

# Why was there a 'Rock Revolution' in Britain? Comparing the Production and Evaluation of Popular Music in Britain and West Germany, 1950–1980

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## Introduction

The term 'Rock Revolution' is commonly used as a shorthand to describe developments in popular music in the 1960s in which British protagonists played a key role and that transformed the landscape of pop globally. This so-called revolution began immediately after the meteoric rise of British beat and rock groups to international stardom around 1963/64. British bands – first the Beatles and then the Rolling Stones, The Who, Pink Floyd etc. – reversed the influx of American tunes and started what became known as the 'British invasion', to use another battlesome metaphor. Its most important outcome, however, is that the sounds, images and values associated with the rock genre became firmly established and dominated the discourse of popular music, arguably until today.

The following paper deals with the question why and how this 'revolution' started in Britain in the 1960s. It follows the production-of-culture perspective as devised by US sociologist Richard A. Peterson and others, focussing on institutional developments within the music industry, rather than explaining cultural change as caused by a clash of generations, musical genius, consumer demand or changing mentalities. The paper analyses the interplay of the six facets that cultural production systems consist of: technology (broadcasting media and recording facilities, for instance), law and regulation (i.e. copyright legislation and the rules of copyright collecting societies), industry structure (the relationship between firms in the music business and related sectors), business organisation (the organisational structure of individual firms), occupational careers (the professional socialisation of actors) and market perception (assumptions about what kind of music will be popular with a perceived audience). It takes the view of the actors involved, looking at their motives, skills and strategies and taking into account opportunities and the limits of their perceptions.<sup>1</sup>

Going beyond older production-of-culture studies, the present article does not limit itself to analysing the production of 'content', but also looks at the institutionalisation of values and conventions that become an

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<sup>1</sup> Richard A. Peterson, N. Anand, "The Production of Culture Perspective," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004), 311-34. A case study that demonstrates the interplay of the six facets is Richard A. Peterson, "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music," *Popular Music* 19, 1 (1990), 97-116.

attribute of cultural genres and that form the frame of reference for musicians, music managers and record producers, critics and fans alike. The conventions that require heavy metal rock or classical music to be played, produced, marketed, judged and appreciated in a certain way inform all actors involved in the respective genres. Consequently, studying the institutionalisation of genres offers a possibility to look at the production, the meaning and the reception of culture, the three aspects of culture that are commonly dealt with individually.<sup>2</sup>

To be able to identify crucial conditions and factors that facilitated the rise of rock, I am going to contrast the British case with developments in West Germany, a country where domestic music production declined steadily under the impact of first American and then also British imports. My leading question is why the makers of popular music in Britain, where the share of US-hits had been even bigger in the mid-1950s than in Germany, managed to stem the tide of American songs and to create an internationally successful product, while German '*Schlager*' music was still produced when it had become obvious that it had lost touch with the majority of consumers even in Germany, let alone with listeners worldwide.

Before I come to this comparison and present part of the answer to this question, I have to briefly qualify the term 'Rock Revolution'. As a first and necessary step in order to find causes for this development, I have to explain in what respect events in the mid-sixties might be called 'revolutionary'. My point is that rather than bringing about a new sound or fundamentally changing the power relations within the music business, the events of the mid-1960s primarily affected the symbolic value of the rock genre. The 'Rock Revolution' was mainly about transforming a style of popular music into a genuinely artistic expression. Whereas before Rock 'n' Roll had been marketed and evaluated more or less like any other form of popular music with its glitzy but disposable stars, its shallowness and short life cycles of hits, at the end of the 1960s rock had become a 'serious' form of expression. During the 1960s, rock was elevated above the rest of pop and became something superior to the passing fads of 'merely' commercial music. The genre established its own values around the notion of 'authenticity', a term that shifted in meaning and then stood for a true, undistorted expression of the artist's 'inner self'. Rock developed its own canon of landmark albums and had its own genealogy – the 'family tree' of bands and styles that would eventually be put up as a poster in every musical instruments shop. So the 'Rock Revolution' describes a rapid

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<sup>2</sup> For sociological studies of genres see Simon Frith, *Performing Rites. Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 75-95; Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1999); Jennifer C. Lena, Richard A. Peterson, "Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres," *American Sociological Review* 73 (2008), 697-718.

transformation of a genre from the 'lows' of entertainment to the 'heights' of 'serious' cultural expression.<sup>3</sup>

Analysing this transformation requires study of both the production of musical 'content' and the efforts to make it valuable and meaningful. Consequently, the following paper will be looking at actors of the music industry such as publishers, producers and record company people, but also at the role of critics. It will become apparent that the latter played an important part in bringing about the 'Rock Revolution'.

