cover of ‘Always on My Mind’. As I noted earlier, one striking difference between Elvis’s track and the Pet Shop Boys’s is their substitution of a IV-V-III^b-IV-I progression for the simple iv-v-i bass line leading out of the chorus. It is easy to regard this substitution as somehow altering, perhaps adding to, the song manifested by the original track, so that the song is an ontological snowball, accreting elements as it is covered again and again.

But there are two things to note about this hypothesis. The first is that if it *were* true (which it is not), then the Pet Shop Boys's track *would not qualify* as a cover of the Elvis track on my account. For the Pet Shop Boys's track would now manifest a *different* song from that manifested by the Elvis track. This hypothesis thus both (i) misrepresents my theory, and (ii) has unintuitive consequences in terms of what counts as a cover of what. The second, more important thing to note is that the assumption is false. It makes a confused inference from the fact that the cover *track* is thicker than the original *song* to the mistaken idea that the *song manifested by* the cover track is thicker than the song manifested by the original. Other rock musicians, on hearing the Pet Shop Boys's 'Always on My Mind', might like the IV-V-III^b-IV-I progression and include it in their own cover of the song. But they would not feel obliged to, conversant as they are with the tradition. They would realize that this progression is just a fancy substitute for a simple IV-V-I, and would feel free to 'revert' to that progression, even if they were not aware of the Elvis original. Moreover, if they did go with the Pet Shop Boys's progression, adding further some prog-rock counterpoint between an electric guitar and keyboard, they could not, given the tradition within which they are working, expect other bands covering *their* track to include that counterpoint. Rock songs are exceedingly thin, and rock musicians are, of course, aware of this fact.⁵⁷

There are a number of avenues open to me as possible solutions of the striking-cover paradox. One is to deny that the covering relation is transitive in any way. On this view, if track C is a cover of track B, and B is a cover of A, we cannot say anything about the relation between C and A. But this is unappealing for a number of reasons. Firstly, although a band may take just one version of a song as their target, knowledge of this

does not seem relevant to critical assessment of their track. Willie Nelson covered 'Always on My Mind' in 1982, between Elvis's and the Pet Shop Boys's versions. Both of the later versions are covers of the same song. It would not make any difference to this situation if the Pet Shop Boys had never heard Elvis's track and only intended to cover Nelson's. Secondly, and relatedly, rock audiences seem to group covers with respect to the song they are intended to manifest, rather than simply by the track(s) taken as the immediate object of the covering intention. Covers do not only occur paired one-to-one with originals.

A different strategy is to appeal to the intentional aspect of my account. Z's artists *intend* to manifest Y's song, which Y's artists intended to be X's song, and so on. Thus at some level of description, the intentions of Z's artists were to construct a track manifesting A's song. However, a path from Z to A paved solely with this kind of intention does not appeal to me. My claim is that the intentions involved must be *successful*, and even if there is a sense in which Z's artists intended to manifest A's song in their track, that intention has not been successful. Yet, *ex hypothesi*, the intentions at each link in the chain from A to Z *were* successful. Hence the paradox.

Perhaps, then, I should resist precisely this latter part of the thought experiment – the claim that each successive band was successful in their intention to cover the preceding track in the chain. Perhaps if I am to grant that we got from 'Don't Be Cruel' to 'Pop Goes the Weasel', I must insist that at some point along the chain, some track, say, N, must have failed to manifest its predecessor's (M's) song. One way to do this would be to argue that though the proposed chain of covers is theoretically possible, it would never happen in practice, because rock musicians, like any others, are generally

well aware of the history of the tradition within which they are working. Thus N is, in practice, much more likely to be a cover of the original A, or perhaps the well-known F, with an awareness of several other previous versions, than simply a cover of M as if it were the original manifestation of the song in question. In sum, the scenario sketched in setting out the paradox is so unlikely that we needn't worry about it.

