

EXPLORING THE EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL MUSIC:
A HISTORICAL AND ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Ruth Vecchio, B.A.

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Committee Members:

Dr. Nico Schüler, Chair

Dr. Charles Ditto

Dr. Kevin Mooney

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CHAPTER I

INDUSTRIAL MUSIC: ORIGINS

1.1 Historical Factors Contributing to Industrial Music

Industrial music is a genre in which a better understanding of the cultural and social influences is particularly vital to understanding the depth of meaning behind the music. Influences that made an impact upon the development of industrial music include technological advancement, political, social and economic climate, visual and performance art, literature, art music and popular music. This portion of the chapter will cover some of the artistic, literary, and musical innovators that had the most direct influence on industrial music.

Early in the 20th century, there was still a great deal of optimism towards industrialization and technology. This attitude manifested itself in Futurism, a movement that embraced a philosophy glorifying technology as something that would lead humanity to Utopia. The Futurist philosophy was first laid out by the Italian writer Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) in his *Futurist Manifesto* in 1909.¹ This philosophy bled into the realms of art and music. Francesco Balilla Pratella (1880-1955) fully embraced Futurism in his 1911 *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Music*.² Pratella's manifesto espoused directly representing the sounds of modern life in musical compositions. He originally used traditional instruments to create these sounds, but he helped to lay the

¹ F.T. Marinetti, "Manifeste de Futurisme," *Le Figaro*, February 20, 1909. English translation found in: Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, ed., *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 49-53.

² Francesco Balilla Pratella. *La musica futurista: manifesto tecnico*. Milano: Redazione di Poesia, 1911. English translation found in: Rainey, Poggi and Wittman, *Futurism*. 80-83.

groundwork for future composers, such as Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), to create a mechanical atmosphere through more unconventional means.³

At the same time, attitudes towards rapid technological advancement were already changing, and this change would be solidified with World War I. The Futurists declined with their support of the war. A new movement, the Dadaist, moved in to fill this void. Dada began as a reaction against the war. The imagery used by the Futurists to exalt progress and technology was taken and used ironically by the Dadaists. They believed that extreme rationalization had led to conditions that would allow a world war. The factories, instead of being viewed as a place for camaraderie among the working class, began to be viewed as working camps or institutions of slavery. There was a common theme of humanity being consumed by the machine. Creating “nonsense” art was seen as a way of channeling the subconscious and combating imposed, constricting order.⁴ The Dadaist use of collage in an ironic manner set a precedent for using media against itself. This type of imagery is still recognizable in industrial music, as seen below in Figures 1 and 2. The Dadaist use of anti-art was intended as commentary against societal norms. They used not only collage, but also found objects or *objet trouvé*. Found objects were often common items labeled as art in order to be viewed from a new perspective. Dada musicians followed in the footsteps of the futurists, but added a new vocal style using “bruitistic poetry.” The vocalists would not only sing, but use their voices in harsh ways, including screaming, while they were accompanied by a cacophony of sounds. It was not uncommon for this “chaosplasma” to incite riots in the audience. Such a riot occurred at the performance of *The Gas Heart* (1921) by Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), which included

³ Karen Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat: Industrial Music and Dystopia*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: Mass Media Music Scholars’ Press, 2012), Location 447-453.

⁴ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 476.

performance art and music. This composition was intended to disturb the audience, and it had the desired effect at its second performance in Paris at the Théâtre Michel in 1923.⁵ The vocal tactics of the Dadaists would be incorporated into several types of popular music, including punk, rock, and industrial.



Figure 1. Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Las Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, 1919, Berlin Neue Nationalgalerie.⁶

⁵ Hans Richter, *Dada, Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

⁶ Image from: "File: Hoch-Cut with the Kitchen Knife," Wikipedia, accessed January 13, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hoch-Cut_With_the_Kitchen_Knife.jpg.

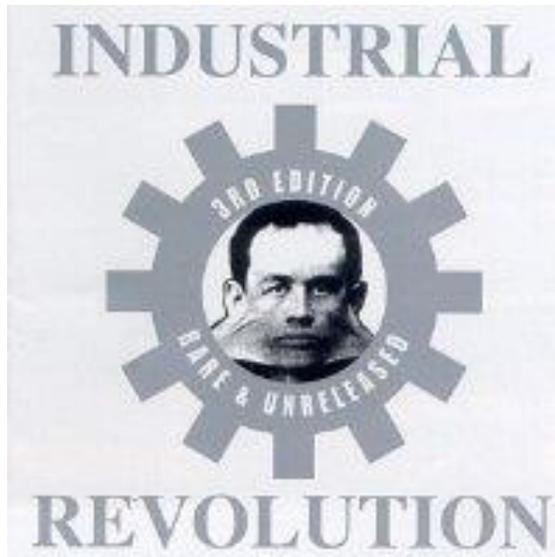


Figure 2. Cover art *Industrial Revolution: 3rd Edition Rare and Unreleased*, 1996.

Performance art, as a genre, developed in the 1960s. A group active in performance art during this time was Fluxus. Fluxus carried on some of the traditions set forth by the Dadaists by creating non-art and through their use of found objects.⁷ In describing Fluxus, George Brecht (1926-2008) writes:

Whether you think that concert halls, theaters, and art galleries are the natural places to present music, performances, and objects, or find these places mummifying, preferring streets, homes, and railway stations, or do not find it useful to distinguish between these two aspects of the world theater, there is someone associated with Fluxus who agrees with you. Artist, anti-artists, non-artists, anartists, the politically committed and the apolitical, poets of non-poetry, non-dancers dancing, doers, undoers, and non-doers, Fluxus encompasses opposites. Consider opposing it, supporting it, ignoring it, changing your mind.⁸

An example of found art by Brecht is *Void Stone*, as seen in Figure 3. The name of the group of artists, Fluxus, was first introduced by George Maciunas (1931-1978) in 1961. The Fluxus artists, however, were not well known until 1972, even though prestigious

⁷ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 592-595.

⁸ George Brecht, "Something About Fluxus," *Fluxus Newspaper #4*, 1964. Republished at: "Something About Fluxus by George Brecht," art / not art, accessed January 13, 2014, <http://www.artnotart.com/fluxus/gbrecht-somethingabout.html>.

artists such as La Monte Young (b. 1935) and Yoko Ono (b. 1933) contributed works in the 1960s. Ono created a performance art piece or a “happening” for Fluxus entitled *Painting with the Wind* (1961) with the given instructions: cut a hole in a bag filled with seeds of any kind and place the bag where there is wind.⁹ Genesis P-Orridge (b. 1950) and Cosey Fanni Tutti (b. 1951), both founding members of the performance art group COUM Transmissions, and later the seminal industrial band Throbbing Gristle, became active in Fluxus in March 1973.¹⁰ P-Orridge and Tutti became disillusioned with the movement as it became commercialized. By August 1973, P-Orridge wrote to the archivist Ken Friedman, who was in possession of the Fluxus collection, and offered to buy it in order to destroy it. Friedman’s surprising answer was that P-Orridge could have it for whatever purpose for \$20,000. However, Friedman soon became frustrated with P-Orridge’s communications, as P-Orridge’s motive was most likely to expose Friedman’s hypocrisy than to actually purchase the collection, so Friedman cut off the negotiations.¹¹



Figure 3. George Brecht, *Void Stone*, 1987, Arp-Museum.¹²

⁹ Thom Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music: Technology, Music, and Culture*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 109.

¹⁰ Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of Coum Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London, UK: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 3.11-3.12.

¹¹ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 3.13-3.14.

¹² Image found at: “File:George Brecht - Void Stone 01,” Wikipedia, accessed January 13, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:George_Brecht_-_Void_Stone_01.JPG.

The Viennese Actionists, a group formed in the mid-1960s, took performance art to a new level of extremity. P-Orridge said of a member of the Actionists: “I found [Otto] Mühl interesting, because he was dealing with taboo and social behavior, whereas Fluxus was really a running battle and commentary with art itself.”¹³ The Actionists had an overt political agenda, exploring the extremes of human nature in an effort to subvert unquestioning deference to authority.¹⁴ This is a tactic that would be fully incorporated into industrial music. The Actionists sometimes used self-mutilation in their performances. In the early 1970s, “body artists,” such as Marina Abramovic, went so far as to allow the audience to physically abuse her for six hours, eliminating the boundaries between the act and the observer. Collins notes that “The performance activities of the body artists would, as we will see, carry themselves over into the world of rock in the performance of punk and industrial bands.”¹⁵ The trend of creating situations where expected barriers were violated would continue.

The world of Western art music also strove to make sense of and reflect the new technological environment. Luigi Russolo, building on Pratella’s ideas of representing modern sounds in music, was one of the original proponents of not just recreating the sounds, but using the actual sounds themselves. Russolo began as a painter in the Futurist movement, but abandoned that career for a time to pursue his experiments in music. In 1913, he published *The Art of Noises*, wherein he urges breaking free from the constraints

¹³ John Savage, “Throbbing Gristle,” *Search and Destroy*, no. 6, April 1978, quoted in Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London, UK: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 3.16.

¹⁴ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 3.16.

¹⁵ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 600-604.

of traditional instrumentation.¹⁶ Thom Holmes explains: “As was natural for a child of the machine, Russolo equated the diminishing relevance of classical music to its being out of step with modern industrialized society.”¹⁷ He invented and constructed, along with his assistant Ugo Piatti (1888-1953), instruments he called the *intonarumori*, or noise intoners. Each of these machines was named after the sound it produced, such as the exploder and the howler.¹⁸ Russolo devised his own notation for his creations, and very few recordings exist of his original performances. His impact comes mostly from his writings and the influence he had on those who attended his performances, such as Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971).¹⁹

Feruccio Busoni (1866-1924) also searched for new means of expression through musical technology. His 1907 essay *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*²⁰ encouraged the use of alternate scales and a breaking free of the confines of traditional art music. His essay advocated the use of sounds and noise in music. He became most widely known as a virtuosic pianist and did not directly experiment with emerging technologies himself. He did, however, influence those who ventured into the electronic realm. Busoni was a friend and mentor to Edgard Varèse (1883-1965), who is sometimes credited as being the father of electronic music. Even though many innovators had experimented in the genre before Varèse, he brought it to the attention of the public with his premier of *Poème*

¹⁶ Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises in Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 133-138.

¹⁷ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 14.

¹⁸ Flora Dennis, “Russolo, Luigi.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed September 10, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

¹⁹ Dennis, “Russolo, Luigi.”

²⁰ Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1911).

électronique on May 5, 1958 at the World's Fair in Brussels.²¹ Holmes notes of Varèse: "One of his goals was to create a kind of mechanized means for composing and playing music wherein the composer's ideas would 'no longer be desecrated by adaptation or performance as all the past classics were.'"²² A composer's intentions would no longer be limited by the availability or proficiency of the performers. For much of his life, Varèse attempted to obtain funding to realize his ideas. He reached out to Harvey Fletcher at Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1927 to ask for his own laboratory in which to perform research. When this was unsuccessful, he moved to Paris and tried to raise interest for founding a school of composition with an experimental sound studio.²³ This was not realized, and he again appealed to Fletcher in 1932, this time asking for access to their facilities, instead of funding for his own. Around this time he also applied for a grant from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and clearly laid out his research goals in experimenting with new sounds and greater ranges than instruments at the time could produce. These requests were also denied.²⁴ In 1938, he brought his ideas to the film industry in Los Angeles, in the hope that they would see the value of his concepts applied to their work. He was again turned away.²⁵ It was not until the early 1950s that the validity of his concepts began to be appreciated.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) and Ernst Toch (1887-1964) began experimenting with the use of turntables not only to record and replay music, but as actual instruments themselves. This *Grammophonmusik* is one of the original instances of sound distortion.

²¹ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 4.

²² Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 5.

²³ Peter Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 9.

²⁴ Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 9-11.

²⁵ Paul Griffiths. "Varèse, Edgard." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed September 25, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

Hindemith and Toch premiered *Originalwerke für Schallplatten* at the 1930 Neue Musik festival in Berlin. This composition consisted of five short pieces, two composed by Hindemith and three composed by Toch. The sound distortion was created by recording a sound, then re-recording the sound at a different speed. This process would be repeated with the other recorded sounds. In order to create the final mix, several turntables playing each “track,” with its own distinct sound, would be recorded at the same time, to create one record containing the entire composition.²⁶ Hindemith’s pieces were for xylophone, voice and cello, and Toch’s were for spoken word. These early experiments revealed the potential compositional value in sound manipulation.

Pierre Schaeffer (1910-1995), Abraham Moles (1922-1992), Jacques Poullin and Pierre Henry (b. 1927) worked together at RTF in Paris to bring found sound into the realm of electronic music. The combination of expertise between Schaeffer, a radio engineer, Moles, an engineer and theorist in information perception and psychology, Poullin, an audio engineer, and Henry, a classically trained composer, was essential in the formation of *musique concrète*. Schaeffer and Moles first worked together to develop the concept of *l’objet sonore*, the sound object. Manning defines this as “a basic sound event, which is isolated from its original context and examined in terms of its innate characteristics outside its normal time continuum.”²⁷ The experiments in sound conducted by Schaeffer and his colleagues, and the approach towards sounds as basic elements of composition, separate from their context, were vital to the development of electronic music. Schaeffer discovered, through the recording of percussion instruments struck in different ways, that the attack and decay of a sound, not only the timbre,

²⁶ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 43-44.

²⁷ Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 23.

determines its characteristics.²⁸ This realization was instrumental in the development of sound synthesis. Schaeffer also anticipated needed developments in sound manipulation. He “quickly realized that sources retaining a significant proportion of their identifying characteristics after processing created major problems of association.”²⁹ In order for sampled sounds to be completely under the control of the composer, they must be able to be distorted and altered into unrecognizable forms, if the composer should so choose. Unlike Varèse, Schaeffer was able to obtain considerable funding through his studio in Paris; therefore, he was able to experiment with his ideas in ways for which Varèse did not have the resources.

The counterpart to RTF in Paris, was *Studio für Elektronische Musik*, or Electronic Music Studio, out of Cologne. *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk*, Northwest German Broadcasting (NWDR), later to become *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*, West German broadcasting (WDR), broadcast compositions created in this studio.³⁰ Herbert Eimert (1897-1972), a composer and musicologist ran the studio and was supported by Dr. Werner Meyer-Eppeler (1913-1960), a physicist and information theorist studying phonetics, Robert Beyer (1901-1989), a sound engineer, and Fritz Enkel (1908-1959), an engineer. Eimert’s studio first focused solely on composition with electronically generated sound, a different take on using modern technology in music composition than Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*.³¹ The advances made in Cologne in audio processing and tone generation were to prove just as vital to the future of electronic music as the discoveries made in Paris. Schaeffer and Eimert, however, felt that their different

²⁸ Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 20.

²⁹ Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 20.

³⁰ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 56.

³¹ Charles Wilson. “Eimert, Herbert.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 6, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

approaches to electronic music were incompatible with one another, and their contempt for one another's philosophies at the time was well known.³² Eimert saw the electronic medium as a means to expand upon atonal music and serial techniques. Schaeffer felt that it was important to break away from the influence of German music and forge a new path. Although the two studios had conflicting means of achieving their goals, they often achieved similar ends. The Paris studio took acoustic sounds and distorted them to sound less natural, whereas the studio in Cologne often took electronic sounds and manipulated them until they sounded as if they could have come from an acoustic source. An example of this would be Eimert's *Fünf Stücke* (1955), composed with synthesized sounds that could be mistaken for distorted recordings of acoustic sounds. Karlheinz Stockhausen worked first out of the Paris studio with Schaeffer in 1952, before returning to Cologne to work out of the electronic studio there in 1953, and so was influenced by both branches of electronic music.³³ Stockhausen and the studio at Cologne would further influence other composers such as György Ligeti (1923-2006). Though Ligeti did not compose many electronic pieces, he often created electronic sounding textures due to the influences of his experience at Cologne. The impact of these two prominent electronic music studios, as well as many others in Europe and Britain that became operational during the 1950s and 1960s, also made its way to the United States.

Though John Cage (1912-1992) was by no means the only avant-garde composer from the United States during this early boom in electronic music, it was his writings and philosophies that would make its way back to Britain to directly influence the inception of industrial music. Ford notes that early on, P-Orridge "began to take an interest in

³² Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 56.

³³ Richard Toop. "Stockhausen, Karlheinz." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 6, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

experimental music, chiefly inspired by reading John Cage's book *Silence* (1961).³⁴ Composers in the United States were not as quick to begin experimentation with new music technology, and very few American composers in the 1950s had access to anything more than standard tape recorders wired together. In 1951, Cage founded the project "Music for Magnetic Tape" with a group of individuals who were interested in exploring the new medium. The founding of this project was partially inspired by the work of husband and wife recording engineer team Louis (1920-1989) and Bebe Barron (1927-2008). Cage invited the Barrons into his project, as well as composers Earle Brown (1926-2002), Morton Feldman (1926-1987), David Tudor (1926-1996), and Christian Wolff (b. 1934).³⁵ One of the most prominent compositions to come out of this collaboration was *Williams Mix* (1952). The substance of this piece was created from up to six hundred recordings of various materials which took nine months to tape and splice together.³⁶ Whatever one might think of the resulting chaos, it was the philosophy behind the making of this piece that was revolutionary. Manning notes:

The intention was to provoke a positive reaction to such a kaleidoscope of disorder, shaking the protective assuredness of traditional musical tastes and expectations and impelling the listener to search actively for plausible associations amongst the diverse events. In complete contrast to the early Colgone works, *Williams Mix* forces a level of communication by its very assault on traditional values, without any pretence to provide an alternative aesthetic that may be safely assessed from a distance. This challenge to the normal detachment of audiences is made all the more pointed by the inclusion of cheers, jeers, and applause toward the end of the piece, as if the composer is assessing the performance of the listener, rather than vice versa.³⁷

The "normal detachment of audiences" that Manning refers to is a large part of the reason for Throbbing Gristle's move from the art world into the world of popular music.

³⁴ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 1.7.

³⁵ Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 74.

³⁶ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 84.

³⁷ Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 75.

Throbbing Gristle sought an audience that would be directly affected by their work, as opposed to one that would just analyze the aesthetics. In 1954 the members of Music for Magnetic Tape disbanded to move on to other projects. The Barrons would become film composers, the film *Forbidden Planet* (1956) being their first large score. The debate about whether or not electronic music constitutes “real” music is not a new point of contention. The original credits to *Forbidden Planet* were to read “Electronic Music by Louis and Bebe Barron.” Concerned that there would be resistance from the musicians’ union over this, it was changed to “Electronic Tonalities by Louis and Bebe Barron.”³⁸ After the project disbanded, Cage would delve deeper into his exploration of chance and indeterminate music, first using the *I Ching*, then through numbers randomly generated by computer.³⁹

Cage’s philosophies provided new perspectives on noise, sound, and silence as well as on the incorporation of these elements into music. Genesis P-Orridge says that after reading Cage’s book he felt “there are no rules. I think reading *Silence* confirmed a lot of the things I was already feeling. That book was vindication that anything and everything was possible and that everything could be included. I think inclusion has been one of the big themes of what I’ve done.”⁴⁰ Cage’s philosophies have had an influence on musicians ever since. “In the history of avant-garde music, activities like John Cage’s visit to an anechoic chamber, where he learned that there is no such thing as pure biological silence (he claimed to hear the sounds of his own blood circulation within the chamber), have had radical effects on the nature of composition, to the point where it

³⁸ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 86.