First, I am going to sketch the West German case that is characterised by the dominance of music publishers, who, with the profits reaped from the import and adaptation of American copyrights, secured their central position within the domestic music industry. Around 1960, a number of German publishers began to act as record producers, making it difficult for domestic producers of alternative sounds – i.e. rock music – to find a position in the German music business. Second, I am going to point out differences in the British case which might contribute to an explanation of why rock musicians and their managers found a niche in the British music industry. In this part I will highlight a structural peculiarity of the British case: Whereas in continental Europe American music was generally translated, re-arranged and re-recorded by domestic publishers, composers and lyricists, in Britain American recordings were mainly imported as matrices and then simply reproduced. This weakened the older generation of British publishers, authors and composers, but at the same time opened a window of opportunity for the protagonists of what then became the British beat and rock boom. Another British particularity to be pointed out in that section was that parts of the music press took the new popular music seriously. The invention of rock criticism can be seen as the most important contribution to the 1960s rock 'revolution'. In the third part of my chapter I will return to the German case to assess the implications of the import of the then established Anglo-American rock canon around 1970. I will argue that while this transfer of musical classifications and conventions fostered the interest in rock music generally, it turned out to be another disadvantage for domestic rock bands, who could by definition at best be a good copy of the British or American original. 'Authentic' rock and its aesthetic value became widely accepted, but 'authenticity' sprang from sources in Britain and the USA and could only be consecrated by American or British authorities.

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<sup>3</sup> Gestur Gudmundsson et al., "Brit Crit. Turning Points in British Rock Criticism, 1960-1990," in: Steve Jones (ed.), *Rock Music and the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 41-64; Motti Regev, "Producing Artistic Value: The Case of Rock Music," *Sociological Quarterly* 35 (1994), 85-102.

### **Sub-Publishing as a Resource for the Established Music Business: the German Case**

In Germany, like in other Western European countries, songs that were written in the USA had a huge share among the hits at least from the mid-1950s. In 1956, 41 of Germany's hundred top record hits were American copyrights.<sup>4</sup> US tunes most commonly entered the German market in a different form to the one that American listeners knew. In most cases, they were re-arranged and re-recorded by a German performer with German lyrics. “Sixteen Tons”, for instance, had been written by country songwriter Merle Travis, recorded by Tennessee Ernie Ford and reached the American Top20 record charts in January 1956. In Germany, the song was released as “Sie hieß Mary-Ann” (She was called Mary-Ann), recorded among others by Freddy Quinn and Ralf Bendix and reached the German record charts in June, five months after the original had appeared in the Billboard charts. The song was re-arranged by Bert Kämpfert and Ralf Arnie, two well-known composers of light music; the German lyrics were penned by Peter Mösser, who was Freddy's regular lyricist.<sup>5</sup> During the transfer, the song that dealt with dependency, hopelessness and anger of a miner became a sentimental song about a sailor who is true to his ship, the “Mary-Ann”, and sinks with it in the last verse.

The person at the centre of this so-called sub-publishing business was the music publisher. He would have spotted a potential foreign hit for the German market, negotiated a contract with the original publisher, given the score or record to a German arranger and a lyricist and approached dance bands, radio stations, film production firms and record companies. The latter had the star performers – like Freddy, Peter Kraus or Caterina Valente – under exclusive contract, hired the musicians and organised a recording. In the 1950s, the choice of repertoire in the German recording business depended very much on the taste, expertise and contacts of music publishers.

The original publishers in the United States were very much interested in sub-publishing deals, firstly because it was common knowledge that a song could only be successful if it was translated into the language of the receiving country. Leaving the exploitation of a song to a publisher who was familiar with a foreign market seemed the most effective way to sell it internationally, especially as the establishment of foreign subsidiaries that could have collected royalties at source was costly and faced certain difficulties, to which I will come back later. Moreover, German publishers still promoted music via live performances of dance orchestras, which meant that they produced sheet music. This gave publishers from the

<sup>4</sup> Russell Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business. The First Four Hundred Years, vol. III. From 1900 to 1984* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 378.