Although each of these responses contains some truth, I do not consider any of them satisfying. Given the great differences possible between a cover and its original, a critic of my theory probably does not need to posit a chain of twenty-five covers to make her point. And it is surely not inconceivable that one distinctive cover might be taken alone as the target of another quite transformative cover, and thus that the paradox can be accomplished in a plausible hypothetical scenario. The solution to the paradox does lie in a rejection of the hypothesis that each link in the chain of covers is a successful intention to manifest the song of the target track, but this is due to a more complicated intentional structure than we have so far considered. The covering artist intends his new track to manifest the song manifested on his target track *whatever that song is*. Because he is knowledgeable about rock practice, he is unlikely to misidentify that song. However, if the target track is a striking cover of a previous track, and moreover the artist is *unaware* of this fact, we can see how he might fail in his intention. He will fail in the same way that a classical musician intending to perform a very old work might fail. If the score she is playing from has been greatly corrupted through many individually minor copying errors, the classical performer will fail to instance any work at all. She will still produce a musical performance, but it will not be of the work she intends to perform (that which began the causal chain resulting in the score she is playing from), nor of any other work.

Thus a track may be intended to cover a certain target track, be as similar to that track as many other (successful) covers are to their targets, yet fail to be a cover of its target by failing to manifest the song manifested by that target.⁵⁸ As with Goodman's original wrong-note paradox, the striking-cover paradox is the result of over-simplifying the relations between various entities involved in a musical tradition.⁵⁹

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The work of art in rock is a track constructed in the studio. Tracks usually manifest songs, which can be performed live. A cover version is a track (successfully) intended to manifest the same song as some other track. This ontology reflects the way informed audiences talk about rock. It recognizes the centrality of recorded tracks to the tradition, but also the value accorded to live performance skills. It draws relevant distinctions between what goes on in the studio and what ends up on the recording, but also between what happens in the studio and what happens on stage – a relation importantly different in the rock and classical traditions.⁶⁰

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Notes

¹ In a broad sense of ‘interpretation’. For a narrower one, which a work performance might lack, see Jerrold Levinson, “Performative vs. Critical Interpretation” reprinted in his *Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 60-89.

² Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 317-18.

³ Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Duke University Press, 1996).

⁴ Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, p. 13.

⁵ Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, pp. 1-17.

⁶ Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, pp. 1-98. The terminology of ontologically ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ works is Stephen Davies’s: “Pieces consisting of abstract structures of note types are ontologically thinner than those specified at the level of note tokens. Thinner works determine less of the fine detail of their performances than do thicker ones, but performances are always thicker than the works they are of” (*Musical Works and Performances*, p. 3).

⁷ One criticism Davies does not focus on is Gracyk’s sidelining of the importance of lyrics in the rock tradition. Gracyk oddly treats rock music as an almost purely sonic (that is, non-verbal) art: “To be blunt, in rock music most lyrics don’t matter very much” (*Rhythm and Noise*, p. 65). But the lyrics of Bob Dylan’s early work were surely at least as important as his ‘sound’ in earning him the central place Gracyk knows he occupies in rock history. Gracyk redresses the balance somewhat with his second book on rock which, in focusing on how people use rock tracks in constructing their identities,

implicitly assumes that lyrics are an important part of a rock track. See his *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* (Temple University Press, 2001).

⁸ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, p. 32.

⁹ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 31-2.

¹⁰ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 34-6.

¹¹ I make some of the following points in my review of Davies's *Musical Works and Performances*, *Mind* 112 (2003): 513-18.

¹² I will sometimes talk of rock 'bands', sometimes of 'artists'. In all cases, what I say applies generally, to both solo artists and groups of musicians.

¹³ Here I refer to the person who plugs the machine in, keeps it well-oiled, and so on, not the person who operates it in the performance, who *is* a performer.

¹⁴ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, p. 190.

¹⁵ Stephen Davies, "Comments on Andrew Kania's 'Ontology of Rock Music'", presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics. San Francisco, 2003.

¹⁶ I have in mind here cases where a performer presents himself as producing certain sounds on stage, typically by singing or playing an instrument, while he is in fact just miming those actions as a prerecorded track is playing. Thus I do not have in mind prerecorded backing tapes played as part of the live performance, or the production of music videos, in which the singer, and often the rest of the band, mime the live performance of a song to the playing of the single. The first case is clearly one of deception, while the latter two are not. Here, as elsewhere, the line between acceptable practice and misrepresentation is drawn by the tradition.