³⁹ Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 87.

⁴⁰ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 1.8.

would be impossible to ‘un-learn’ them.”⁴¹ Bailey believes that experiments like Cage’s “have revealed the way the world has always been, even while this reality was obscured from our sensory perception in the age of mass media.”⁴² This idea of revealing the truth of the world despite the information constantly fed to the masses is central to industrial music.

1.2 Throbbing Gristle and the Founding of Industrial Records

The performance art group COUM Transmissions, out of Sheffield, England, would change direction in 1976 to center around music, renaming their act Throbbing Gristle. COUM Transmissions consisted of Genesis P-Orridge, Peter “Sleazy” Christopherson (1955-2010), Cosey Fanni Tutti, and Chris Carter (b. 1953), and all of these members made the transition into Throbbing Gristle.⁴³ “Each of the four COUM members who would become Throbbing Gristle were in agreement that music would provide more of an indelible imprint on the psyche of a younger, more diversified public.”⁴⁴ This venture into the popular music realm led to the existence of COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle in two mutually exclusive worlds. Ford explains: “Whilst the ‘popular’ music press ignored COUM and classified TG as experimental art rock, the bulk of the art press ignored TG and still classified COUM as performance artists.”⁴⁵ The crossover into popular culture was a strategic experiment. Ford notes: “P-Orridge and the others had concluded that COUM’s art world audience was generally too detached and disengaged

⁴¹ Thomas Bey William Bailey. *Micro-Bionic: Radical Electronic Music and Sound Art in the 21st Century*. (London: Creation Books, 2009), 6.

⁴² Bailey, *Micro-Bionic*, 6.

⁴³ Bailey, *Micro-Bionic*, 17.

⁴⁴ Bailey, *Micro-Bionic*, 13.

⁴⁵ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 5.17.

from its work” and that “TG’s aim was to find an audience that would be more responsive and committed to its way of seeing the world.”⁴⁶ The members of COUM formed the musical group Throbbing Gristle and founded Industrial Records to have full control over producing and distributing their work. The name of the record label itself implied the coldness of the newly mechanized world. It reflects an existence in which the World Wars became possible. Technology had contributed to the capability of such large scale war and, as in any war, even more developments were made during the conflict to advance the purposes of war. Also new to these wars was the ability for the public to receive information at an accelerated rate and visual proof of the atrocities through photography and video. The control and dissemination of information was vital, and this was not lost on Throbbing Gristle. “As Genesis P-Orridge states, ‘We’re interested in information, we’re not interested in music as such. . . . We think the real power lies with who controls the information.’”⁴⁷ Throbbing Gristle continued a movement begun with COUM Transmissions to break the monopoly on the control of information.

The new perspective on the use of sound and noise began to be explored in the musical community outside of art music as well. “Apparently, the clear distinction between noise and music (not-noise) maintained throughout the history of western music, mainly because of the specific traits of the western notational system – no longer sufficed from the late 19th century onwards and noise itself came to mean and represent something entirely different.”⁴⁸ Noise, which before would have been perceived as a distraction to the performance, could now become an essential part of the composition. “White noise is

⁴⁶ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 5.17.

⁴⁷ Melle Jan Kromhout, “‘Over the Ruined Factory There’s a Funny Noise’: Throbbing Gristle and the Mediatized Roots of Noise in/as Music,” *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 34, no. 1, January 2011, 31.

⁴⁸ Kromhout, “Over the Ruined Factory,” 28.

not so much just meaningless, but rather ‘beyond’ meaning, though densely loaded with possible data, or information. This ‘new’ noise is the backdrop of technological media. The frequency-based ‘noise’ of recording has proven to be fundamental for music ever since; it changed the ideas of sound, music, and noise altogether.”⁴⁹ Every sound encountered now has the potential to become a part of creative expression and the vehicle for dissemination of information or ideas. The artist who calls himself Scanner (b. 1964) uses found sounds to create impressions of cityscapes. He questions: “How does one define the spaces between music and sound? When we listen to a Walkman, how do we distinguish between that which is intended – the sound carrier – and that which is incidental: passing traffic, the roar of a plane, the screech of a train door, your own footsteps? Whether active (creator) or passive (listener) we set up a virtual space in which we are each free to explore the sonorous and acoustic strata of what is an intimate yet global expression of space, a simple translation of the social transformations wrought by new technologies.”⁵⁰ Through new technologies, expression through sound was no longer limited to trained musicians. This expression could be achieved without any traditional instrumentation through the recording and manipulation of data. Genesis P-Orridge explains his attitude towards sound: “I believed music was organized and assembled sound and that was as far as you could go with a definition. You can assemble it anyway you want and you can use any sound you want.”⁵¹ This definition is most likely a direct result of P-Orridge’s study of Cage’s philosophies. P-Orridge believed, however, that “Western music is pathetic in its rigid conformity,” and that the “future of music lies in

⁴⁹ Kromhout, “Over the Ruined Factory,” 24.

⁵⁰ Scanner, “Remembering How to Forget: An Artist’s Exploration of Sound,” *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 11, 2001, 66.

⁵¹ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 1.7-1.8.

non-musicians.”⁵² Only those not indoctrinated in the traditional musical system, or those willing to step outside of it, could come up with a truly unique approach that is relevant to the current times.

Music was not the only artistic genre to take advantage of the new recording technologies, and these other genres influenced music as well. The philosophies of William S. Burroughs (1914-1997), an American writer associated with the Beat Generation, and his use of cut-up techniques had an effect on Throbbing Gristle. The cut-up technique was invented by Brion Gysin (1916-1986) and further developed by Burroughs as a way for writers to use collage as a medium. “Here is one way to do it. Take a page. Like this page. Now cut down the middle and across the middle...Now rearrange the sections...and you have a new page. Sometimes it says much the same thing. Sometimes something quite different.”⁵³ A cut-up could easily be, and has been, applied to audio tape as well. Burroughs’ cassette novel, an early audio book, *The Revised Boy Scout Manual*, discusses using propaganda, something generally used by governments, as a political statement against the government. “A French revolutionary sets forth a method by which one man with an unlimited expense account can bring down a government. He invents an underground, planting stickers and slogans. Acts of sabotage at widely separated locations give an impression that the underground is widespread and well-organized.”⁵⁴ Propaganda was clearly coming to light as an attempt at government control. “Propaganda is the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that

⁵² Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 2.10-2.11.

⁵³ Vivian Vale and Andrea Juno, eds. *RE/Search #4/5: William S Burroughs, Brion Gysin and Throbbing Gristle*. (Hong Kong: Colorcraft, 1982), 36.

⁵⁴ Vale, *RE/Search #4/5*, 8.

further the desired intent of the propagandist. Propaganda is then, by definition, a forceful action. It does not simply attempt to influence the receiver; it shapes and manipulates. Its purpose is to engage in direct communication with a subject, and to create a highly specific and almost reflexive behavior.”⁵⁵ Throbbing Gristle believed that this attempted indoctrination should be revealed. “The trends of increasing species homogeneity and of ‘branding’ were thrown back in the face of the public in an uncomfortable but irrefutable statement on the old 1960s subculture’s powerlessness relative to the massive military-industrial complex.”⁵⁶ Throbbing Gristle’s philosophy, however, was not one of passively accepting defeat. “‘Industrial’ music was not a wholesale capitulation to, or endorsement of, superior forces of bureaucracy, war and mass production – far from it. It simply proposed a different way of engaging these hostile powers: outright protest, street skirmishes and on-campus proclamation of one’s anti-authoritarian position were obsolete, if not downright foolhardy, especially when the authorities were now so huge and bloated as to be undermined in more subtle, stealthy ways.”⁵⁷ New ways of confronting the system needed to be explored.

In order to fight the system, one often must be outside of the system. “COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle always operated at the very limits of what was respectable, legally actionable—as some of the participants in this extraordinary story have found to their cost—and indeed possible: engaging in ‘nothing short of a total war’ on contemporary perceptions.”⁵⁸ They “plunged into a technological and personal examination of the dark side—the forbidden, the taboo, the dystopian future on the

⁵⁵ Jason J. Hanley, “‘The Land of Rape and Honey’: The Use of World War II Propaganda in the Music Videos of,” *American Music*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Spring 2004, 159.

⁵⁶ Bailey, *Micro-Bionic*, 14.

⁵⁷ Bailey, *Micro-Bionic*, 14.

⁵⁸ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 8.

doorstep.”⁵⁹ The reference of their work as being part of a war is noted by those writing about Throbbing Gristle as well as by band members themselves. Genesis P-Orridge points out that “real war has become information war. It is being fought by subtle informational media—under cold conditions.”⁶⁰ Throbbing Gristle believed that “the mass media distort reality by pre-selecting information, robbing people of the individual freedom to think and act for themselves.”⁶¹ Even to this day: “industrial music in general makes use of shock tactics on a regular basis as a form of protest. Bands attempt to shock their listeners with the horrors of something negative, instead of telling them the positive alternatives.”⁶² A current industrial musician, Alain Jourgensen (b. 1958), of the group Ministry says of this approach: “All we’re ever saying is ‘think for yourself, question authority.’ It’s very, very simple. Everyone wants things pre-cut, homogenized, spoon-fed, and I won’t give it to them.”⁶³ Jourgensen suggests that the audience carries part of the responsibility as to become active participants, not just recipients.

Live performances by Throbbing Gristle often tried to force the audience out of complacency. Kromhout notes: “Throbbing Gristle’s violent gestures and images, referring to struggle, war, and guerrilla tactics, complement their uncompromising use of noise.”⁶⁴ All of these elements, however, had definite purpose. “As band member Cosey Fanni Tutti noted, their ‘sound was cathartic and used as an assault weapon’ in what they call their war against modern power-through-information strategies: the control of

⁵⁹ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 8.

⁶⁰ Vivian Vale and Andrea Juno, eds. *RE/Search #6/7: Industrial Culture Handbook*. (Hong Kong: Colorcraft, 1983), 15.

⁶¹ Kromhout, “Over the Ruined Factory There’s a Funny Noise,” 31.

⁶² Hanley, “The Land of Rape and Honey,” 164.

⁶³ Hanley, “The Land of Rape and Honey,” 168.

⁶⁴ Kromhout, “Over the Ruined Factory There’s a Funny Noise,” 32.

information by those in power.”⁶⁵ According to Bailey, their strategies led to “what would eventually become the defining characteristic of industrial music: manipulating and reappropriating consumer technologies, especially those intended to have a behavior-modifying or pacifying effect, so that they will instead agitate individuals and once again stimulate them into a state of free, non-compliant thought.”⁶⁶ Throbbing Gristle used the tactics of the system against itself. Bret D. Woods says in his master’s thesis on industrial music:

Understanding industrial music as the experimental, electronic sound of Industrial Records is only viewing part of the equation. Indeed, the name of the genre itself was invoked for the connotation it suggests—industrialization. But in many ways, the musicians and visual/performance artists who were innovators of industrial music were also spokespeople, in a sense, for the numbness and sameness that had come to pass in society as a result of mass industrialization prior to the invention of the label. The sociopolitical content of lyrics and choices of sampling communicated a clear message—something is wrong with this world, and we are going to tell you; we are going to show you what it is.⁶⁷

This tradition of unflinching truth, initiated by Throbbing Gristle, was to carry forward into further generations of industrial music. Throbbing Gristle as a musical act was always a means to an end. Music just happened to be the most effective medium to distribute their ideas.

Industrial Records, as an independent label, was an experiment born out of necessity. Throbbing Gristle had brief negotiations with Virgin Records, but could not obtain the autonomy they desired in a contract with a large record company.⁶⁸ After agreeing upon the name Industrial Records for the new endeavor, Monte Cazazza, an artist who would have releases through the record label, suggested the slogan “Industrial

⁶⁵ Kromhout, “Over the Ruined Factory There’s a Funny Noise,” 32.

⁶⁶ Bailey, *Micro-Bionic*, 16.

⁶⁷ Bret D. Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People: The History and Development of an Underground Genre.” Master’s thesis, Florida State University, 2007, 32.

⁶⁸ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 7.14-7.15.

Music for Industrial People.” The name of the label served as both a representation of modern culture and a statement against the system. Throbbing Gristle and Industrial Records manufactured a brand that purposely simulated the system of control.

Constructing the band’s image obviously meant more than just wearing particular clothes. It meant examining every detail of the bands interface with the public, including logos, album covers, posters, badges, regalia, press photos and press releases... Out went the folksy bohemian humour and in came the ironically deadpan corporate slogan, and with it, eventually, the ‘tough’ and authoritarian image associated with military uniforms. Uniforms suggested conformism to values that suppressed individual freedom of choice. TG employed these uniforms, insignia, emblems, patches and badges to bind together its growing but disparate audience. Orders would be issued, and strategy developed, by an organization separate from TG. The name of that organization was Industrial Records.⁶⁹

Throbbing Gristle understood that there are good reasons the systems of control use the tactics of unifying its members into a definable culture. It is effective. It makes people feel that they are a part of something larger than themselves, and provides a social network. At the same time, the audience who would be attracted to Throbbing Gristle and industrial music were those who were disillusioned with the system and would intuitively understand that all of these symbols and the way they were used carried a heavy amount of irony.

1.3 First-Generation Industrial Music (1976-1983)

Industrial Records was officially founded September 1977 in London, England, though Throbbing Gristle did release some works on cassette in 1976. The first incarnation of Industrial Records operated through January 1982, though its last release was in 1981. The company only existed a little over four years, but its output was influential enough to found an entirely new genre of music. Most of the music released through the label was

⁶⁹ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 7.14.

experimental in nature, but there were a few notable exceptions. William S. Burroughs released an LP through the studio entitled *Nothing Here Now But The Recordings*⁷⁰, which consists of Burroughs reading excerpts from his works, sometimes accompanied by sound effects, and sometimes spliced or distorted. There was also a single, “I Confess,”⁷¹ which can best be described as bubblegum pop. It was recorded by Dorothy, with music composed by Alex Fergusson (b. 1952). Fergusson knew P-Orridge through his work with the band Alternative TV. Both Dorothy and Fergusson would be involved at various points in P’Orridge’s group Psychic TV. Dorothy, whose full name is Dorothy Max Prior, did not release any other music on her own, and the best information I could find about her involvement with Industrial Records comes from an interview conducted by a curious fan who goes by the name Kek-w. The interview was posted on his blog, Kid Shirt.⁷² Dorothy, who goes by Max, explains the reason the single was released on Industrial Records: “all of TG very much liked the idea of challenging expectations of the Industrial label by having a sweet and chirpy Eurovision style pop song released on the label, so that’s why we put it out on Industrial.”⁷³ As shown by these examples, the output of Industrial Records ended up being quite eclectic. Industrial Records came back into being in 2008 and has mostly re-released Throbbing Gristle material. A full listing of Industrial Record’s releases can be found on the label’s official website on the “history” tab.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ William S. Burroughs, *Nothing Here Now But The Recordings*, Industrial Records IR0016, LP. 33 rpm, 1981.

⁷¹ Dorothy, *I Confess*, Industrial Records IR0014, LP. 33 rpm, 1980.

⁷² Kek-w, “Kid Shirt,” Kid Shirt, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://kidshirt.blogspot.com/>.

⁷³ Kek-w, “Kid Shirt: The Story of ‘I Confess’,” Kid Shirt, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://kidshirt.blogspot.com/2006/01/story-of-i-confess.html>.

⁷⁴ “Industrial Records – History,” Industrial Records, accessed January 18, 2014, <http://www.industrial-records.com/>.

Although Industrial Records released a variety of material, several other bands besides Throbbing Gristle issued through the label are also considered early innovators of the industrial music genre. These bands included Clock DVA and Cabaret Voltaire from England, The Leather Nun from Sweden, SPK from Australia, and Monte Cazazza from the U.S. Clock DVA and Cabaret Voltaire continued making industrial music into the second generation, adopting a more danceable sound, with Cabaret Voltaire later venturing into ambient territory. The Leather Nun is generally considered a post-punk band. Their song “Death Threats,” however, fits very well into the industrial music genre. It was this song that convinced P-Orridge to publish their album *Slow Death*⁷⁵ through Industrial Records.⁷⁶ A song by SPK will be analyzed in this thesis, and SPK’s history will be covered in more detail in the following chapter. Monte Cazazza is primarily a controversial performance artist, and Industrial Records was probably the only label around at the time that would release a recording such as “Candy Man.” This piece has a straight forward reading of the names of the victims of serial killer Dean Corll and details of their deaths while a cyclical engine sound plays in the background. Cazazza, as previously stated, is also known for coining the Industrial Records slogan: “Industrial Music for Industrial People.”

Industrial Records was not the only label to publish industrial music during the first generation, though the debate about what would or would not qualify as industrial music had already begun. Cazazza made his view clear in the *Industrial Culture Handbook*, published in 1983: “Basically I think the idea of putting out this issue of and on Industrial Culture is ‘beating a dead horse.’ While all of the various people involved

⁷⁵ The Leather Nun, *Slow Death*, Industrial Records IR0006, LP. 33 1/3 rpm, 1979.

⁷⁶ Colin Larkin. “Leather Nun.” *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, 4th ed.. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 17, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

were doing their initial work, they were paid very little attention—just met with dishonest animosity. . . . It is really only after the fact that band-wagon jumpers have decided to hitch a ride on our little virus. Well, if people think it is for fun or entertainment, they are in for a bad surprise.”⁷⁷ Regardless of Cazazza’s feelings on the matter, Industrial Records had begun a trend that was now out of its control. Collins notes:

There were also other artists not affiliated directly with Industrial Records that were beginning to create music with a similar mechanical aesthetic. These artists were not always coming from the middle-class art-school background common to the Industrial Records artists. Test Dept for instance began in 1981 south-east London, as a direct reaction to Thatcher’s pit closure program. . . . Test Department were [sic] not only politically minded, but also politically active. In fact, their musical style grew from the equipment of the decommissioned factories and mines.⁷⁸

The next place that industrial music took up a strong presence outside of the U.K. was in Germany. Hanley details this trend: “By the late 1970s German groups such as Einstürzende Neubauten (Collapsing New Buildings), Die Krupps (The Krupps [Family]), and Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft (German-American Friendship, aka DAF) created a more percussion-based sound by using sledgehammers, power tools, and sheet metal to produce their own brand of metallic industrial music.”⁷⁹ These early German bands would prove to be highly influential to future generations of industrial music as well.

Hanley describes the conclusion of the first generation of industrial music: “Industrial Records officially closed its doors after Throbbing Gristle performed their last live concert in San Francisco on Friday, May 29, 1981 (a live recording was later released as *Mission of Dead Souls* [Mute, 1983]). The members of Throbbing Gristle all

⁷⁷ Vale and Juno, *Industrial Culture Handbook*, 81.

⁷⁸ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 723-732.

⁷⁹ Jason James Hanley, “Metal Machine Music: Technology, Noise, and Modernism in Industrial Music 1975-1996.” PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2011, 10-11.

continued to make music on their own, but the sounds of TG and the business of Industrial Records were both finished.”⁸⁰ Other early industrial bands also disbanded or changed style at this time. However, without the pressure to achieve mass appeal or to satisfy a record label in terms of sales and profit, these early industrial bands set a precedent in using whatever sounds they could find and addressing any topic of their choice.