<sup>5</sup> Information on subpublishers, arrangers and lyricists of individual songs can be found in the GEMA online-database, <https://online.gema.de/werke/>, [16 July 2010].

States the opportunity to save money by leaving the printing job to their sub-publishers and buying the scores from them at a low price.<sup>6</sup> All this explains why original publishers were in retrospect quite generous and conceded their European partners 50% of the royalties generated in the respective country. The writer of the new lyrics would also benefit from the income of a song. In Germany, he got 12.5% that were deducted from the original publisher's share.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the arranger who produced a written score and was the first to get it registered with the GEMA, the German collecting society, also earned a share of the royalties from performing rights.<sup>8</sup> This means that established publishers, authors and composers profited from the adaptation of a foreign-language song to the German market.

In the late 1950s, the first German music publishers began to invest some of the income from selling American hits in setting up their own production facilities. This way, they reacted to a fundamental shift 'from print to plastic', a structural change of the music industry that was caused by the establishment of new communication media and affected music publishers not only in Germany. Before this shift, music publishers had occupied the key position between the originators of music, the songwriters, and the consuming public. On the one hand, they bought or took compositions into commission by paying the author a fixed sum or granting a royalty, which is a share of the income from sales and performance fees. On the other hand, they promoted the song by providing bands and orchestras with scores, paying well-known performers or organising performances themselves. In the late nineteenth century, the British publisher Thomas Chappell for instance initiated a 'popular concert' series to present compositions from his catalogue to a public of potential consumers.<sup>9</sup>

With sales of sheet music (i.e. 'print') declining and the new media radio and record entering a symbiotic relationship, music publishers gradually lost their power to select what the public would like to hear to the record companies – the manufacturers of 'plastic' – and their artist and repertoire managers. As a sound recording became necessary to turn a song into a hit, songwriters approached record companies directly as these could offer a recording deal and had the well-known performers under contract. The record companies welcomed the songwriters because they realised that they could do the publishing job themselves. They could reap

<sup>6</sup> Sanjek, *American Popular Music*, 324f.

<sup>7</sup> Edward C. Heine, Norbert Hauptfleisch, "Subpublishing," in: Rolf Moser, Andreas Scheuermann (eds.), *Handbuch der Musikwirtschaft* (München: Josef Keller Verlag, 1993<sup>2</sup>), 180-195.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Mühlbauer, "Arrangement und Arrangeure," in: Siegmund Helms (ed.), *Schlager in Deutschland. Beiträge zur Analyse der Populärmusik und des Musikmarktes* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1972), 81-108.

<sup>9</sup> William Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), 80f.

the publishers' royalties that a song earned when a record was sold and when it was broadcast or used in a film. Consequently, the shift from 'print' to 'plastic' began to re-assemble the commodity chain of popular music and threatened to reduce the publishers to administrators of musical rights, if not excluding them from the business altogether. The complaint of a veteran publisher from New York's "Tin Pan Alley" to a music journalist in 1953 pointedly describes the changing role of the publisher and the decline of his influence and understanding of quality:

Everybody but the music publisher, who used to be pretty good at that, nowadays picks songs. And don't tell me that in the final analysis the public really picks 'em. We [...] used to have a pretty good concept of quality and values in songs that we published. [...] Today, we don't dare publish a song until some artist perhaps likes it, or when the whim of an A&R genius decides it should be done. [...] A record should be a by-product of publishing; not the sparkplug of songwriting and publishing.<sup>10</sup>

Against this backdrop, publishers who did not see themselves as administrators of copyrights, who wanted to remain musical gatekeepers and attract new talent had to offer the possibility to make recordings to their composers and authors. Income from sub-publishing enabled them to do this and set up recording studios. Ralph Maria Siegel, who had entered the music business as a singer and composer in the 1930s and founded several publishing firms in 1948, started in October 1958 as one of the first German publishers to produce his own recordings. After what he described as a learning period he managed to place his tapes with radio stations.<sup>11</sup> Another 'pioneer' in Germany was Will Meisel who, as a composer, had founded his publishing firm in 1926 and formed the production company Monopol in 1960. Meisel's sons Peter and Thomas, who entered the publishing trade by working on the Intro catalogue that had been given to them by their father, founded the Hansa production company in 1964 that went on to become the most prominent German independent record company. Running Intro and Hansa meant that Peter and Thomas Meisel were at the same time importing international hits by, for example, Steppenwolf and Elton John and producing German '*Schlager*' by Michael Holm, Joachim Heider and other domestic composers.<sup>12</sup>