¹⁷ For discussion of the ambiguity of ‘performance’ in the classical tradition, see Jerrold Levinson, “Evaluating Musical Performance” reprinted in his *Music, Art, & Metaphysics* (Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 378-9.

¹⁸ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, p. 197.

¹⁹ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, p. 192, my emphases.

²⁰ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 25-34.

²¹ There are further problems for Davies’s account which there is no space to go into here. Particularly interesting is the case of ‘cross-over’ versions, for example, rock recordings of jazz songs, jazz treatments of rock songs, and classical ‘orchestrations’ of rock hits. For instance, the latter, if produced in a recording studio, will count as authentic instances of their respective works, according to Davies’s theory. These are complicated issues for any account of musical works, but I suspect Davies’s division of works into the ‘for-live-performance’ and ‘for-studio-performance’ categories does not simplify the situation.

²² On my view, a work of art is an art object that (1) is of a kind that is a primary focus of critical attention in a given art form or tradition, and (2) is a persisting object. I defend this view in my “The Work ‘Work’ Does: Works of Art and Other Art Objects”, unpublished MS.

²³ As an anonymous reviewer for this journal reminded me, not all rock recordings or performances include lyrics, and are thus not happily called *songs*. But since the vast majority of rock music is in song form, and there is no common term for what would be a song if only it had lyrics, I will continue to speak only of songs, though my arguments apply equally to lyric-less rock pieces.

²⁴ *Rhythm and Noise*, p. 18.

²⁵ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, p. 34.

²⁶ Davies puts this in terms of works, but he would surely subscribe to the generalization.

²⁷ *Contra* Roger Scruton, who argues that one distinctive feature of music as an art is that we can hear its sound as sourceless. See his *Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1-13.

²⁸ Perhaps we undergo a perceptual illusion when we listen to recordings, just as we cannot help but see film images as continuously moving, despite knowing that they are not. (See my ‘Illusion of Realism in Film,’ *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002): 243-58.) Or perhaps we engage with recordings in a way analogous to how some argue we engage with visual art: we *imagine hearing* a continuous performance. (See, for example, Jerrold Levinson, “Seeing, Imaginarily, at the Movies,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (1993): 70-78, and Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Harvard University Press, 1990) on imagining seeing.) Perhaps we do *both* these things, but in response to different kinds of recordings. For instance, it might be that the appearance of continuity in recordings of classical works for performance and their ilk is purely illusory, while in listening to rock tracks and classical electronic works we *imagine hearing* a continuous performance. A conflation of these modes of listening might go some way to explaining why Davies’s view of rock recordings as performances of some kind is intuitively plausible.

²⁹ In fact, I think Santiago duets *with himself* on this track. Nonetheless, we expect both solos to be the product of real-time guitar-playing skills.

³⁰ *The Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Macmillan, 1988), p. 235.

³¹ Gracyk helpfully reminded me that he nods in this direction (*Rhythm and Noise*, p. 79).

³² Davies, “Comments”.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ One of the many possible permutations of song, recording, and performance that I cannot hope to deal with in this paper is the likes of the Dark Star Orchestra: a band that attempts to reproduce on stage *particular historical live performances* by the Grateful Dead.

³⁶ Theodore Gracyk discusses one way this happens – when an artist changes labels and re-records his or her earlier hits – for inclusion on a ‘best of’ for the new label, for instance (*Rhythm and Noise*, p. 29).

³⁷ *I Might Be Wrong: Live Recordings*. Capitol (2001).

³⁸ Another permutation I do not have space for is the phenomenon of live recordings of rock concerts. As a first pass, I would consider them to be in the same ontological boat as live recordings of classical concerts that incorporate electric instruments. See my “Not Just for the Record: A Philosophical Analysis of Classical Music Recordings” (M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1998) and Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 301-7.

³⁹ One important note about terminology: When I talk of ‘covers’, I am talking about recorded cover *versions*, not the live performances of cover *bands*. So for instance, we talk about Rod Stewart’s 1991 cover of Tom Waits’s ‘Downtown Train’ (1985) or Johnny Cash’s 2002 cover of Nine Inch Nails’s ‘Hurt’ (1994). Cover bands are a very different phenomenon. They are bands, as described earlier, that attempt to reproduce live

the sound of particular tracks by other, more famous bands. I will be discussing cover versions at length, and will only make some brief remarks about cover bands.