⁸⁰ Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 292.

CHAPTER II

INDUSTRIAL MUSIC: EVOLUTION

2.1 Second-Generation Industrial Music (1983-1989)

The second generation of industrial music was conceived in an environment already established by the first generation. Industrial artists of this era knew they were coming into a musical genre, unlike many of the first-wave artists, who through exploration developed into musical groups as their preferred means of expression. Due to this, there was not as much of a push to establish an artistic and philosophical lineage; it had already been created. Hanley details this development:

The first generation actively sought out the past in order to borrow specific elements in order to construct a history for Industrial music and form the set of subcultural and musical ideas... For the second-generation musicians the Industrial subculture already existed. Thus, they entered into it, and by doing so they were granted access to the history, artistic methods, and subcultural attributes of the first-generation bands. In turn, second-generation Industrial musicians looked to assimilate contemporary styles of popular music and fuse them into the Industrial-music archetypes developed by the first generation. Because of this there are very few new historical connections made to the early twentieth century during the years 1983 to 1989.⁸¹

Removal of the pressure to lay these historical foundations allowed more room for the exploration of establishing precedents in the mode of message delivery, the music itself. Technological advances, such as software synthesizers with their greater ability to program looped material, also allowed access to musical capabilities that untrained musicians would not have previously been able to recreate.

⁸¹ Hanley, "Metal Machine Music," 289.

During the 1980s, industrial music proliferated through more of Europe and into North America. Part of this growth was due to the incorporation of influences from pop and rock music. Hanley asserts that the theme of second-generation industrial music was assimilation. According to Hanley: “Assimilation was the core philosophy of the second generation who rebooted the Industrial music subculture in 1983; this new group of musicians took the musical experimentation of first generation and integrated new sounds and techniques from other styles of popular music, specifically synth-pop and heavy metal. This often brought the music closer to a ‘popular’ sound, but it also meant that the music reached a larger audience.”⁸² The addition of elements of pop music was not always received well by the original supporters of the genre. In any underground community, there is the concept of “selling out” or compromising one’s principles to better fit into the mainstream. Once any element of an underground culture moves into the mainstream sphere, it often becomes a watered-down, diluted version of its former self. To this day, there are those within industrial culture that believe this is exactly what became of industrial music after the first or second wave. There was, however, a positive reaction to these changes within the community as well.⁸³ Some saw industrial music as retaining its ideals while evolving into a more polished form. Hanley tells of the dual aspects of this generation’s theme:

Assimilation was also the means by which the second generation continued the information war by creating a critical commentary on modern life, political relations, and global injustices, and further developed the Industrial music sound and style. But the process of assimilation was not always a harmonious one. Assimilation can also be a forceful action. One can be assimilated or witness the forceful assimilation of an entire group of people. In many ways the word, and what it represents, reeks of the modern crisis.⁸⁴

⁸² Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 291.

⁸³ Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 293.

⁸⁴ Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 289-90.

Here Hanley hints at the needed change and growth in the second wave of industrial music in order to stay culturally relevant. The increasing interconnectedness of the world became important to address, and this was done quite literally by blurring the lines of what is encompassed in industrial music and ideologies.

A concept that was a part of industrial music from the beginning was that of using the system against itself. With this in mind, incorporating elements of pop culture could be seen as a tactical maneuver. In his book *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music*, S. Alexander Reed proposes three main purposes for industrial's experimentation with pop. He lists the first reason as "the explicitly political appropriation of pop, which can include parody, but which usually instead of mocking popular music uses and recontextualizes it to assert social commentary about that pop and the culture that consumes it. In doing so, it also presents that industrial artist as knowing and empowered: he or she can *do* pop without *being* pop."⁸⁵ His second explanation states one reason the sounds of pop came into industrial music was "that in the historical moment, these new elements were not as identifiably poppish as we take them to be today. Instead, they might reflect a time when industrial music's exploration of technology aligned itself in parallel with pop's."⁸⁶ The technology with which to make music at this time was fairly limited. Reed explains: "The third way that industrial music uses dance and rock tropes is for their sheer musical and bodily pleasure."⁸⁷ One of the most influential sub-genres of the second generation was Electronic Body Music, a term coined by the group Front 242. "Early on Front 242 began to identify their brand of Industrial as Electronic Body Music

⁸⁵ S. Alexander Reed, *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), Location 2601.

⁸⁶ Reed, *Assimilate*, 2637.

⁸⁷ Reed, *Assimilate*, 2701.

(EBM) in order to convey both the modernist electronic nature of the music and the fact that it was intended as dance music featuring sounds and rhythms that would affect your body.”⁸⁸ This would seem to be a definite departure from the first generation of industrial artists; however, it does have connections back to industrial’s roots. Throbbing Gristle was formed partially as a means to spread the message to a wider audience outside of the art world, and this incorporation of dance music certainly achieved the goal of once again broadening the fan base. Ford notes that Throbbing Gristle researched “sound’s ability to affect both physical and psychological change in humans,”⁸⁹ which is similar to Front 242’s goal of affecting the listener’s body. These trends of incorporating additional elements into the music would continue into the next generation of industrial musicians.

2.2 Third-Generation Industrial Music and Beyond

In 1989, the industrial sound came more fully into the public eye as popular bands such as Nine Inch Nails began appropriating the sounds to huge commercial success. Hanley explains: “These new incarnations of the Industrial-music sound allowed the style to reach its widest audience ever, to the point that the word industrial became a marker for journalists to describe the use of noise and aggressive, buzzing, machine-like synthesizer timbres within a song. At the same time many second-generation Industrial bands began to retreat from the style.”⁹⁰ The threat of commercial success was one of the reasons why Throbbing Gristle disbanded, fearing that fame would create a group of blind followers; the ability to goad the fans into thinking for themselves would be lost. The new media coverage poses a dilemma for the growth of industrial music. The mass media, which

⁸⁸ Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 317.

⁸⁹ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, 8.7.

⁹⁰ Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 359.

industrial artists have worked to subvert, is now stamping the label of industrial onto acts that may or may not have anything to do with industrial culture, but rather have a harsher or more electronic sound than other bands that are played through mainstream media outlets. This has created conflicting views as to what industrial music is, both within mainstream culture and the industrial community. There is first the split between what the average music listener, who has heard the term ‘industrial,’ believes it to be, and what fans who are involved in the underground scene believe it to be. Then, within the scene itself, there are a multitude of splits that seem to be mainly determined by how, when and where the fan was first exposed to industrial music. For example, from my experience in the industrial community, a fan who was exposed to first-generation industrial music at the time it was active will have a far different perspective on what the music is than one who first heard Nine Inch Nails’ appropriation of industrial sound on the radio and decided to seek out the industrial dance scene active since the second generation. A fan who became active in the scene in the second generation, when there were specialty record stores and tape exchanges with fellow fans, when new music was mostly discovered through interaction with other people in the scene, will have a different perspective than someone who has become active more recently and gets most of their information about the music online. Until the internet became the main means of dissemination of music, the industrial scene was also quite regional. Although there are some industrial music “standards” that have been regularly played in clubs throughout the world, there are also local bands that achieve a strong following in their region, but do not necessarily get played in clubs internationally, or even outside of their local area. So, the industrial club scene, even to this day, remains somewhat regional. The scene in

Austin, Texas, is not the same as the scene in Los Angeles, California. This presents an additional layer of complication in defining the genre.

Third-generation industrial music and beyond has splintered into a multitude of subgenres, and since there is so much debate as to what qualifies as industrial music, forming a clear picture of the genre can be complicated and not easily agreed upon.

Woods states that “much of the music prevalent in today’s industrial scene—that is most of the music that is called ‘industrial’ music—is essentially a conglomeration of the EBM and electro-industrial sound. Generally speaking, if the fan base ambiguously refers to music as ‘industrial,’ then it can most likely be classified in these groups as well.”⁹¹

Woods lays out a complex chart of genre relationships shown below in Figure 4.

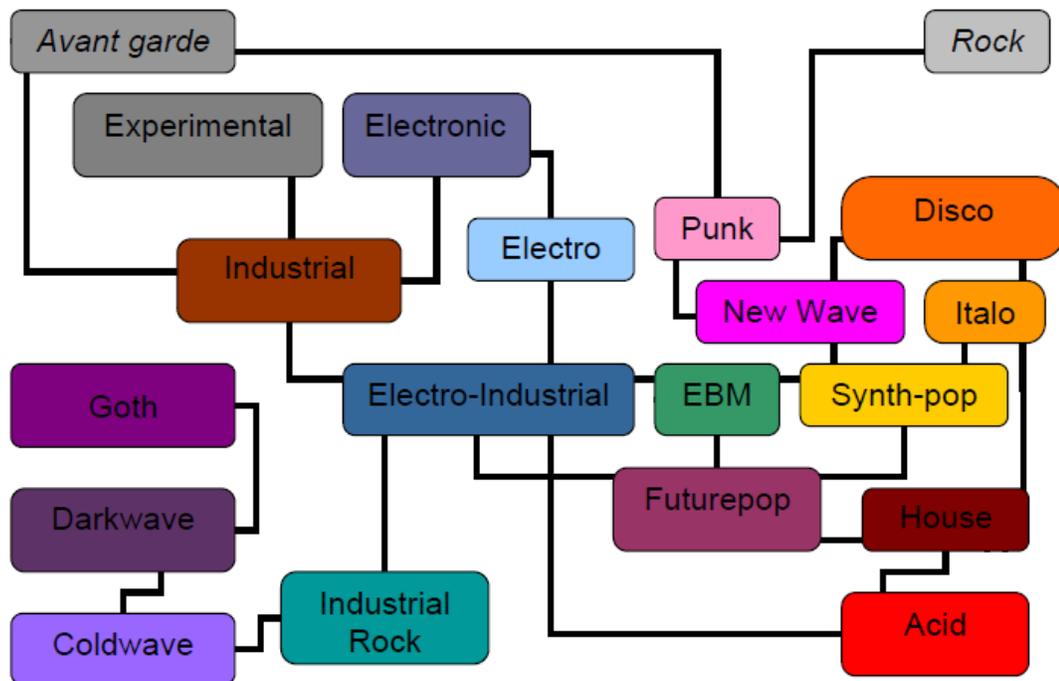


Figure 4. Woods, “The development of industrial music: Historical influences and genre connections.”⁹²

⁹¹ Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 52.

⁹² Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 55.

Woods provides another chart that includes additional subgenres of industrial music: power electronics / power noise, electro-industrial / elektro, synth / darksynth, aggrotech / terror EBM.⁹³ Collins supplies a slightly different set of sub-genres listing: classic industrial, industrial metal, neo-folk and black industrial, classic noise, power noise, and EBM. She also includes a few gothic genres, cybergoth, dark wave, and electrogoth, with the caveat that some fans completely separate gothic and industrial.⁹⁴ Woods admits: “It is increasingly difficult to even attempt to chart history and interrelationships of the numerous derivative genres of industrial over the past thirty years, and thus my humble attempt is by no means definitive.”⁹⁵ The subgenres have become extensive enough to potentially merit their own studies. Since industrial music is such an international genre, a further complication enters with the fact that the music is often labeled differently in different countries. For example the Dark Munich Festival scheduled for April 25-27, 2014, includes many bands that would be considered industrial or EBM in the U.S., such as Front 242, Decoded Feedback, and Psyclon Nine. The press release in English, however, not once uses the word industrial. Instead, it uses the terms goth, gothic rock, EBM, synth and future pop, NDH (which stands for *Neue Deutsche Härte*, New German Hardness), and dark scene.⁹⁶ The gothic and industrial music scenes, while usually considered quite separate in the U.S., as noted by Collins, have often shared club space on the same nights and have most certainly had an impact upon each other. Apparently, in some places, they are not viewed as such separate scenes any longer. The reference book *Das Gothic-und Dark Wave-Lexikon: Die Schwarze Szene Von A-Z*, The Gothic and

⁹³ Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 56.

⁹⁴ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 787-824.

⁹⁵ Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 55.

⁹⁶ “Kontakt, Presse, Crew - NERTHUS GmbH,” Dark Munich Festival, accessed January 19, 2014, <http://www.d-m-f.net/kontakt-presse-crew/>.

Dark Wave Lexicon: The Dark Scene from A-Z, includes extensive information on many industrial artists.⁹⁷

Industrial music continues to evolve and incorporate new influences. The world is in a different place culturally, socially, politically and technologically than it was in 1976. An underground music genre, such as industrial, involves many artists who are participants solely because of their love for the music and the scene, and not necessarily for financial gain. Even relatively successful artists, such as Shikhee from Android Lust, who has had tracks featured on the television show NCIS, often do not make their living from their musical output or tours.⁹⁸ Because of these factors, industrial music is free to change and evolve as quickly as is necessary to keep up with our rapidly changing world.

⁹⁷ Peter Matzke and Tobias Seeliger, *Das Gothic-und Dark Wave-Lexikon: Die Schwarze Szene Von A-Z* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2003).

⁹⁸ "Android Lust – Bio," Android Lust, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://www.androidlust.com/?pg=bio>.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Literature Review

My first inclination in beginning this research was to focus on academic sources to support the claim that industrial music is a “legitimate” type of music to study. I encountered a couple of problems in reviewing the academic sources. Many of the sources that dealt with analysis were only on popular music in general, or they were on music that shares some characteristics with industrial music. In both cases only parts of the analytical methods can be applied. The other problem encountered in academic sources was that after about 1990, the historical information offered differed from my personal experience with industrial music, often because the authors participated in different regions than I did or focused on sub-genres to which I did not have as much exposure. The academic studies after that point lean towards more popular bands, such as Nine Inch Nails, or synth pop, which is a distant sub-genre of industrial music. After reviewing the academic sources, it seemed even more important to focus on the underground industrial music of the 1990s, which was when it had the largest fan base and number of clubs, and the time period in which the music splintered into a plethora of sub-genres. Much of the information on this time period will have to come from alternate sources: fan blogs, magazine articles, my own personal experience, and the experience of others in the industrial community, as well as the musicians themselves. Most of the

resources I will address in the literature review are the best of the academic sources, as the popular sources used generally address very specific topics within this thesis.

The definitive history on COUM Transmissions, Throbbing Gristle, and the members of these groups is *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of Coum Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* by Simon Ford.⁹⁹ Ford lays out a complete picture of the beginnings of COUM Transmissions, its evolution into Throbbing Gristle, and the eventual dissolution of Throbbing Gristle and Industrial Records. There are also vital appendixes, including the chronology of COUM & TG actions, concerts and exhibitions, compilations including tracks by TG, and a filmography and videography.

The *Industrial Culture Handbook* edited by Vivian Vale and Andrea Juno¹⁰⁰ provides rare insight into what the originators of industrial music were thinking in the early 1980s. Each chapter provides a conversational interview between the editors and early industrial artists such as members of Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire, Monte Cazazza, and SPK, among others. At the end of each chapter is a reference section, including books, films, and music that each artist considers influential. The interviews are unique and include philosophical views as well as commentary on the world in general.

Bret D. Woods addresses genre classification issues with industrial music in his 2007 master's thesis entitled "Industrial Music for Industrial People: The History and Development of an Underground Genre."¹⁰¹ Woods' study offers a balance of history, philosophy, and a look at characteristics of the music itself. Woods creates a chart, "A

⁹⁹ Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of Coum Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London, UK: Black Dog Publishing, 1999).

¹⁰⁰ Vivian Vale and Andrea Juno, eds. *RE/Search #6/7: Industrial Culture Handbook*. (Hong Kong: Colorcraft, 1983).

¹⁰¹ Bret D. Woods, "Industrial Music For Industrial People: The History and Development of an Underground Genre" (Master's thesis, Florida State University, 2007).

model of formal features of a contemporary industrial music text,”¹⁰² including details on instrumentation, musical features, subjects and themes, and imagery. He then situates that text within context of many factors including social, historical and cultural in another graph he created.¹⁰³ This work includes an extensive bibliography. Woods’ thesis is an excellent primer on industrial music. It includes polls and emailed interviews with fans to offer the perspective of the people actively participating in the music scene. While he does outline common features of industrial music, he stops short of an actual analysis of a specific piece.

Jason James Hanley’s “Metal Machine Music: Technology, Noise, and Modernism in Industrial Music 1975-1996,”¹⁰⁴ was his 2011 doctoral dissertation. This 426-page music history work contains a large amount of information on the pre-history of industrial music, influences of other avant-garde artists, the history of the first industrial artists, and the evolution of industrial music through the 1980s. The dissertation then continues with a section on the period of 1989-1996 which heads towards a history of Nine Inch Nails and the popularization of industrial music. It does not address the underground bands after this point in the body of the dissertation itself, although an appendix listing bands of this era and their sub-genres is included. After 1989 the focus of the dissertation turns to bands that became popular in the mainstream, to the detriment of the underground music that was created during this time. Hanley does include an in-depth discussion of the track “The Dada Man” (1979) by the band Cabaret Voltaire creating a graph he calls a “sound map” for the opening section of the piece. He also

¹⁰² Woods, “Industrial Music For Industrial People,” 62.

¹⁰³ Woods, “Industrial Music For Industrial People,” 90.

¹⁰⁴ Jason James Hanley, “Metal Machine Music: Technology, Noise, and Modernism in Industrial Music 1975-1996” (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2011).

presents stylistic elements and characteristics of industrial music from a different perspective than Woods. Hanley details musical cues from each generation of industrial music, then sorts these cues into different archetypes that developed into the industrial music sub-genres. Whereas Woods provides an extensive chart of features of contemporary industrial music, Hanley lists only a few features of third-generation industrial music, arguing that after 1989 industrial music diversified too much to retain cohesiveness.

Karen Collins published a book in 2012, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat: Industrial Music and Dystopia*,¹⁰⁵ based on her 2002 doctoral dissertation. Collins worked extensively with Philip Tagg and uses many of his ideas on popular music analysis. Tagg and Collins co-authored a paper for the Institute of Popular Music entitled “The Sonic Aesthetics of the Industrial: Re-Constructing Yesterday’s Soundscape for Today’s Alienation and Tomorrow’s Dystopia,”¹⁰⁶ in February 2001 that presented some of her dissertation work. Tagg’s methods take into account the reception of the listener to the music, so Collins conducted a case study on five industrial tracks and the reception of these tracks with both fans and non-fans. Like Woods’ thesis, the perspective of the industrial music community is considered important. The book provides a sample “transcription” of portions of tracks by the industrial group Einstürzende Neubauten. Collins focuses on elements of the music in order to analyze the meaning the elements create. Some of the section titles are: “Song Structure,” “Tonality and Timbre” and

¹⁰⁵ Karen Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat: Industrial Music and Dystopia*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: Mass Media Music Scholars’ Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Philip Tagg and Karen E. Collins, “The Sonic Aesthetics of the Industrial: Re-Constructing Yesterday’s Soundsape for Today’s Alienation and Tomorrow’s Dystopia” (paper presented at the UK/EIR Soundscape Conference, Dartington, February 2001).

“Instrumentation.” There is also a strong focus on the use of dystopian ideas and how those are communicated in the music.

S. Alexander Reed published his book *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music* in 2013.¹⁰⁷ Reed’s work is currently the most up-to-date perspective. Reed provides a solid history of the genre, but his most significant contribution comes in addressing the complex relationship between industrial music and synth pop. Also included is an entire section on industrial politics as well as one on the people involved in the industrial music scene.

In 1995, Brian Duguid published his article “A Prehistory of Industrial Music”¹⁰⁸ in *EST Magazine Online*. Duguid uses the framework laid out by John Savage to discuss industrial music. Savage, in his introduction to the *Industrial Culture Handbook*, listed five elements that were common to the original industrial artists. These elements are: organizational autonomy, access to information, use of synthesizers and anti-music, extra-musical elements, and shock tactics.¹⁰⁹ Duguid discusses each one of these elements as they relate to industrial music in more detail than Savage. Since this article was written twelve years later, it offers a broader perspective on how these elements have remained relevant.

Joanna Demers released her book *Listening Through the Noise: the Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music*¹¹⁰ in 2010. This book only briefly mentions industrial music, but is extremely relevant to all forms of electronic music. Demers’ work is the

¹⁰⁷ S. Alexander Reed, *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Brian Duguid, “A Prehistory of Industrial Music,” *EST Magazine Online*, accessed January 13, 2014, <http://media.hyperreal.org/zines/est/articles/preindex.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Vale and Juno, *Industrial Culture Handbook*, 5.

¹¹⁰ Joanna Demers, *Listening Through the Noise: the Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

most cerebral of my sources, tackling the subject of electronic music and its aesthetics on philosophical and sociological levels. Demers was one of the presenters that I had the chance to see at the AMS/SEM/SMT Conference in New Orleans. Her presentation on “The Ethics of Apocalypse”¹¹¹ explored possible reasons our culture is intrigued by dystopia, using electronic music as a framework. Her presentation showed that she is not afraid to tackle questions which some may find unpleasant. Although her writing is dense, she manages to temper the academic perspective by including the human element in the listening and creation process. This book also includes an extensive bibliography.

A few fan-based websites deserve mentioning. An article by Burton Pressboard called “The New Classic Industrial”¹¹² provides a perspective on the current state of industrial music. *Industrial Music for Industrial People: A Blogger’s Guide to Essential Industrial Music*¹¹³ mostly contains postings of the author’s favorite bands and tracks with commentary and historical information. A similarly fan-based blog, *INDUSTRIAL_SKADS*, includes a very informative article called “Guide to Genres.”¹¹⁴ These are just a couple of examples of the rich range of perspectives on industrial music outside of the academic community.

In researching the literature on industrial music, I discovered a far broader base of resources than anticipated. There are many scholars in academia interested in popular electronic music and several who have focused on industrial music in particular. A large deficit exists, however, in the music of the 1990s, in which I am the most interested. The

¹¹¹ Joanna Demers, “The Ethics of Apocalypse” (paper presented at the AMS/SEM/SMT Conference, New Orleans, LA, November 1, 2012).

¹¹² Burton Pressboard, “The New Classic Industrial,” *TheWritingDisorder.com*, Spring 2011, accessed January 13, 2014, <http://www.thewritingdisorder.com/reviewsburton.html>.

¹¹³ *Industrial Music for Industrial People: A Blogger’s Guide to Essential Industrial Music*, accessed January 13, 2014, <http://industrialmuzak.wordpress.com/>.

¹¹⁴ “Guide to Genres,” *INDUSTRIAL_SKADS*, accessed January 13, 2014, <http://industrialskads.blogspot.com/p/guide-to-genres.html>.

research is also short on in-depth analyses. The ground has been broken regarding research on industrial music, but there are still many unexplored avenues to follow.

3.2 Analytical Methodology

There exists very little agreement on how to analyze electronic music, popular or not. As Marc Battier points out in his article “A Constructivist approach to the analysis of electronic music and audio art – between instruments and *faktura*,” published in 2003:

Analysing electronic music remains an ill-defined activity. There have been various attempts to address the issues involved. It seems that any of them are bound to fall into one of two camps: the esthetic camp, in which analysis is built upon perception, and the poietic camp, for which analysis focuses on the context and processes involved in the making of a piece.¹¹⁵

This remains just as true ten years later. Further complicating the analysis of industrial music is the fact that popular music is a relatively new area of study within the academic community. Kayla Roth states in her 2011 thesis on Electric Light Orchestra: “Perhaps because of the immense variety now available in music, a theory of popular music form has yet to be developed.”¹¹⁶ Trying to find one method of analysis applicable to all of popular music is like trying to find one method that works for Gregorian chant through total serialism. There, of course, will be some commonalities. However, in trying to apply the same techniques to such a diverse range of repertoire, the specific characteristics that make each era distinct would be lost. This is surely applicable to popular music. The amount of information that exists on the popular music that was created in the last year alone is more than any scholar could even hope to briefly address in a life-time, let alone

¹¹⁵ Marc Battier, “A Constructivist approach to the analysis of electronic music and audio art – between instruments and *faktura*,” *Organised Sound*, vol. 8, no. 3, December 2003, 249.

¹¹⁶ Kayla Roth, “‘Son of Beatles’: A Historical and Analytical Study of the Music of Electric Light Orchestra” (Master’s thesis, Texas State University, 2011), 15.

conduct an in-depth study. This is especially true when the vast number of genres and the access to diverse international material is taken into account. The study of Western art music contains a huge amount of repertoire as well; however, it is limited by location, the documentation that survived, and by the fact that the surviving documentation has been filtered through what scholars of the era deemed to be worthy of study. This concept of what is or is not worthy of study is problematic. The fact is that scholars do not know for sure what music will stand the test of time. Often, it is simply the music about which information was published. Right now, those of us studying popular music have the opportunity to communicate to future generations what music from our time is important to us. I also believe that it is vital to study music while it is being created. If one waits for the judgment about the durability of the music, the opportunity to document the perspective at the time of the music's creation is lost. A composer will have a different viewpoint on a composition ten years after writing it than he or she would at its premiere. The academic community has nothing to lose, and everything to gain by encouraging scholars to study any and everything that peaks their interest. There is always the question as to whether or not a line of study provides "significant" contribution to current scholarship. I would argue that what is considered significant is extremely subjective. Pursuing a line of research that has received little attention at the very least lays the groundwork for others to make significant discoveries in the field. If a particular line of research is never pursued, that potential is forever lost. I believe the "play it safe" mentality that pressures academics to stay within the bounds of "acceptable" repertoire is one of the largest hindrances in the advancement of unique discoveries in music research.

Even in 1963, David Lewin recognized the challenges in analyzing music that lies outside of established rules.

In the analysis of a tonal piece, the nature of the sound-universe can usually be safely left implicit: “everyone knows” enough about tonality nowadays so that the analyst can count on fairly common recognition of the theoretical notions he is invoking. In the analysis of a serial work, however (or of works from other historical periods and/or cultures), we are in the uncomfortable position of “knowing” (I mean intuitively, not intellectually) that there is an important theoretical context involved, while having only a relatively vague sense of how that context is interacting with the specific events of the piece.¹¹⁷

In a footnote he further emphasizes the importance of context.

Imagine trying to analyze a Beethoven symphony without presuming the pertinence of “tonality” in some sense as a context! In fact, such analyses have been attempted and are of interest because they show how little of our hearing is adequately reflected without such a presumption.¹¹⁸

A challenge for scholars focusing on underground or alternative genres lies in establishing the context for those who are outside of that culture. In order to do this, the analyst must be able to determine what he or she is taking for granted as being “known,” when in fact it is particular to the underground genre and not commonly known. An example of this in industrial music is how the use of fascist symbols by bands is often mistaken as a sincere reflection of their political stance by those outside the culture. Within the culture, with very little exception, these symbols are quickly understood to be ironic, critical, or even humorous. No band included more over-the-top fascist symbology than Laibach from Slovenia. However, as Hanley points out: “The Laibach mission, as they explain it, is to deconstruct the images of fascism and totalitarianism through enactment and hopefully eventual identification on the part of the audience.”¹¹⁹ Laibach’s

¹¹⁷ David Lewin, “Behind the Beyond: A Response to Edward T. Cone,” *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 7, no. 2, Spring - Summer, 1969, 63.

¹¹⁸ Lewin, “Behind the Beyond,” 63.

¹¹⁹ Hanley, “The Land of Rape and Honey,” 172.

live shows were so convincing that there often was confusion as to just what was the intended message. However, in recreating a fascist-like propaganda event, often for audiences who had never been exposed to the ‘real thing,’ it clearly elucidates how powerful these images and tactics can be. In experiencing this, the audience would hopefully walk away being able to identify when they are being manipulated in this manner in the future. Laibach’s “Geburt Einer Nation”¹²⁰ is a cover of the Queen song “One Vision.” It is translated into German, given heavy march-like percussion, and the video is filled with totalitarian imagery. Other than the translation, the lyrics remain unchanged. It is a brilliant demonstration of how dramatically a change of context can alter the meaning of a song. Queen’s vision of an accepting utopia is transformed into an enforced imperative. As someone from within the industrial culture, it is so obviously a parody that it is difficult to understand that someone else might need an explanation. An understanding of industrial music cannot be achieved without the accompanying context. Woods’ chart “An industrial music text situated within context” (Figure 5) attempts to demonstrate some factors to keep in consideration when addressing industrial music.

¹²⁰ Laibach, *Opus Dei*, Mute Records CDSTUMM44, CD, 1987.

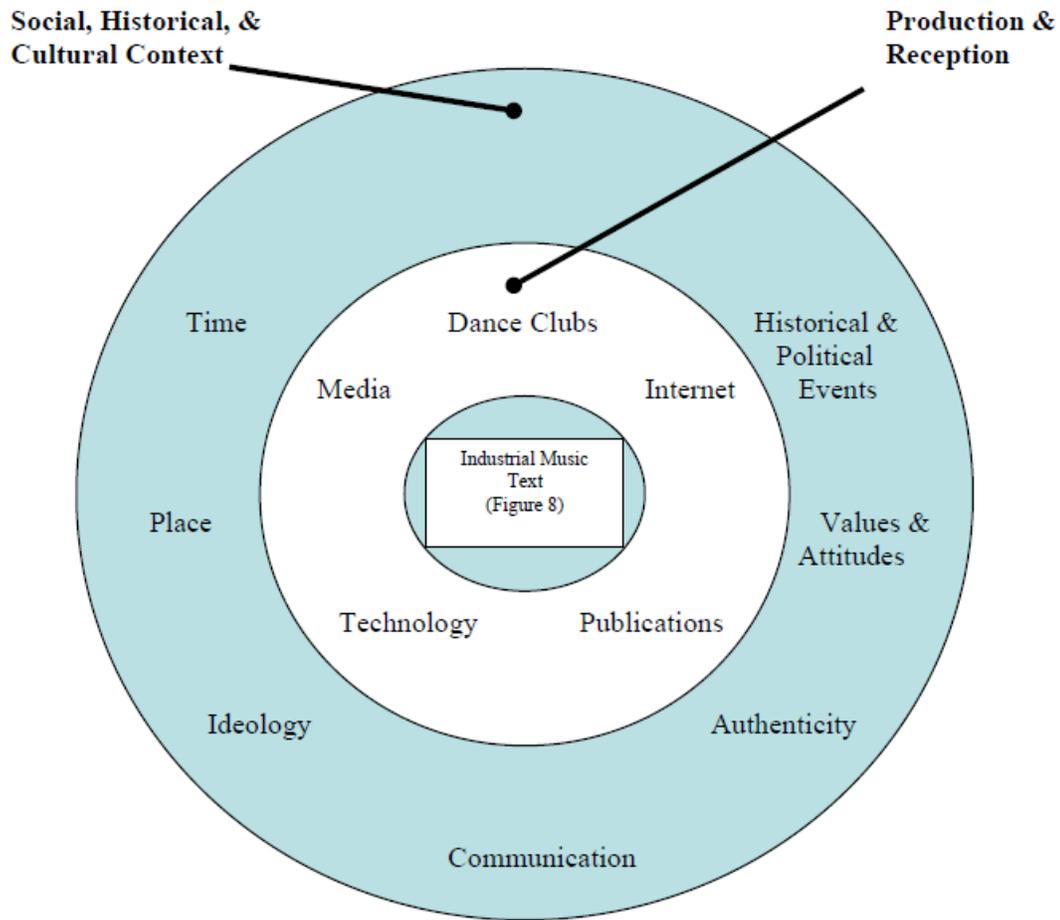


Figure 5. Woods, “An industrial music text situated within context.”¹²¹

Scholars with a focus on popular and experimental music are currently at work laying essential groundwork in electronic music scholarship. There are many tools at these researchers’ disposal, but none of them quite “fit” at this point. The researchers must filter through and discern what is applicable from their education in Western art music, current studies on popular music, their own personal experience, and the fans’ and musicians’ personal experiences with their chosen genre. The following examples are of

¹²¹ Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 90.

some of the techniques that have been used in Western art music, electronic music, and industrial music that are most pertinent to this thesis.

One of the challenges of analyzing industrial music is the effort to describe the sonic elements. Due to the fact that there is very little traditional instrumentation, or that traditional instruments are used in unconventional ways, one cannot simply refer to the guitar line or the pattern in the kick drum. As industrial music has evolved into a dance genre, kick drum sounds are often used. However, it is nearly universal that the sounds, if they are from an electronic source, are customized and altered so that there may not be the same kick drum sound on any of the tracks on a particular album. Another common approach with percussion in an industrial track is to use found sounds or objects to create unique timbres. Herein lies part of the problem in not documenting the music during its creation. If the percussion sounds “metallic,” how was that achieved? Is it a synthesized sound or a found sound? If it is synthesized, what processing and effects were used? If it is an altered recording of a natural sound, what was the original source of the sound, and how was that processed? An artist who created a track twenty or thirty years ago may not recall all of the details of how the equipment of that time was used. Even if the processes used are documented, there still lies a challenge in describing just what that sounds like. In the 2007 book *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, Leigh Landy addresses considerations of timbre when dealing with newly created sounds:

Timbral results in works within the category of new sounds range from the highly alienating (e.g., the continuous presence of noise is found to be alienating by most listeners other than those who appreciate what is known today as industrial or noise music) to the aesthetically warm (e.g., the granulation of real-world sounds tends to provoke such a reaction).¹²²

¹²² Leigh Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 120.

Just as in traditional musical analysis, the types of sounds used are chosen for a reason. A composer may choose to use an oboe instead of a violin for a melodic line. An analyst can safely assume that those who would read a musical analysis will know the difference in sound between the two instruments. Describing what sound is created when an artist records a busy New York street and granulates the sound to create the percussion track becomes a little more complicated. It is even more imperative that those reading an analysis of industrial music listen to the tracks discussed. Often, the best the analyst can achieve in the description of the sound is an analogy. For example, it sounds like bursts of static interspersed with a crunchy bass tone and a distorted bass drum sound.

Another challenge comes into play when deciding how to visually represent the music. Industrial music, like most electronic music, is not a genre that uses scores. Achieving a visual representation that properly conveys what is happening aurally has been problematic even for researchers studying experimental music written with traditional notation. An example of this would be *Lontano* by György Ligeti. As a means to represent the cluster chords, Jonathan W. Bernard created the graph seen below in Figure 6. Vertically, each square represents a semitone, and the number shown is the octave designation. The horizontal numbers represent the measures. John A. Dribus included *Lontano* in his 2010 doctoral dissertation on electronic music, even though it is scored for orchestra, since it sounds so electronic-like. Figure 7 shows his graph representing noise in the piece. The analysis of electronic music requires a blending of traditional techniques along with new ones particularly developed for these new challenges.

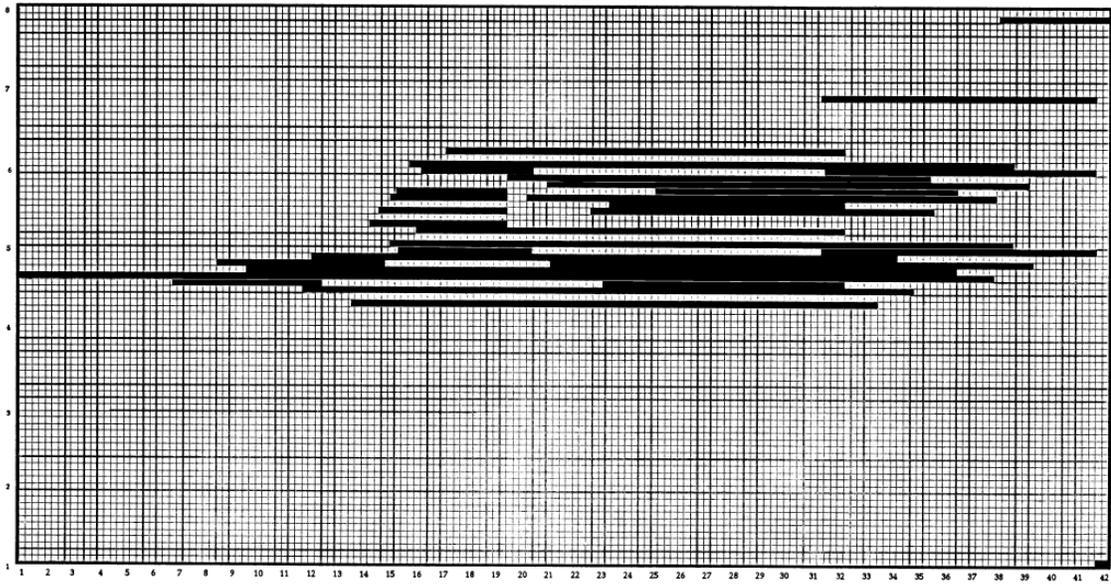


Figure 6. Bernard, *Lontano*, mm. 1-41, graph.¹²³

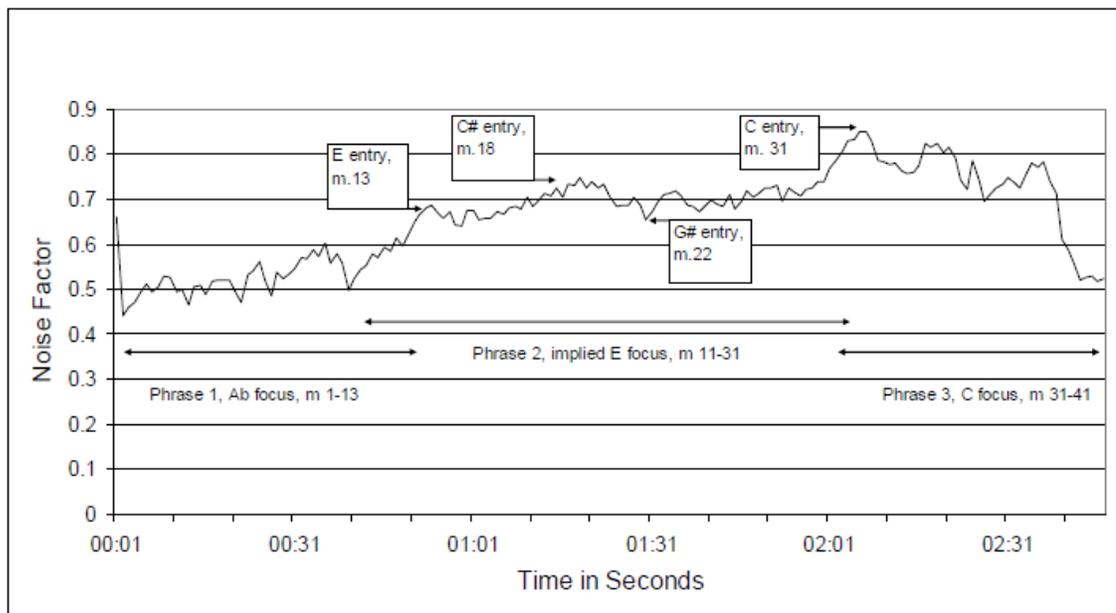


Figure 7. Dribus, Noise graph of *Lontano*, Section 1.¹²⁴

¹²³ Jonathan W. Bernard, "Ligeti's Restoration of Interval and Its Significance for His Later Works", *Music Theory Spectrum* vol. 21, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 5.