⁴⁰ Ontologically, at least. He discusses the different purposes a cover can be made for, and put to, in *I Wanna Be Me*, pp. 63-6.

⁴¹ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 196-7. The second condition would need to be modified for rock music, since the song is not usually specified in written instructions. But Davies is well aware that a work can be communicated through a model performance, so a charitable reading already includes this alternative. I discuss these conditions further in chapter 3 of my “Pieces of Music: The Ontology of Classical, Rock, and Jazz Music” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2005).

⁴² Of course, there can be extremely ‘faithful’ remakes and covers. In the first category, recall Gus Van Sant’s (1998) remake of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), which remade the original (almost) shot for shot. In the second, consider Sixpence None the Richer’s 1997 cover of The La’s ‘There She Goes’ (1990) or their 2003 cover of Crowded House’s ‘Don’t Dream It’s Over’ (1986).

⁴³ I do not mean to beg any questions by my adoption of the usual term ‘original’ for a film that gets remade, or a track that gets covered. The word is not intended evaluatively; a remake can be better – even more *original* – than the ‘original’ film or track.

⁴⁴ You might say, though, that both films *manifest* the same narrative.

⁴⁵ This argument – that covers are not new performances of pre-existing songs – stands independently of my arguments that the rock song is not a work of art.

⁴⁶ An anonymous reviewer for this journal suggests that the relative rarity of covers is irrelevant to the point at hand, since my main arguments above depend on no such thing.

Be that as it may, I do think the following considerations bolster, rather than undermine, my view.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 99-105.

⁴⁸ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Second edition. (Hackett, 1976), p. 128.

⁴⁹ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, p. 128, n. 1.

⁵⁰ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, p. 178.

⁵¹ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, pp. 186-7.

⁵² Goodman, *Languages of Art*, p. 189. I have altered this quotation from Goodman's negative particular form (he is denying that a particular Cage score is notational, in his sense) to a positive general form.

⁵³ For a variety of responses critical of Goodman's argument, see Alan Tormey, "Indeterminacy and Identity in Art," *Monist* 58 (1974): 203-15; Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*, pp. 98-105; Jerrold Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is" reprinted in his *Music, Art, & Metaphysics*, p. 87, n. 34, and "What a Musical Work Is, Again" in *Music, Art, & Metaphysics*, pp. 257-8; Bengt Edlund, "On Scores and Works of Music: Interpretation and Identity," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 367-80; Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 111-12; R. A. Sharpe, *Music and Humanism: An Essay in the Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 98-9; Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 135-49; and Aaron Ridley, "Against Musical Ontology," *Journal of Philosophy* 101 (2003): 203-20. A notable exception is Stefano Predelli, who argues that Goodman's account of the relationship between performance and score can be

saved with minor modifications. See his “Goodman and the Wrong Note Paradox,”

British Journal of Aesthetics 39 (1999): 364-75.

⁵⁴ Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 151-97.

⁵⁵ Put this way, it is perhaps clearer why the paradox arises in Goodman’s nominalistic framework. For the nominalist there is no work created in the act of composition to which each performance might be related.

⁵⁶ Liner notes to Pet Shop Boys, *Discography: The Complete Singles Collection*. EMI (1991). Note the group’s casual yet clear distinction between live performance and track construction.

⁵⁷ Or so the philosopher puts it. Of course, what I am attempting here is to describe what artists and audiences do in a clear, systematic way. Thus, the sentence in the main text should not be construed as implying that the thinness of rock songs is somehow prior to, or independent of, what rock musicians do.

⁵⁸ I am indebted to Lee Brown and Jerrold Levinson for drawing my attention to the special role of the original track in a series of covers, though they did not do so in the context of the striking-cover paradox, and should not be held accountable for the solution to it given here.

⁵⁹ An anonymous reviewer for this journal suggests that one could not fail to cover the track one intends to. Though I agree this is *unlikely* – like the failed classical work performance – I do not see that it is *impossible*.

⁶⁰ I would like to thank Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies, Theodore Gracyk, and Lee B. Brown for giving me helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I also benefited from discussion of an early version at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Society

for Aesthetics, in San Francisco, and would like to thank the ASA for financial support towards my attendance at that meeting.