¹²⁴ John A. Dribus, "Characterizing Noise and Harmonicity: The Structural Function of Contrasting Components in Electronic Composition" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2010), 36.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 1: FROM “CONTACT” TO “MACHINE KONTROL”

4.1 SPK: An Elusive History

SPK was an experimental group whose album *Meat Processing Section*¹²⁵ was released through the Industrial Records label. SPK is generally considered to be a pioneering group in industrial music, though the band never accepted the industrial genre label. The reasoning for this is explained in the liner notes to their album *Auto Da Fe*:

It has been some decades since western culture could be accurately described as Industrial. Since the under-consumption crisis of the thirties, we have shifted entirely into a social structure dominated not by production but by reproduction, not by equivalence but by commutation, not by merchandise but by the mode. We live in a post-industrial world. . . . SPK has always been certain to establish its separation from any label like Industrial because it has always pursued a strategy more in keeping with an attack on a structure radically more efficient and successor to industrial society. If not we shall only continue to confuse the symptom for the cure. If the industrial era was determined by its capitalist mode the post-industrial is hyper-capitalist.¹²⁶

In the mid-1980s, SPK transformed into a pop group, but they started out with an edgy sound and a confrontational agenda. An interview with Operator, one of Graeme Revell’s pseudonyms, recounts that the group was founded in early 1979, and their first performance was in June of that year.¹²⁷ There is some evidence, however, that their first performance may have been in 1978, covering the song “Panik” by the French group Metal Urbain.¹²⁸ The early history of SPK was deliberately obscured by the members of the group. Adding to the difficulty in finding accurate, detailed information on the early

¹²⁵ S.P.K., *Meat Processing Section*, Industrial Records IR0011, LP. 45 rpm, 1980.

¹²⁶ Liner notes to *Auto Da Fe*, SPK, The Grey Area of Mute Records SPK 4 cd, CD, 1993.

¹²⁷ Charlie, “Spk,” *Chainsaw*, February, 1981, page number unknown. (Fanzine)

¹²⁸ Reed, *Assimilate*, 2927.

days of the band is the fact that many of their interviews were published in underground, privately published fanzines that are difficult to obtain in any way other than questionable transcriptions of the articles on the internet. There appears to be a rather extensive archive of interviews and articles at the web page “SPK = Information Overload Site,” though the website was established in 1999, and many of the referenced magazines cannot easily be found anywhere else.¹²⁹ There was a history published on SPK, *SPK – Krankheit Im Recht*, by Trevor Blake and Graeme Revell, but supposedly the book was published from an unfinished manuscript and contains many errors.¹³⁰ In the history here, the generally agreed-upon facts will be recounted, as well as some alternate explanations of disputed information.

The band’s original namesake, *Sozialistisches Patienten Kollektiv*, or Socialist Patients’ Collective, were a radical activist group (not a band) of former patients from the Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic in Germany. The original SPK was founded in 1970 and led by Wolfgang Huber, who was a doctor at the clinic. Huber published a history and manifesto entitled *SPK, Turn Illness into a Weapon: For Agitation by the Socialist Patients’ Collective at the University of Heidelberg* with a preface by the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.¹³¹ The book was roughly translated into English from German by Huber himself. Huber was convinced that mental illness is a symptom of the unhealthy system in which we exist and believed that mental illness could be used to overturn that unhealthy system. As a result of his beliefs, he was fired from the Heidelberg clinic and

¹²⁹ “SPK = Information Overload Site,” SPK = Information Overload Site, accessed February 16, 2014, <http://home.pi.be/~spk/>.

¹³⁰ Trevor Blake and Graeme Revell. *SPK--Krankheit Im Recht*. Heidelberg, Germany: KRRIM Selbstverlag für Krankheit, 1995.

¹³¹ Wolfgang Huber. *SPK, Turn Illness into a Weapon: For Agitation by the Socialist Patients’ Collective at the University of Heidelberg*. Heidelberg: KRRIM, 1993.

ultimately served prison time for his political agitations. Below are selected points from Huber's chapter "Theses and Principles," as printed in the book in Huber's own translation:

- 1) Illness is condition and result (Voraussetzung und Resultat) of the relations of production (Produktionsverhältnisse) in capitalism.
- 3) As the result of capitalist relations of production illness in its developed form as protest of life against capitalism is the revolutionary productive power par excellence for all human beings.
- 4) Illness is the only form in which "life" in capitalism is possible.
- 5) Illness and capitalism are identical: in the same measure in which dead capital (totes Kapital) is accumulated, a process which runs parallel to the annihilation of human work, so-called capital-annihilation (Kapitalvernichtung), becoming a common matter, illness becomes more widespread and increasingly malign (Verbreitung und Intensität von Krankheit nimmt zu).
- 9) If we get illness released from administration, exploitation (Verwertung) and the custody (Verwahrung) through the institutions of health and if illness emerges in the form of collective resistance there is the situation, that the state has to intervene in order to substitute the inner prison of the patients by external, "real" (richtige) prisons.
- 10) The health system can get along with illness only on condition that patients are totally outlawed.
- 11) Health is nothing but an ideologic-fascist figment of the mind (Gesundheit ist ein biologisch-faschistisches Hirngespinnst), the function of this figment is to veil in the heads of the making-stupids and of the made-stupids (Verdummer und Verdummten dieser Erde) that illness is conditioned by society and also to veil the social function of illness.¹³²

Huber often included the German translation when he did not know the best English translation or felt that the German words carried a heavier connotation. These points demonstrate how adamant and radical Huber's concepts were. These principles struck a chord with the original founders of the band SPK and can be found reflected in the band's own philosophies.

¹³² Huber, *SPK*, 17-18.

The origins of the band SPK are also out of a psychiatric clinic, though in Australia rather than Germany. Neil Hill, who was not with the band for long, performed vocals on “Contact” and was a patient at the clinic. Another band member was a nurse at the same clinic. Due to the sketchy nature of the early information on the band, various sources report this nurse to be either Derek Thompson, who performed percussion with the group for a time, or Graeme Revell, who is the only constant member throughout the band’s ever changing line-up. Finding that Huber’s ideas resonated with them both due to their experiences, they decided to approach change through music. In the *Industrial Culture Handbook*, the band members that were current in 1982, which included Graeme Revell, Dominic Guerin, James Pinker, and Karel van Bergen, discussed the importance of art in questioning society. In reference to what is viewed as absolute truth in science, they said:

We’re trying to exhibit that kind of thing and show how close to magic it is. In a lot of ways we’re not trying to say it’s ridiculous, we’re just trying to question the idea of *truth* associated with it, and isolate its mechanisms, its obsession with empirical verification of everything—that nothing can be true unless you can see it to be true. Because this acts to the detriment of the *imaginative faculties* which could come up with something in a surrealist sense (or whatever sense you like), but because it’s only *art* it’s never accorded the value of other “truth” like sciences. People think: Oh yes, that’s interesting, but we would never actually form any belief in an *art*. But I think great art is the equivalent of science—you can believe in it equally as much as you can in science. It’s very important to *believe* in the power of the imagination, and not just let the rationalistic function, the logical side of the brain, dominate.¹³³

Shortly after this interview, however, SPK would venture into the pop world with their hit “Metal Dance.” Reed writes about this change: “Among the most infamous of industrial excursions into pop was that of SPK, who until 1983 were arguably the genre’s

¹³³ Vale and Juno, *Industrial Culture Handbook*, 95.

most outspoken ideologues and among its noisiest performers.”¹³⁴ This change brought the band a modicum of fame and fortune, and they never truly returned to their industrial roots. Graeme Revell has since gone on to achieve success as a film composer.

4.2 “Contact”

“Contact” is a track from SPK’s first single in 1979¹³⁵ and was re-released twice, once through Industrial Records in 1980¹³⁶, and again on their 1993 compilation *Auto Da Fe*.¹³⁷ “Contact” is in strophic form, with the vocal verses separated by instrumental sections. This track contains many elements that are representative of first-generation industrial music, including unconventional use of instruments, the use of sound effects, direct or disturbing lyrical content, repetition, and lack of functional harmony. The instrumentation includes: intro / outro effects, a cyclical engine noise that is likely a looped sample, a drum machine as the main percussion, additional percussion as effects, vocals, vocals with distortion, rhythm guitar (used unconventionally), bass guitar (also used unconventionally), and a drill sample that supports the lyrical content.

As was common among early industrial bands, SPK provided a declaration of their beliefs in the liner notes to *Auto Da Fe*. “Contact” is a particularly apt example of what a vital role context plays in understanding industrial music. This track graphically relates a fundamental aspect of SPK’s philosophy:

We live in a post-industrial world...And an era in which time is no longer accumulated like money but is broken in a confused web or nostalgia, fetishism and futurism...The real horror is that this process no longer stops at the factory

¹³⁴ Reed, *Assimilate*, 2729.

¹³⁵ SPK, *Mekano*, Side Effects PRS 2655, LP. 45 rpm, 1979.

¹³⁶ SPK, *Meat Processing Section*, Industrial Records IR0011, LP. 45 rpm. 1980.

¹³⁷ SPK, *Auto Da Fe*, The Grey Area of Mute Records SPK 4 CD, CD, 1993.

gates but penetrates into our homes, our loves and our minds, all of our time becomes marked time.¹³⁸

This quote situates “Contact” as social commentary, with the vulgar lyrics serving a specific purpose. “Contact” provides a graphic representation of the infiltration of the process into everyday life.

The track begins with a laser-like sound effect, followed by the introduction of a cyclical engine noise that permeates the entire song. The engine noise, due to its cyclical nature, adds a rhythmic element during the introduction. The sound is likely sampled. It is a layered sound containing a deep, low pitched component as well as a mid-range sound. These may have been the properties of the original sound source, or it could have been manipulated to achieve this layering. This continues for six seconds before the main percussion enters. The tempo of the cyclical engine sound is slower than the rest of the instruments on the track and does not match up metrically. Whether this was due to a limitation in accessible technology in being able to sync up the sample, or intentional, it still provides philosophical commentary. The mechanistic and humanistic elements in the track are at odds with each other. The listener must pause for a moment to find the new beat. With the engine noise on its own schedule, it ceases to provide a rhythmic element and creates an atmospheric droning in the background. Also, when the main percussion begins, it is on beat two. This is not apparent, however, until the vocals enter. Before this, it sounds like the accent is on beat four, which is a possibility. However, the vocal line consistently enters on the same beat, clearly delineating the stressed beat as one. This creates another moment of disorientation for the listener.

¹³⁸ SPK, *Auto Da Fe*, Liner Notes.

The vocals begin at 0:12 in the fourth full measure after the introduction of the percussion. The vocals are delivered in a shouting sing-song, with a definite contour, but no real melody. The lyrics for the first vocal section are as follows:

All the cogs
They're clinking in the factory
All the circuits
Connecting in your body

All day long
You're working the machines
Screwing nuts and bolts
In your wet dreams

Immediately there is the concept of the human as machine-like in a very concrete way. The circuits are integrated into your body; it is not an abstract comparison. This verse also refers to the fetishism that was presented in the liner notes and takes it one step further. Not only is it that the process “penetrates into our homes, our loves and our minds,” but also our bodies. Along with the vocal section, the rhythm guitar begins. The guitar sound is distorted and sounds metallic. During this vocal section, it continuously plays a pattern of eighth notes at counts 3 & 4. This rhythmic pattern creates an interplay with the vocal line. It alternates between sounding like a commentary, as call and response, after the line has been delivered and an interruption during the middle of the vocal line. For example, the interaction in the first couple of lines works like this:

All the cogs (guitar)
They're clinking (guitar) in the factory

The figure shows two staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "All the cogs they're clink-ing in the fac - tory". The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4, quarter note E4, quarter note D4. The bottom staff is a guitar line in 4/4 time. The notes are: quarter rest, quarter rest, eighth note G4, eighth note A4, quarter rest, quarter rest, eighth note G4, eighth note A4, quarter rest, quarter rest, eighth note G4, eighth note A4, quarter rest, quarter rest, eighth note G4, eighth note A4, quarter rest, quarter rest.

Figure 8. “Contact” Vocal and Guitar Rhythm.

The first vocal section ends at 0:32, and the last word, “dreams,” is accompanied by a sustained note from the rhythm guitar. This sustained note is used throughout the entire piece to delineate sections. Industrial pieces without functional harmony, such as “Contact,” often use alternative means to create organization. Instead of a cadence at the end of a phrase, this sustained guitar sound marks the end of the verse.

The next section contains the instrumental interlude that occurs in between the vocal verses. The sustained guitar note continues from the end of the vocal phrase into the first second of this section, an example of elision often used in industrial music to smooth transitions. At 0:32 it is joined by the first occurrence of the bass guitar. The bass guitar is also distorted and is another marker that delineates sections. The sustained note from the bass guitar uses slight pitch bending during the duration, giving it a whale-call quality. From 0:33 to 0:39 the rhythm guitar plays steady eighth notes with each note alternately panned more to the left or the right. This mimics the tick-tock feel of the main percussion on a smaller scale. The main percussion alternates between the lower and higher pitched drums every two beats. The rhythm guitar in this section pans back and forth every eighth note, adding a sense of urgency. Also at 0:37 and 0:38, panned almost entirely to the right, is an interjection of “ow” from the vocalist. It is very subtle, and it is hardly noticeable without listening to channel separately. At 0:41 the sustained rhythm guitar enters, and a second later the sustained bass enters marking the end of the instrumental section.

The next vocal verse begins at 0:43. The lyrics to this section are as follows:

Going home
What is there to do?

Finished work
What is there to screw?

Gotta have contact
Satisfy your need
Gotta have some action
With your engine

The vocal sections become progressively longer until the last distorted section at the end where they shorten again. In this section, it is not yet noticeable, however, there is an extra measure added after “gotta have contact,” adding an additional second. The instrumentation remains the same, with the exception of several added effects. A few electronic beeps occur at the beginning of the line “what is there to do.” There is also a bell sound right before the word “engine.” The lyrics of this section describe an extreme workaholic. The protagonist’s life is integrated with his or her work; there is nothing worth going home to. All of the person’s self-worth and self-identity comes from his or her job. Even more than that, work has become an addiction. The sustained guitars signal the end of the section, and the instrumental interlude that follows is largely unchanged from the previous instance.

In the next section, the difference in the length of verses becomes more obvious. Instead of two stanzas of text, there are three. Below are the lyrics:

Take out your
Three orifice blow-up doll
Hanging on the wall
Your ever-loving moll

Fill her up
With ice cold water
All of it
Makes your meat water

Nothing like
The feeling of plastic tissue

None of that
Fucking human re-issue

“Moll” is Australian slang for slut. The rhythm guitar starts to play a constant eighth-note pattern in the third measure of this verse, beginning during the words “blow-up doll.” The prominent pattern played on beat three (two eighths), and the first eighth of beat four remains, but a click-like sound is added on the other beats (and their divisions). This at first adds a purely rhythmic element, unlike the eighth-note pattern that is played during the instrumental interlude, which serves more of a lead role. In the measure after “makes your meat water,” the guitar adds an extra element of intensity with a few squeaky notes on count one of the next two measures. This particular sound anticipates the upcoming lyrics “the feeling of plastic tissue” and serves as audio support for these lyrics. In this verse, what was heavily hinted at previously is now graphically described. This is a hallmark of industrial music, to present an issue in a fully realistic, plain, and perhaps uncomfortably direct manner. Like any addiction, the workaholic way of life creates a longing that can never be fully satisfied. The artificial is exalted, and there is disdain for the purely human. Human contact is seen as inferior. It is implied here that this type of interaction is tainted or will cause you to become tainted. This type of lifestyle encourages hatred for humanity, and in turn, hatred for oneself. The instrumental interlude that follows is largely unchanged; however, the panning that occurred in previous instances is different. Instead of panning back and forth from the left to right channels, it is panned mostly to the left the entire time. This somehow makes the sound less clean and polished. Figure 9 on the next page shows the audio for these two instrumental sections. The second graph, especially in the left channel, visually demonstrates the sound as less clean.

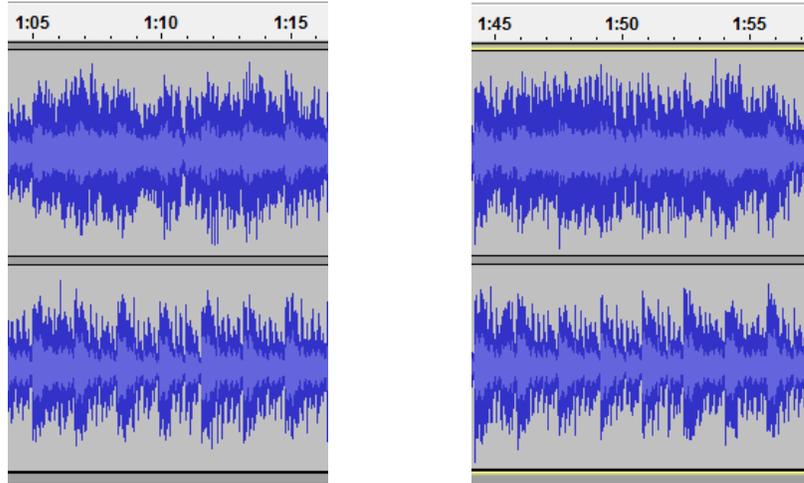


Figure 9. Audio excerpts for two instrumental interludes in “Contact.”

The next section is the longest of the vocal sections. It spans twenty measures in thirty-three seconds, compared to the first that encompassed twelve measures in twenty-one seconds. This section intensifies leading into the next expanded instrumental section that is the climax of the song. This section continues to graphically relate the concept of bringing the process into your home, and even more literally, into your body. The lyrics are as follows:

Take out your
 Twelve-inch electric dildo
 Switch on the box
 Sap your libido

You imagine
 It's a spanner you're sticking in
 Making sparks
 Fly from your rubber skin

Make that knob
 Drive you ecstatic
 Switch it from
 Manual into automatic

Again, a few differences between Australian and American English bear mentioning. A “spanner” is a wrench. “Knob” is a slang word for penis. Throughout the entire song, the vocalist has been addressing “you.” You are meant to put yourself in the position of the subject of the song. This verse makes the song inclusive to those whose proclivities may lead them to get more use out of a “dildo” than a “blow-up doll.” You are meant to question how much of the process you are allowing into your own life. The lyrics evoke a sense of extreme isolation and loneliness, a sentiment to which most people in modern society can relate. The vocals in this section are delivered in a more insistent manner. The rhythm guitar, however, is the element that adds the most intensity. It begins a pattern that has the approximate rhythmic values as notated below:



Figure 10. Guitar rhythm in fourth vocal section of “Contact.”

The rhythm played is very irregular, and again, this may be intentional, it would certainly fit with the song, or it could be that the person playing the guitar had very little experience. Regardless, it adds a sense of urgency and desperation, and it becomes more complex throughout the section. Also, for the first time in the song, the bass guitar plays a larger role. The rhythm guitar is no longer functioning in a call-and-response manner with the vocals, due to its increased activity. The bass guitar steps in to fill this role. It provides commentary during the lyrics “sap your libido,” makes a few random interjections, responds after “it’s a spanner you’re sticking in,” and supports the lyrics “fly from your rubber skin.” The last word of this section, “automatic” is drawn out and

lasts well into the beginning of the next section until it fades and is seemingly drowned out by the guitars.

The instrumental section that occurs at this point is a full minute long. This is nearly a quarter of the four-minute-and-sixteen-second song. The previous instrumental sections had only been up to twenty seconds long, and the longest vocal section was thirty-three seconds. The length of this section is only one of the elements that sets it apart as the climax of the song. The rhythm guitar begins with the typical sustained sound, but quickly changes into an eighth note pattern in a higher register. This occurs before the bass guitar's sustained sound even begins. The rhythm guitar is also louder at this point. Eleven seconds into the section, at 2:38, a new dramatic sound effect enters. It is an intense and varied drilling noise. As the drilling becomes higher in pitch and more complex, the rhythm guitar does as well. The bass guitar enters at 2:41 to provide its own commentary, the most active this instrument has been during the entire song. At around 2:48, the rhythm guitar falls into a more background role, as the drill and bass guitar interact with each other. At 3:04, the rhythm guitar comes back into prominence as the drill has tapered off to a whine, and it seems as though the action may calm down, but there is one more spurt of interaction between all three instruments before this happens. At 3:17, we finally receive the instrumental section we had come to expect, as the rhythm guitar returns to the panning eighth-note pattern. It is an abbreviated version, as five seconds later the sustained guitar and bass mark the end of the section.

There is then a return to the first verse, but in a modified form. The vocals are heavily distorted, sounding more machine-like. The rhythm guitar is limited to a single

note on beat three, and due to its metallic timbre, it now sounds more like a hammer strike. The instrumental interlude then brings in the last vocal section:

Clockwork action
Can't stop to scream
Gotta have contact
For the engine (4 times)

The process has become automated, and though the subject of the song is obviously in discomfort, all of his or her time is now completely consumed by work. What was once intensely personal is now cold and abstract. Instead of “your” engine it is “the” engine, signifying that the protagonist has become part of the machinery.

4.3 Decoded Feedback

Decoded Feedback is a Canadian-based band founded in the mid-1990s and consists of Marco Biagiotti, originally from Italy, and Yone Dudas, originally from Hungary. Biagiotti was involved in another band and working as club DJ at the time he and Dudas met at an industrial club in Budapest, Hungary. Dudas studied classical music at a conservatory and was also involved in local bands before the duo decided to fully pursue Decoded Feedback. The group was offered a deal through Hard Records after a very positive review of their demo tape by Belgium's *Side-Line Magazine*. Their first official CD release was in 1996 with *Overdosing*. The group continued a steady stream of releases through the 1990s with *Technophobia* in 1997, *Bio-Vital* in 1998, and *EVOLution* in 1999. The band is still very active, and they frequently play live shows. Their latest album *Dark Passenger* is due to be released later in 2014. Biagiotti also has a side project, Sequential Access, with Claus Larsen (born 1967) from Leather Strip. Their first album, inspired by old-school EBM, is also due to be released in 2014.

In an interview with *Side-Line Magazine* in 2005, Dudas said of the band's evolving sound:

We started out as an electronic punk band, that's why it is called Decoded Feedback, and Marco, made up the name. It got more and more electronic, and more refined. It sort of evolved and got cleaner and more melodic actually because in the beginning it was harder and less melodic. I think the melodic part has come through more but still the harshness is there.¹³⁹

Though they may have begun with the intention of becoming a punk band, the heavy electronic dance influence in their music made the industrial scene a more natural home for the group. Biagiotti and Dudas were immersed in the industrial scene in the 1990s, a time when it was not uncommon for bands to actively participate in the industrial scene and socialize with the audience after live shows. Many bands, such as Decoded Feedback, still make it a point to personally connect with their fans. Because of their involvement in the scene, they were directly influenced by many earlier industrial artists that they met at live shows such as Front Line Assembly, Clock DVA, Insekt, Vomito Negro, and Klinik.¹⁴⁰

4.4 "Machine Kontrol"

"Machine Kontrol" is the title of a track from Decoded Feedback's 1998 album *Bio-Vital*.¹⁴¹ This track contains many of the elements that represent third-generation industrial and beyond. The group explains the inspiration behind the song:

¹³⁹ Stefan Davey, "Decoded Feedback - The travelling decoders," *Side-Line Music Magazine*, 05 Dec, 2005, issue 53, accessed February 16, 2014, http://www.side-line.com/interviews_comments.php?id=9969_0_16_0_C.

¹⁴⁰ Detailed biographical information on Decoded Feedback was very difficult to locate. However, I personally met the band at a show in Austin in 2013, and they have been kind enough to fill out a questionnaire by email. Much of the biographical information as well as detailed information on "Machine Kontrol" comes from this questionnaire. The entire transcript of their answers is included as an appendix.

¹⁴¹ Decoded Feedback, *Bio-Vital*, Metropolis Records Met101, CD, 1998.

It was inspired by the idea that humans are trying to recreate themselves in machine form. Human beings are playing God by creating machines that can move, work and think like humans. And if those machines become more like us, who will be better? Who will win control? Who will rule the world? It's a dangerous idea, but we are getting closer and closer to this reality every day. They have developed machines that can now repair themselves, thus possibly making humans obsolete as mechanics. How long will it take for machines to out think us and want independence from us? How long will it take them to have feelings or a soul?¹⁴²

“Machine Kontrol” is loosely structured as follows: an introductory section, first and second verse, chorus, repeat of the first verse, chorus, and a brief concluding section. In analyzing this track, the focus will be on the use of simplistic and repetitive elements, how variety is created through textural processes, the importance of rhythm and rhythmic layering and development of the piece outside of traditional contexts. “Machine Kontrol” demonstrates a layering process through textural accumulation and dissolution, creating a rhythmic polyphony with different voices of equal rhythmic importance. The rhythmic polyphony of “Machine Kontrol” involves many seemingly simple elements, that when combined create a richly textured, yet danceable aural landscape.

The introduction begins with two layers of lush synth pads. The group describes the choice of instrumentation in the piece:

We wanted the music to sound like machines at work. A pounding kick drum in the background demonstrates the continuous beat of the machines at work. They never stop, and neither will the kick drum. We added pads/strings to show human feeling in a machine dominated society. Humans don't want to lose control of being human. Feelings and emotions are lost in a machine's world.

The beginning of the piece introduces only the human element with a lower pitched synth first playing a progression of F with open fifths, Db Major, Ab Major, and C with open fifths, which is then repeated with slightly different voicing as seen in Figure 11 on the following page. The piece is in 4/4, and each chord lasts a full measure. The higher

¹⁴² See appendix.

pitched synth starts in unison, then cycles up to double the pitch at the octave. It sounds likely that it is the same synth sound put through a pitch-shifting process. On the second pattern a spoken sample is added. The text “will you suffer to come unto me?” is repeated twice. It is a dialogue sample from Clive Barker’s film *Lord of Illusions*.¹⁴³ This dialogue is likely a biblical reference from Luke 18:16: “Suffer the little children to come unto me.” Heavy reverb is applied to the sample. Decoded Feedback explains their sample choices:

For us, these samples represent “god” (humans) speaking to its “creation” (machines). When “god” asks the question “will you suffer to come unto me?” to the machines, “god” wants to know if the machines are willing to suffer in order to be more like their god, their creator. And the statement “I was born to murder the world” could be taken as either the god or the machine thinking they were born to destroy the world. It is left to the listener to interpret who would say this.

After the second repetition of the synth pattern, there is a subtle tempo change but a dramatic rhythmic change as a sixteenth-note sequenced synth pattern begins. The synth pad settles on a low F and cycles up to the higher F for the four measures in which the sequenced synth is introduced before fading out. The sequencer plays a complex pattern of F in two different octaves as well as C. By now, the key has been firmly established as f minor. At 0:31, the kick drum, signifying the machine element, begins playing a pattern of three quarter notes and two eighth notes. This continues for four measures before the rest of the percussion enters along with a second sequenced synth. The two synth lines along with the percussion create a complex layer of rhythmic interplay. This continues for eight measures until another dialogue sample, “I was born to murder the world,” enters at 0:54.

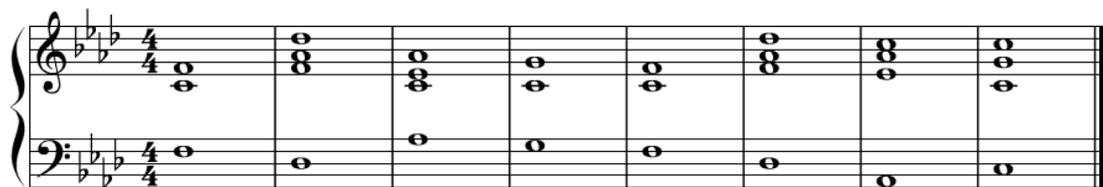


Figure 11. Opening chord progression in “Machine Kontrol.”

¹⁴³ *Lord of Illusions*, directed by Clive Barker (MGM-UA, 1995).

At 1:00 a drum fill announces the beginning of the first verse. The lyrics of this verse are as follows:

Man or machine
What have you been
What are you now
Log in, log out
Man or machine
What are your dreams
How can you die
Future is a lie

Melodic content is not generally an area of complexity in industrial music. The vocals are more spoken than sung, have no discernable melody and are heavily distorted. The synth pads have returned for the vocal section playing a pattern of F, Bb, Db, Gb, modulating to f Phrygian from f minor. This is achieved through a circle of fifths sequence separated by a major third (F and Db). The lyrical content encapsulates a theme common to industrial music, the determination of the border between humanity and its creations. At 1:16 there is a transitory section that leads to the second verse. The lyrics listed in the liner notes for this section are “man or machine...” However, on the track itself, the word “machine” is repeated, as if the vocalist were answering the question. This is repeated four times. At 1:32 the sample “I was born to murder the world” is repeated.

The second verse begins at 1:38, after a drum fill similar to the one that began the first verse. The lyrics to the second verse are as follows:

Man or machine
What have you been
What are you now
Systems down
Man or machine
How can't you see
You are nothing to me
You are nothing to me

The second verse turns personal. The vocalist disowns the subject of the song. It could be because there are “systems down” or it could be because of the text to come in the following chorus. Like the first verse, the second verse is also followed by the “man or machine” transitory material.

In the chorus, beginning at 2:10, the upper voice in the synth pad changes to C, Db over f and Db chords. Each chord lasts two measures. The chorus ends on the Db chord, and since it is just a two chord repetition, it does not sound like a deceptive cadence, but rather like the Db did not resolve back to the C which leaves the listener with a sense of tension. The text of the chorus is:

An empty race
No body or soul
This machinery's
Got control

This suggests that when the song has referred to “you,” it has not been as a singular pronoun, but in reference to mainstream society or humanity as a whole. This suddenly shifts perspective to the vocalist as a chosen outsider, rejecting the world, as opposed to him rejecting and judging a single person. The lyrics printed in the liner notes show the text “this machinery’s got control,” though on the actual track the lyrics sound like “this machinery’s lost control.” The chorus is followed by new transitory material that leads into a repetition of the first verse. The upper voice of the synth pads in this section, starting at 2:38, play a pattern of Ab, Bb, Gb, F, over f minor, g minor, gb with and open fifth and f with an open fifth as shown in Figure 12. The only text in this portion occurs at 2:45 with the title of the song “Machine Kontrol.” At 2:52, a drum fill again announces the first verse that repeats with no variation. At 3:25, the chorus is again repeated twice.

The piece ends with the “Machine Kontrol” transitory material, and a few seconds at the end containing only the synth pads fading out.

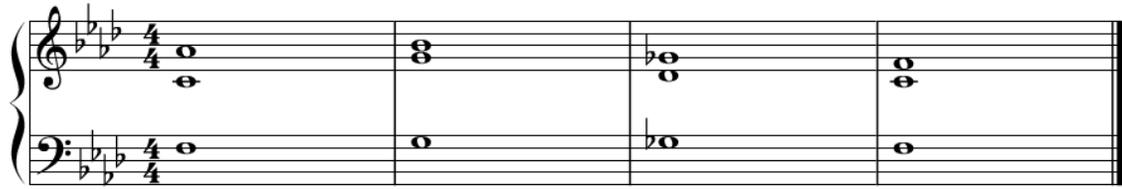


Figure 12. Chord progression during transitory section of “Machine Kontrol.”

4.5 From “Contact” to “Machine Kontrol”

The philosophy from SPK expressed in the liner notes of their album *Auto Da Fe*, which is graphically depicted in “Contact,” is also reflected in “Machine Kontrol.” There is an obvious theme of man morphing into machine and some type of judgment towards this process. In “Contact” the disdain for human interaction is presented in a satirical way, such that the song is actually providing social commentary against modern society’s culture of isolation. “Contact” is quite direct in representing a picture of what this type of life looks like. “Machine Kontrol” is direct in a different way by stating that “an empty race” is what is created out of these circumstances.

Though released twenty years apart, there are many attributes common to industrial music that are demonstrated in both songs. They both use a minimal amount of compositional material and instrumentation. The minimal materials, however, are used effectively to keep interest throughout the song. Due to “Contact” being strophic, there is much built-in repetition. Each repetition is varied by lengthening or shortening the verse and by shifts in the use of the instrumentation. This creates a sense of building towards the climax, which prevents the song from feeling static. “Machine Kontrol” creates its

shifts in the use of instrumentation as a contrast between verse and chorus, though the song still retains a relatively simple form. In “Contact,” it is the guitars that encompass these contrasts, whereas in “Machine Kontrol” it is the synthesizers.

The steady, pervasive rhythms are another point of similarity within the two songs. Drum machines are used in “Contact” as well as “Machine Kontrol,” supplying an exact, driving beat. This steady pulse, however, is supplemented through the creation of rhythmic interplay among the different instruments. A complex rhythm is created by the combination of elements, which taken by themselves may have simplistic rhythmic patterns. This compositional device is a key element in the creation of the sound of industrial music. Another key element is heavy reliance on technology. It may seem contradictory that songs that are criticizing the loss of humanity to technology are using that very same technology. This again feeds into the concept of using the system against itself. Collins addresses technology in relationship to the dystopian imagery used in industrial music. She writes: “Technological imagery in dystopia has been used predominantly negatively, often as a symbol of the dehumanization of modern life.”¹⁴⁴ She notes, however, that this negative portrayal is not always the case: “Technology in dystopia is also viewed as potentially liberating, and is often appropriated by the resistance movement to their own benefit.”¹⁴⁵ She unites these two opposing views by concluding: “Dystopia therefore has an arguably ambiguous relationship with technology itself. It is often through the metaphor of technology that we are led to a realization that it is not technology that is at fault, it is the way it has been employed that enslaves

¹⁴⁴ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 373.

¹⁴⁵ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 384.

humankind.”¹⁴⁶ This concept is central to the meaning of both “Contact” and “Machine Kontrol.”

Though there are many similarities between “Contact” and “Machine Kontrol,” one can also perceive the evolution that has taken place in industrial music during the intervening twenty years. The vocals on both tracks are more spoken or shouted than sung. In “Contact” this is achieved mainly solely through the use of the vocalist’s voice until the last processed section. The vocals are delivered in a nearly punk style. In “Machine Kontrol” the vocals are processed throughout and bear little resemblance to punk, making them sound less confrontational. “Machine Kontrol,” has definite harmony and uses a minor as well as a modal key, whereas “Contact” does not. In “Machine Kontrol,” the dance genre influence is far more prominent. SPK does use traditional instruments, the guitars, even though they are used in unconventional ways, whereas Decoded Feedback does not use any. The reliance on electronic instrumentation gives more recent industrial music another notable characteristic; although the music being performed may be complex and include a large number of voices, the average contemporary industrial group consists of only one to three members. Decoded Feedback has two members to SPK’s four. This is possible due to the heavier reliance on technology. With further elimination of human elements in favor of technological ones, it is as if the theme begun in “Contact” has fully manifested itself in “Machine Kontrol.”

¹⁴⁶ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 389.

CHAPTER V

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 2: “MORTAL” AND “THORNS”

5.1 Front Line Assembly

This chapter will compare two tracks that were released in the same year, 1995, but from bands that began in different eras of industrial music. The first of these bands is Front Line Assembly, founded during second-generation industrial music in 1986. The founding members of the group were Bill Leeb (1956), born in Austria though he resides in Canada, and Michael Balch. Leeb began his career as a member of perhaps the most well-known second-generation industrial group, Skinny Puppy, though Front Line Assembly and another of his side projects, Delerium, have also achieved great success. Leeb has been the sole consistent member of Front Line Assembly throughout the group’s history. In 1990, Balch left the band and Rhys Fulber, another Canadian, took his place.¹⁴⁷ Leeb and Fulber were the core members of the group in 1995. Hanley situates Front Line Assembly’s music in between the sub-genres of EBM (Electronic Body Music) and Industrial Noise.¹⁴⁸

5.2 “Mortal”

A prominent feature in contemporary industrial music is the use of pre-recorded non-musical sounds, including field recordings, dialogue samples and other *musique concrète* procedures. Contemporary industrial artists often feature dialogue samples from movies

¹⁴⁷ Matzke and Seeliger, *Das Gothic-und Dark Wave-Lexikon*, 227-228.

¹⁴⁸ Hanley, “Metal Machine Music,” 298.

or political events, which take the place of or supplement a vocalist. Collins notes that: “Although industrial is hardly unique in using verbal samples, it was one of the first popular styles to use them to such an extensive degree.”¹⁴⁹ Woods also discusses the importance of sampling in industrial music: “industrial did redefine the way in which sampling can create multiple musical ideas within a given work. More than just an extra-musical element of sonic interest or character within a given work, industrialists sample dialogue, sound, and score from film... particularly dystopian films.”¹⁵⁰ These dialogue samples are often macabre in nature, and critical of society, government and question the perception of human nature as dark. Black humor, satire and sarcasm are also prominent concepts contained in these dialogue samples and the vocals of contemporary industrial music altogether.

“Mortal,” released on Front Line Assembly’s album *Hard Wired*¹⁵¹ in 1995, features dialogue samples as its only source of text. This track is ambient and not structured into clear sections. General soundscapes are created and transformed throughout the piece, and these soundscapes are given interpretation through the chosen dialogue samples. Figure 13 below gives visual representation of the gradually increased texture and dynamics that then quickly decrease during the concluding section. Using this chart, the placement of the dialogue samples, and significant musical events as a basis, the sections of “Mortal” will be discussed as follows: 0:00-0:48 ambient introduction, 0:48-1:37 “news broadcast” samples, 1:38-2:13 introduction of “life after death” sample, 2:13-3:06 “life after death” sample development, 3:06-4:00 musical section without step

¹⁴⁹ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 2068-2074.

¹⁵⁰ Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 81.

¹⁵¹ Front Line Assembly, *Hard Wired*, Metropolis Records MET 015, CD, 1995.

sequencer, 4:00-5:15 musical section with step sequencer, and 5:15-5:42 concluding material.

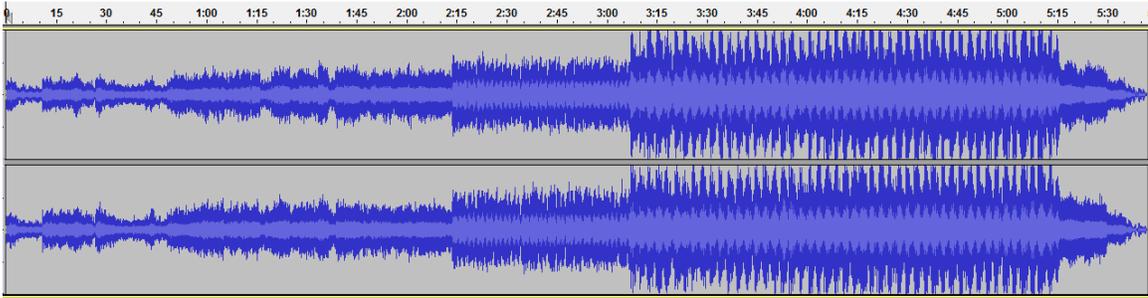


Figure 13. Audio chart of “Mortal” by Front Line Assembly.

The ambient introduction consists of complex layers of sound that create a compelling atmosphere. The beginning of the introduction begins with a resonant ringing metallic sound, almost like a coin being spun, quickly followed by a drum hit and a sample of a quiet grunt in a male voice. This is then layered with rustling noises, a creaking door, and a rolled cymbal. A string bass holds out a sustained note on D, serving as a tonic drone, along with rumbling sounds. The production quality on this track is excellent, and one sound blends seamlessly into the next. At 0:11 the beginning drum hit and grunt sample repeat, accompanied by the rustling and creaky door, though there is a subtle difference. The addition of a resonant room tone increases the complexity. Due to there being nearly ten seconds of intervening material with no pulse, it may not even be apparent upon first listen that this is a repetition. At 0:20 the first electronic sound enters, a granulated static. It contrasts harshly with the sounds presented up until this point. The opening material repeats again at 0:27, but it is altered even further. The sample is stretched out, which lowers the pitch. Dripping water sounds are added. Shortly after,

barely discernable whispers enter in the background. Another burst of static interrupts at 0:32, sounding almost like a buzz saw. The whispers become more prominent after this, but they are layered and still provide a background ambiance, rather than textual material. At 0:41 another noisy burst occurs, and then the whispers ease off slightly, leading into the next section. All of these elements serve to set an ominous atmosphere for what is to come.

The next section introduces a high-pitched instrument that is likely some type of altered synthesized woodwind. Layers of texture continue to be accumulated and removed, such as the sound of a radio tuner and more static bursts. The main point of interest in this section, however, are the dialogue samples taken from the film *In the Mouth of Madness*.¹⁵² The samples are transcribed as follows:

I'll try and uh continue this emergency broadcast as long as we can hold out here, um, the city is almost completely deserted now. There are only a few stranglers left on the streets, no emergency services, the fires continue to burn out of control. This incredible epidemic of [unintelligible] has spread to every country in the civilized world. Every hour, uh, more people are becoming infected, being driven to senseless acts of extreme violence. Now we have gotten reports, sketchy at best, of people mutating, their bodies swelling and distorting. It's impossible at this time to know how many uninfected people are left.

These dialogue samples provide context for the previously introduced sound samples.

The creaking door and dripping water can be associated with abandoned buildings. The ominous whispering could be hidden survivors trying to remain quiet. Collins makes note of the technique of creating a setting through samples:

Industrial samples, then, help to situate the songs as belonging to a specific time, place or mood. The use of samples from horror or dystopia, for instance, may help to set the songs in a visual context of darkness, the future, death, opposition, terror and tension that these films project, and samples will also provide clues as to how the lyrics, and the music, should be read.¹⁵³

¹⁵² *In the Mouth of Madness*, directed by John Carpenter (New Line Cinema, 1995).

¹⁵³ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 2081.

This is particularly applicable to “Mortal.” During the last line of this section, “It’s impossible at this time to know how many uninfected people are left,” another dialogue sample occurs. It is the word “death,” and it is a distorted version of a word from the sample in the section following this one. The sample is altered to sound monstrous. There is then a drawn out breathy, spoken “ah” containing the same timbral qualities used during the word “death.”

Another “ah” sample brings in the next section at 1:38. Even though the “ah” is a repetition, the introduction of a filter sweep provides a more recognizably electronic instrument timbre, which causes this repetition to fall more naturally into the section with the “life after death” sample. This is another example of the use of elision to create a sense of unity between two adjoining sections that is often employed by industrial music. The first iteration of the most prominent sample throughout this piece is presents the full text: “you’ll find that there is life after death.” Immediately after this text another line is delivered, “very painful life.” This line goes by very quickly and is almost blended in with the soundscape. When the first sample enters, it is accompanied by a synthesized angelic chorus. The notation is shown below in Figure 14, and as there is still no rhythmic pulse, it is simply notated in whole notes. This is the first time in the piece there has been any suggestion of melodic material. This section of the song is filled with double meaning, and this melody supports the ambiguity. The dialogue sample about life after death contains a phrase that would normally be found comforting by most. However, in this context with the previous dialogue samples and the line “very painful life” afterwards, it is clear that life after death is not turning out to be what one might have hoped. The melodic and harmonic material in this section is played primarily in

thirds, implying a harmonic progression, but mostly providing the sense of a simple step-wise melody. The words “life after death” are repeated another twelve times with various manipulations over the angelic chorus until the end of this section. Samples of a man screaming and glass breaking are added in the background leading into the next section.



Figure 14. Chorus accompanying “life after death” sample in “Mortal.”

One of the large dynamic shifts shown in Figure 11 occurs at 2:13. This section is brought in with a drum hit. The angelic chorus and any sense of melody disappear even though the “life after death” sample continues. The increased dynamics are due mainly to a newly added cyclical, metallic grinding sound. At 2:35, more of the dialogue sample returns with “there is life after death.” A sample of a woman laughing also enters at this point. Shortly after, there is a return of the distorted “ah” sample, which has not been encountered since the beginning of the “life after death” section. This sound comes more into prominence as the “life after death” sample begins to fade into the background, giving the section a sense of closure by ending it with the sample with which it first began.

The next large dynamic shift, at 3:06, brings in the thickest and most musical texture that has been encountered so far in the piece. The melody line returns, this time with an instrument that has a more electronic synth timbre, and there is percussion. The melody and percussion enter at irregular intervals and do not line up rhythmically with each other. This circumvents a sense of pulse or meter. It could also be perceived as

polymetric, as there seems to be two competing downbeats. The “life after death” sample continues in the background, slowly giving way to a new sample of the phrase “human evolution” that repeats twice, then is brought back later. At 3:56, the descending motion from E to D is made more quickly, and D is doubled in both the electronic synth and angelic chorus instruments, giving the listener a stronger sense of arrival. A step sequencer enters with a repeating sixteenth-note pattern at 4:00, along with a double drum hit, providing the first real instance of rhythmic structure. The melody and percussion, however, continue with the same irregular pattern as before, creating an even more complex rhythmic texture. A second step sequencer enters at 4:06, layering the texture even further. The same melody line continues in the synthesizer, sometimes doubled at the unison or octave with the angelic chorus. At times the “life after death” or broken-up syllables from this sample are present, but they are so blended into the background that there is only the impression of the speaker’s timbre in the mix, and rarely the actual words. Another cadence E to D motion over Bb major to d minor (bVI to i) occurs at 5:10, leading into the end of the section.

The conclusion begins with a reduction in texture at 5:15. The step sequencers and percussion drop out. What remains are many of the ambient effects, including breaking glass, and another laughing or breathing sound. The synth plays a pattern of F, E, D twice. On the last repetition, the synth drops out and the chorus sound that is playing an octave lower remains. “Life after death” continues to be repeated, however, because of the many repetitions until this point, it has definitely moved far into the background. It is not until all of the other sounds are removed that it becomes prominent again. The song ends with several more repetitions of “life after death,” gradually fading out.

5.3 :Wumpscut:

:Wumpscut: is a German industrial music project created by Rudy Ratzinger (born 1966) in 1991. Ratzinger began his music career as a disc jockey and was inspired by the music of the Danish solo industrial artist Claus Larsen, operating under the name Leæther Strip.¹⁵⁴ To date, Ratzinger has released eighteen studio albums and a significant number of additional materials such as remixes and demos. Ratzinger formed his own record label, Beton Kopf Media, in 1995, solely for the purpose of releasing :Wumpscut: music. This move ensures that creative control at all levels lies solely in the hands of the composer, from the music down to the marketing, packaging and distribution of his works. A few of his early albums, including *Bunkertor 7*, were reissued in multiple guises on different labels with varying numbers of bonus tracks. Before the prevalence of the internet, popular underground music albums often saw multiple releases on different labels in different countries in order to spread music. For example, there are at least ten individual releases of :Wumpscut:’s 1993 album *Music for a Slaughtering Tribe*, including a 2005 remastered version. Woods comments on :Wumpscut:’s role in post-industrial music: “In the second decade as the genre grew in relative popularity (referred to as the ‘second wave,’ c.1982–c.1990), several sub-genres emerged, such as EBM (electronic body music), Coldwave, and Industrial Rock, to name a few, and many bands, such as Front 242, Wumpscut, Ministry, Young Gods, Leætherstrip, and Autopsia began to change the shape, sound, and style of the genre for a fan base increasing in size and

¹⁵⁴ Kevin Congdon, “Interview :wumpscut: - 5/97,” aracnet.com, accessed October 10, 2011, <http://www.aracnet.com/~jester/interview/wumpscut.interview.html>.

heterogeneity.”¹⁵⁵ To clarify, Hanley lists :Wumpscut: as a third-generation artist due to the band’s foundation after 1990. The multiple releases of albums, combined with Ratzinger’s prolific release of new material, make :Wumpscut: one of the most productive industrial music projects of the past twenty years.

5.4 “Thorns”

“Thorns,” on :Wumpscut:’s 1995 album *Bunkertor 7*, is an instrumental track that exemplifies many elements of industrial music. “Thorns” is structured into four main sections: an introductory section, a fully electronic section, a return of the introductory material that includes the climax, and the ending material. I have created a graphical representation to show how harmonic, thematic and rhythmic elements are used to create different textures and timbres, shown in Figure 15. “Thorns” demonstrates a layering process through textural accumulation and dissolution, creating a rhythmic polyphony with different voices of equal rhythmic importance. The rhythmic polyphony of “Thorns” involves many seemingly simple elements that, when combined, create a more complex aural landscape as is common in industrial music. This rhythmic polyphony produces an interesting effect when industrial music is played in a dance club setting. As a result of the many layers of rhythm, people on the dance floor move in a wide variety of tempos. As an example, some dancers may move in time with the half notes, while others move to quarter, eighth, or sixteenth notes. The music is experienced differently depending on the layer of rhythm on which the listener focuses.

¹⁵⁵ Woods, “Industrial Music for Industrial People,” 2.

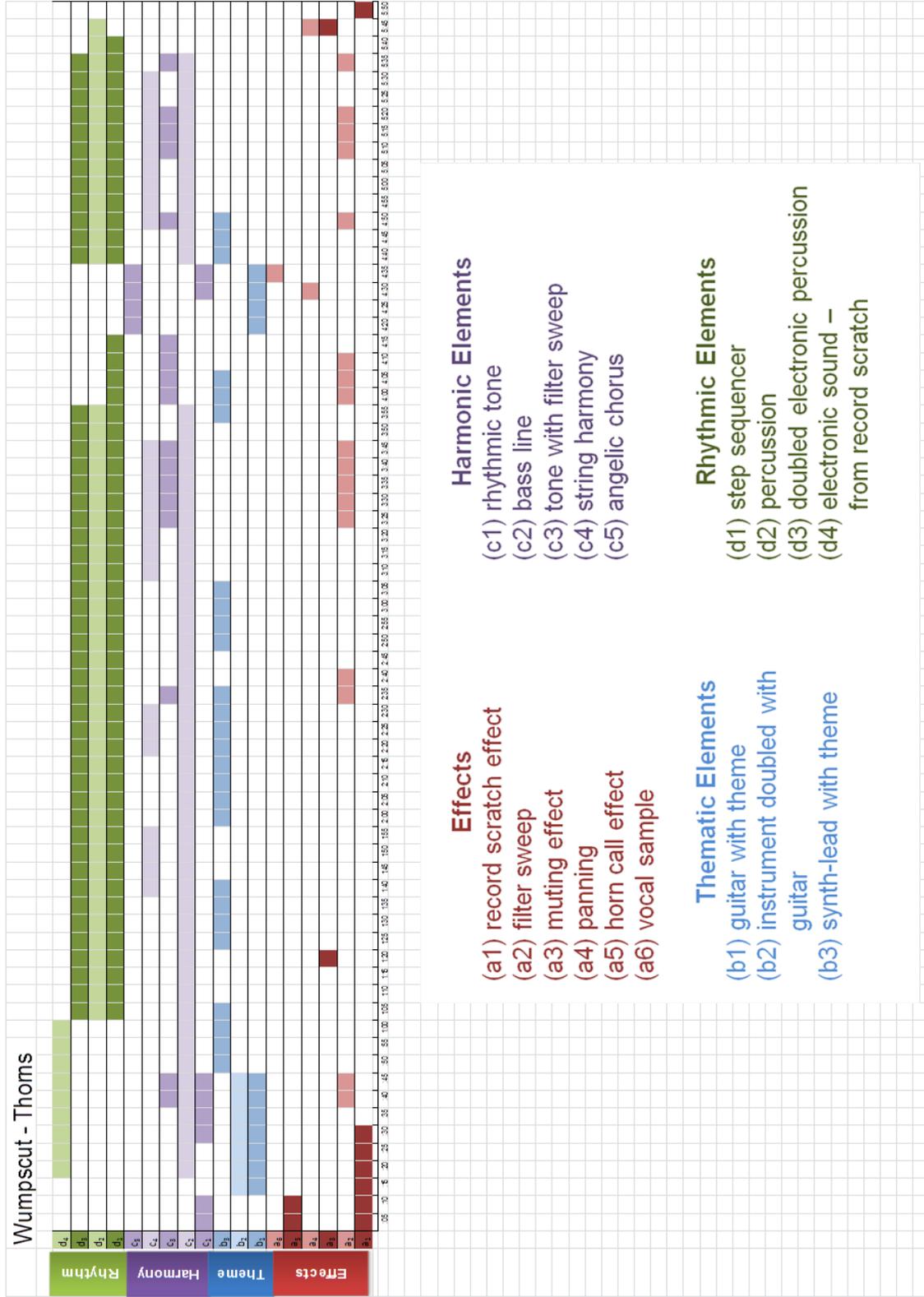


Figure 15. “Thoms” Elements.

To reiterate, melodic content is not generally an area of complexity in industrial music. “Thorns” is monothematic, and the theme is first introduced with a guitar sound at 0:10 in the key of F# minor, a key that the composition never leaves. The theme is a four-measure phrase as shown in Figure 16.



Figure 16. “Thorns” main theme, introduced on guitar at 0:10.

This theme appears in a simplified version in a synthesizer starting at 0:43 and recurs at 1:22, 1:56 and 2:46. The final iteration of the theme returns to the original version with the guitar. The first time we are introduced to the theme in the guitar at 0:10, the guitar pattern is repeated four times; however, additional rhythmic elements are added with each repetition, beginning the accumulation process. The guitar theme is first accompanied by a vinyl popping effect, simulating a record. This is joined by a bass synthesizer reinforcing the tonic on the theme’s second iteration at 0:19. The bass at this point serves mostly as a syncopated rhythmic element, though it does supply a tonic pedal. During this second occurrence of the theme, a new and light percussive electronic element is seemingly born out of the vinyl popping noise. This transition is subtle but extremely effective and sets up another layer of rhythmic complexity. The third iteration adds a siren-like synthesizer that creates an element of urgency and again is more rhythmic in nature than harmonic. On the fourth statement, the entrance of the filter sweep further overwhelms the guitar theme in favor of electronic elements. This creates a transition in timbre that sets up the fully electronic entrance at 0:43, which includes a

simplified version of the same theme. The simplified theme is presented twice and settles on the tonic for eight counts. This notable shift marks the first completely electronic texture in the entire piece, drastically altering the overall timbre. The most human and natural element of the piece so far, the guitar theme, has been completely usurped and simplified by the electronics. This moment symbolizes one of the hallmark philosophies of industrial music: the systematic dehumanization of individuals by mainstream culture. Through this gradual shift in timbre, however, it remains clear that the entrance of the theme in the synthesizers does not denote a new section. This shift provides a linking bridge presenting the simplified version of the theme that will be pervasive throughout the following electronic section. Although the guitar theme is left undeveloped in the traditional sense, something new is created on each repetition through the process of textural accumulation. As is common in industrial tracks, the texture of “Thorns” is often manipulated in subtle ways to create variety and provide musical landmarks. Keeping this in mind, any significant change in rhythmic complexity or texture will usually denote a sectional break.

Ratzinger creates such a break to begin the electronic section. A snare drum plays a pattern of two sixteenth notes and an eighth note as a lead in for the percussion that is one of the foundations of the next section. This snare figure is important and is reiterated in a truncated fashion later in the piece. It announces the arrival of a completely new section of music. In this section, the most prominent elements are delivered by sequenced sounds: the electronic percussion, looped bass line and step sequencer. These sequenced sounds are of equal importance; to take one away would destroy the intricate rhythmic interplay which drives this section. Unlike the previous section, percussion dominates the

texture and gives the music a strong and obvious forward momentum. The percussion also provides a stable, danceable rhythm that is easily identifiable in a club setting. The bass line, constantly underneath the electronic percussion, provides some harmonic support, but mainly functions as another layer of rhythm. In this capacity, the bass line of “Thorns” functions much like it would in a dance or pop setting. The step sequencer provides a unique, electronic and staccato timbre to the rhythm section. The step sequencer begins by reinforcing the tonic and, as this section develops, begins to follow the bass line, reinforcing the harmony. These sequenced elements provide the rhythmic exactness that only programming can deliver. The rhythmic interplay is deliberately precise and mechanical, inhuman, and seems to provide its own subtle philosophical commentary on societal conditions.

The filter sweep is a significant element that returns several times throughout the piece. The first time, as previously mentioned, the filter sweep is the final electronic element to be layered over the guitar theme, overwhelming it completely and transforming it into the fully electronic simplified version in the synthesizers. The second occurrence of the filter sweep, at 2:30, provides a brief respite in the middle of the electronic section. This creates a momentary reduction in texture before the electronic section is repeated with embellishments. When this effect is used again, at 3:20, it repeats three times. This once more signals another change in texture. After the third repetition ends at 3:44, only rhythmic elements remain. This begins the most significant dissolution process in the piece and is used to set up the climax. During this percussion segment, the snare drum plays a pattern of two sixteenth notes every measure for four measures. This sixteenth-note figure is another notable element used to signify an upcoming change.

Like the three repetitions of the filter sweep at 3:20, the four repetitions of the sixteenth-note figure complete a pattern of increased activity, a rhythmic acceleration. This rhythmic acceleration is one of the ways in which a non-traditional cadence is created. The percussion phrase ends, and the theme in the synthesizer is brought back in the thinnest texture since its original presentation at the beginning of the piece.

The setup for the first entrance of the percussion in the electronic section has similarities to that of the return of the original guitar theme. The texture leading into the first entrance of the percussion loop at 1:04 is slightly different. There is a bass line, a sustained note from the synth at a higher pitch, and the electronic rhythmic sound. In the first instance, a snare drum plays a pattern of two sixteenth notes and an eighth note as a final lead in for the percussion. This is modified to set up the return of the guitar theme. At 3:53 the bass line is absent. The sustained note from the synth starts out at the same pitch, but then drops an octave, and the sequencer that has been constant throughout the electronic section is looped in a truncated pattern. This time a snare drum plays a pattern of two 16th notes, modified slightly from the lead-in for the percussion. All these similarities set up the expectation that there may be a return of the percussion. Instead, there is an immediate return of the original guitar theme with an angelic choir effect. The timbre and dynamics of the acoustic guitar with the choir is in contrast with the previous electronic instrumentation. This greatly reduced texture also serves to introduce the climactic moment of the piece, a vocal sample from the movie *Highlander* declaiming “tonight you sleep in hell.”¹⁵⁶ It is also notable, because the processing on the vocals combines acoustic and electronic elements, which had only been presented separately up to that point. This brief sample is the only text, giving the piece a new meaning from this

¹⁵⁶ Gregory Widen, *Highlander*, VHS, directed by Russell Mulcahy (Lions Gate, 1986).

point onward. In retrospect, the quiet guitar and angelic choir seem ominous. The lullaby effect of the guitar, in contrast to the previous electronic harshness, must now be thought of in a new light. The delivery of the vocal sample also provides a clean break between this second delivery of the guitar theme and the closing section, which brings back a barrage of electronic elements in stark contrast.

Another dramatic dynamic and textural shift marks the beginning of the closing material. The elements that had been gradually added at the beginning and carefully dissolved all return suddenly. Before the impact of the “tonight you sleep in hell” vocal sample is allowed to settle in, the harsh electronic elements of the percussion, bass, step sequencer, filter sweep and synthesizer theme immediately come back. This final presentation of the electronic elements ends with the most straightforward harmonic cadence with a scale degree 2 to scale degree 1 movement in the synth lead. A filter sweep at 5:31 marks another textural change, leaving only percussion elements that continue for seven full measures with a panning effect and the return of the vinyl popping effect. The percussion is then cut off in the middle of the last measure, leaving only a few of the vinyl popping noises that frame the piece.

Ratzinger’s compositional style in “Thorns” uses accumulation and dissolution to delineate different sections of music. “Thorns” uses many elements that are relatively simple when standing alone, but create rich textures when added together. This composition uses around twenty different electronic instruments and effects, combined in various ways, to create an instrumental industrial piece rich in subtlety as well as variety. The effects range from phonograph pops to electronic filter sweeps, from acoustic to electric, and from organic to inhuman. Rhythmic complexity pervades this piece at all

levels and provides unique color to each section. The precise, programmed interplay of these elements is a calling card of industrial music, and it is used to great effect in this composition. “Thorns” uses subtle musical devices to continue the industrial music tradition of social commentary. Industrial music was born out of a countercultural and individualistic ideology, and, although the music has evolved, the importance of the ideology is a substantial influence on the compositional techniques used. The *Highlander* vocal sample punctuating the climax is one classic example of this.

5.5 A Comparison of “Mortal” and “Thorns”

The most obvious surface similarity between “Mortal” and “Thorns” is that they both derive their only text from sampled sources. These sources provide the context and meaning for the songs. In “Mortal,” the listener is provided with the dark atmosphere prior to the most significant dialogue sample, setting the sample in a different light than it would normally be encountered. In “Thorns,” it is the surprising nature of the dialogue sample that leads one to interpret the musical content differently. Collins notes that: “*détournement*, the use of those appropriated materials in ways to alter their original meaning, is seen in the sampling techniques applied by the industrial artists who use debris of political speeches, television, film, and advertising, cut them up and intersperse them into the songs.”¹⁵⁷ This technique is even more apparent in “Mortal;” however, the sample used in “Thorns” is also presented in a far different setting than its original context. The theme of both of the songs revolves around death and has an element of shattered hope. In “Mortal,” life after death ends up as a very negative situation. “Thorns” seems to offer the promise of heaven, only to snatch it away.

¹⁵⁷ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 2104.

The songs also contain many musical similarities. They are both monothematic melodically and contain little functional harmonic support. Each song uses a minimal amount of material and presents this material in various forms in order to achieve a balance between repetition and variety. The use of step sequencers is minimalist by nature, as it is a constant repetition of the same pitches. Both songs also employ layered rhythms and entail complex interactions between the parts in the piece. In discussing the interaction between parts in industrial music, Collins goes so far as to assert that: “Although not all industrial contains any harmony or melody in the traditional sense, all industrial music is polyphonic. There may not always be a fundamental—an identifiable frequency—but non-pitched sounds can have a relative frequency and can be used melodically.”¹⁵⁸ “Mortal” and “Thorns” also use material from one section of the song in other sections to achieve a sense of unity. In “Thorns,” it is most prominently the melodic theme. “Mortal” uses the “death” sample in a similar manner. Interestingly enough, the songs encompass almost the same amount of time, with “Mortal” at 5:42 and “Thorns” at 5:49, much longer than popular music you would normally encounter on the radio.

“Thorns” is structured much more recognizably as a song, whereas “Mortal” is loosely structured. “Mortal” relies heavily on sampled sounds other than the dialogue samples, making it more noise-based. “Thorns” relies instead on electronic instrumentation to create its atmosphere. Due to its regular meter and recognizable beat, “Thorns” has regularly been played in dance clubs. Though ambient tracks or tracks that are complex rhythmically may also receive play at clubs, the polymetric nature of “Mortal” has prevented it from becoming a big club hit. These two tracks, released in the same year by two bands founded in separate generations of industrial music, demonstrate

¹⁵⁸ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 2158-2163.

that even though the two songs may appear very different on the surface, there are fundamental similarities that firmly situate both tracks within the realm of the industrial music genre.

CHAPTER VI

CULMINATION: CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study is to show through comparative analysis of early industrial tracks and those of the 1990s that though the method of delivery has evolved, much remains of what makes industrial music a distinct genre that challenges societal norms. Collins notes that: “Industrial Records sought to offer an alternative outlet for music fans that would awaken the social conscience.”¹⁵⁹ I would argue that Industrial Records achieved this goal. Industrial music still provides an alternative to the mainstream, as well as the artistic and intellectual means to explore dissatisfaction with the current system. This is one of the main reasons why industrial music has persisted.

Though the study of popular music has made enormous advancement into the academic community, it still has not gained complete acceptance. There seems to be concern about whether or not modern genres are complex enough at the compositional level to merit deep study. Industrial music in particular entails a certain amount of deceptive simplicity. A two-part Bach keyboard piece may seem simple at first glance. It is not until one delves deeper to discover the craftsmanship involved in the counterpoint that one can appreciate the complexity of the piece and skill of the composer. At first listen, especially to those who have not had exposure to harsher genres in the past, industrial music may appear chaotic and perhaps random. When one begins to understand the context of the music and to acclimate the ear to these new aural experiences, however, it is not difficult to appreciate the skill required to choose and manipulate

¹⁵⁹ Collins, *A Bang, A Whimper and A Beat*, 692.

unique sounds that convey a particular message, and to create the rhythmic polyphony and lush aural landscapes that are pervasive within the industrial music genre. Choosing to analyze only those musics that are “complex enough,” however, greatly limits the understanding of music in general, and discourages a holistic approach.

The scope of this study was by necessity limited; however, there are many ways in which it could be expanded to provide avenues for future research. A broader perspective could have been gained by including more interviews and questionnaires. My view of the genre is biased by my personal exposure to the music and culture, and interviews could have provided ideas for pieces that represent a broader range within the genre. The nature of industrial music calls for an interdisciplinary approach. Sociological studies by someone on the inside who has a real feel as to what the people are about and what attracts them to the genre are indicated. Also, since industrial music tends to be quite regional, a study of the trends within the particular countries in which the music is most widespread would help provide perspective about the industrial music community.

A traditional musical analysis of the pieces analyzed in this thesis, or any industrial music track, may not do justice to the intricacies of the processes used within. It is important to recognize that, although industrial music may use some devices borrowed from other genres, it is a distinct type of music that uses these devices in singular ways. In turn, each industrial artist has his or her own compositional style. The analysis of electronic music is fundamentally different than an analysis of music performed on traditional instruments. Many elements, such as the figures in the step sequencer, have an obvious machine-like quality that must be accounted for when an analysis of industrial music is undertaken. The use of unique sounds and combinations of

new timbres provides unlimited possibilities for exploration of texture. The tools of traditional, tonal musical analysis are wide-ranging, yet they do not present a complete picture of the complexity of much popular music. In the absence of melodic development, large-scale harmonic motion, and expected formal models, industrial music in particular calls out for a more flexible approach to analysis – one that examines additional parameters such as texture, timbre, programmatic elements, message and subject matter, use of unconventional objects as instruments, the use of sampling, and intended audience. This thesis emphasizes the sonic elements of the music; however, widening the scope of study to an interdisciplinary approach would allow an even greater understanding. Much of industrial music contains political and social commentary that has been tackled head-on in a uniquely direct way. Issues of gender, sexual orientation, class, and the various elements of control within society have been addressed by industrial musicians since the inception of the genre. The artists examined here are only some of the many industrial artists with extensive catalogs. Industrial music has evolved into a rich and varied genre with well over thirty years of history, yet has barely begun to be explored from an academic perspective. This genre affords exciting new analytical possibilities, both within itself and in the broader context of electronic music.

APPENDIX: DECODED FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Completed by email February 26, 2014

“Machine Kontrol”

Ruth Vecchio: What was the inspiration behind the song “Machine Kontrol?”

Decoded Feedback: It was inspired by the idea that humans are trying to recreate themselves in machine form. Human beings are playing God by creating machines that can move, work and think like humans. And if those machines become more like us, who will be better? Who will win control? Who will rule the world? It’s a dangerous idea, but we are getting closer and closer to this reality every day. They have developed machines that can now repair themselves, thus possibly making humans obsolete as mechanics. How long will it take for machines to out think us and want independence from us? How long will it take them to have feelings or a soul?

RV: What can you tell me about the choice of lyrics?

DF: The lyrics talk about the journey and growth of the machine into its independence and how it has no soul.

RV: What can you tell me about the compositional process for the music?

DF: We wanted the music to sound like machines at work. A pounding kick drum in the background demonstrates the continuous beat of the machines at work. They never stop, and neither will the kick drum. We added pads/strings to show human feeling in a machine dominated society. Humans don’t want to lose control of being human. Feelings and emotions are lost in a machine’s world.

RV: Anything you can tell me here about how the instrumental sounds were chosen, the structure of the song, tempo, how the sequencer and drum loops were created, and how the keyboard part or other parts were composed would be very helpful.

DF: Kick drum: the pounding of machines in a factory
Bass sound: electrical sounding to emulate machines
Pads/strings: human emotion and pain
Tempo: fast and consistent to show the rhythm of machines

RV: When were tracks from Bio-Vital first performed live? How were they received by the audience?

DF: The songs from Bio-Vital were first performed live in Toronto when we opened for Covenant back in Oct 1998. It was very well received! Breathe, Bio-Vital, Relic and

Machine Kontrol were the most popular songs off that album. That album took our musical career to a higher level. It was one of our most successful albums. We must play Bio-Vital at every show now. It's a must for audiences. Unfortunately we haven't performed Machine Kontrol live for many years and in fact, we don't have the original midi files anymore. We composed our first 3 albums "Overdosing", "Technophoby" and "Bio-Vital" on an Atari. We were poor students and an Atari was cheap (used of course) and midi ready. We recorded all the audio at our friend's studio in Toronto. We still have all the individual audio tracks on DAT, but not the midi files anymore :(

RV: Would it be possible to send me a remix kit for the song so I can listen to each track individually? If this isn't something that you have handy, I completely understand.

DF: Unfortunately due to the reasons mentioned above, we don't have any of those files left on computer backup, so it would be very difficult to get you the individual wave files of each track.

RV: Has anyone ever remixed the song? I have not been able to find it if they have.

DF: No, we never made a remix kit for it, so no one has remixed it. We do have the audio files on DAT, so we could recreate a remix kit if we want to, but that would take a long time. We have been thinking of redoing Machine Kontrol for an upcoming album, so you might hear an updated version of it soon :)

Biographical Information

RV: I do have your biographical information from the website, and a few other sources, but I would like to ask a few more in-depth questions.

RV: How did you two first meet? How did you decide to start creating music together?

DF: We met at an Industrial club in Budapest, Hungary. We had such a strong musical connection that we decided to start our own industrial group just for fun. Marco was actually in another band at the time, but decided to leave it when he thought we should take this more seriously. We produced our first self-titled demo tape and sent it to Belgium's famous alternative music magazine "Side-Line". We got an amazing review, so Hard Records Europe contacted us and we started working on our first CD "Overdosing", which was released in late 1996.

RV: What was your own personal inspiration to make music?

DF: We were very lucky to be living in Torino, Italy in the early 90's because many great industrial bands played there, like FLA, Clock DVA, Insekt, Vomito Negro, Klinik, etc... We were so impressed by this kind of music that we wanted to play it ourselves. We talked with all these bands personally and it inspired us to do it ourselves too. Both Marco and I have musical backgrounds. Marco was a DJ and also played in an alternative

band, and I studied classical music at the conservatory and also played in some local bands (for fun). Meeting each other is what sparked us to take it more seriously.

RV: What is your goal in live performance? What do you hope the audience members walk away from the show with?

DF: We hope the audience walks away exhausted, happy and satisfied. We want to take them on a journey and experience what we experience. We want to connect with our audience and share our passion of music with them. It's a very powerful experience when you connect fully with your audience. It's electrifying. It ignites you and makes you want to create more music. It energizes us. We love performing live. The energy we receive from our audience goes back into our song writing process. It feeds it. It's a creative machine of sorts.

RV: What are some of your most important influences, musical or otherwise?

DF: Yone: Old school electronic music, classical music, electronic gear, music in general, life, pain, sorrow, beauty.

Marco: I think that the old school electronic bands are definitely my most important influence musically. Such as Portion Control, Clock DVA, Gary Numan, Kraftwerk.

RV: Were you influenced by any of the early industrial artists?

DF: Yes, we are very influenced by many early industrial artists like Skinny Puppy, Leather Strip, Kraftwerk, FLA, Klinik, Vomito Negro, Clock DVA, Portion Control, Pouppee Fabrik, Mentallo and the Fixer, etc...

RV: What kind of music do you tend to listen to in general? Has your musical taste changed or evolved since the founding of Decoded Feedback?

DF: Yone: I have a wide variety of music I listen to. I love classical music. I find true inspiration in classical. I love Beethoven, Bach, Chopin, Vivaldi, Albinoni, and Mozart. I love all sorts of music: anything from dark trance, to reggae, to 80s, to industrial, to electronica, to punk, to old school electronic. It depends on the mood I am in. I am open to all kinds of music, as long as it's good. My music taste has always been evolving. I keep adding different genres to it :) I don't want to limit myself to one genre. I want to listen to all types of music. Music is my life. It is my air, food and water. I live and breathe it every single day.

Marco: I listen to mainly old electronic in the vein of the bands I mentioned above. But I also like rockabilly, psychobilly and two of my favorites bands of all times are Joy Division and The Cramps.

RV: What is your impression of the industrial music scene? Do you think it has changed over the years? If so, how?

DF: The scene has changed a lot since we first started, in good and bad ways. When we first started, it was much more intimate and fun. Artists were easygoing and wanted to socialize more with fans. You could hang out with your favourite artist after their show. It was great. Now there is more of a divide between artist and fan. Today, artists like to hang out more backstage and talk among themselves. Marco and I don't really like hanging out backstage. We love to be out in the audience having a good time meeting new people. Connecting. However, in some ways there is more connection between artist and fan than ever before, for example like on Facebook and Twitter. Fans can connect immediately with their favourite artist and even chat with them in real time. It's really quite incredible. Also, the music has changed. Artists who want to be popular seems to make Harsh EBM. That's the most popular type of industrial right now. And if you don't fall into that category, then you are not popular. I find that in the past, the fans appreciated much more variety in the industrial scene. Somehow I think tastes have become much more limited to one sub-genre of industrial. There are many sub-genres of industrial: EBM, synthpop, harsh EBM, IDM, etc... And it seems that fans and artists of each genre don't seem to cross paths much these days. They stay inside their sub-genre. This makes me sad. I preferred it in the past when people much more open-minded about music and genres. Another thing I have noticed is that people don't appreciate this unique scene like they did in the past. The industrial scene is dying due to lack of support from the fans. People need to purchase music legally, go out to local industrial nights and attend shows. Attendance at industrial shows is way down. We know of very famous bands who have had few people show up for shows. It's sad. We all need to support this wonderful and unique alternative scene before we lose it forever. The music in the top 40 world has become so generic and boring. We need the industrial scene to keep alive as an alternative to mainstream junk.

RV: If there is anything else you would like to include, please do so.

DF: We are almost finished production on our new album "Dark Passenger", which will be released later this year on Metropolis Records and Dependent Records. We will be playing some shows in Germany with Leather Strip in April, followed by playing at the Dark Munich Festival on April 27, then the Dubhfest III in Belgium on May 10. Then in late June, we will play Terminus Festival in Calgary. Also, Claus Larsen (Leather Strip/Klutae) and Marco Biagiotti (Decoded Feedback) will be releasing their debut album for their old school EBM side project "Sequential Access" later this year. 2014 is going to be a very productive year!

Lyrics to Machine Kontrol :

Man or Machine
What have you been
What are you now
Log in, log out
Man or machine
What are your dreams
How can you die

Future is a lie
Man or Machine

An empty race
No body or soul
This machinery's
got control

Man or machine
What have you been
What are you now
System's down
Man or machine
How can't you see
You are nothing to me
You are nothing to me

Man or Machine

RV: Why were the samples “will you suffer to come unto me?” and “I was born to murder the world” included in the song? What are the sources for the samples?

DF: The samples were taken from Clive Barker's movie “Lord of Illusions”, but the theme of that movie has no relation to why we took the samples from it. For us, these samples represent “god” (humans) speaking to its “creation” (machines). When “god” asks the question “will you suffer to come unto me?” to the machines, “god” wants to know if the machines are willing to suffer in order to be more like their god, their creator. And the statement “I was born to murder the world” could be taken as either the god or the machine thinking they were born to destroy the world. It is left to the listener to interpret who would say this.

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