As the latter found less and less favour with music consumers, one may ask, why did the German publisher-producers not just change their style and adapt it to what apparently was the popular demand? Why didn't they emulate rock rather than stick to '*Schlager*'? The answer to this question is to be found in the publishers' training, their self-understanding of their occupation and their professional routines that shaped their

<sup>10</sup> Quote in Sanjek, *American Popular Music*, 329f.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph Maria Siegel, "Warum produziere ich Schallplatten?," *Gema-Nachrichten* 47 (1960), 14-17.

<sup>12</sup> Klaus Eidam, Rudolf Schröder, *100 Jahre Will Meisel. Eine Berliner Geschichte mit Musik* (Berlin: Edition Meisel, 1996), 108f. (Monopol); idem, *Die Hit-Fabrik. Zweiter Teil der Geschichte eines Berliner Musikverlages* (Berlin: Edition Meisel, 2001), passim.

outlook and their actions. Although German publishers ventured into production, they remained publishers at heart. Men like Will Meisel and Ralph Siegel had undergone a classical musical training, so they had an eye for a well-made composition, but still had to train their ear for rock and pop sounds. Writing songs themselves, they very much respected composers, but thought much less of the recording star whom they primarily considered as the pretty face of a song. Coming from an era of dance bands and radio programmes which offered no opportunities for individual choice, they aspired to the one hit which would please everyone at a time when more and more listeners apparently preferred music to be 'edgy'. This rationale would in the 1970s prove to be compatible with Disco music and is one explanation for the relative success of Hansa in a genre that was on the other side neglected by the rock-dominated British production firms.<sup>13</sup> In the 1960s, however, the publishers' way of producing music meant that they recorded music which appeared outdated in comparison with the new and more distinctive rock genre. Between the 1950s and the mid-seventies, the share of '*Schlager*' records among the records sold in Germany dropped from about 50% to under 10%, while international productions made up more than 60% of the records listed in the German Top50 charts in 1977.<sup>14</sup>

To make matters worse for German producer-publishers, American and British publishers realised that the German audience did not seem to mind listening to songs in the original version. Quite the contrary, from around 1963/64 English-language songs began to dominate the hit lists.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the terms for sub-publishing became worse for German publishers who got 25%, later only 20% of the royalties and had to accept shorter and shorter contract periods. Moreover, original publishers demanded ever rising advances for their copyrights which led German publishing companies to pool their resources and jointly publish a song. From the second half of the 1970s, the number of songs that had more than one sub-publisher grew, as the trade journal '*Musikmarkt*' observed.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, German publisher-producers and their music dominated the German music business until the late seventies. Firstly, they used their influence in the GEMA to hold foreign publishing interests at bay. According to GEMA rules, foreign music publishers as well as the publishing arms of the international recording firms could only become

<sup>13</sup> Keith Negus, *Producing Pop. Culture and Conflict in the Popular Music Industry* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1992), 60.

<sup>14</sup> "Die Schonzeit für den Schmus ist beendet," *Der Spiegel* 33 (1975); Werner Zeppenfeld, *Tonträger in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Anatomie eines medialen Massenmarkts* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1979<sup>2</sup>), 61.

<sup>15</sup> Konrad Dussel, "The triumph of English-language pop music: West German radio programming," in: Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried (eds.), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980* (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 135.

<sup>16</sup> "Das Jahr 1980 im Spiegel der '*Musikmarkt*'-Statistiken," *Der Musikmarkt* 22, 12 (1980), 26.

'ordinary' members as an exception. As 'associated' members, they had very limited influence on the negotiation of the scheme that regulated the distribution of royalties. This way, the established publishers, along with established composers and lyricists, managed to divert a disproportionate amount of the royalties that were generated increasingly by international hits into their own pockets. They, for instance, awarded more points to so-called evergreens – which were often German songs that were played occasionally – than to current hits – which were primarily of Anglo-American origin. In 1970, they also paid themselves a bonus for twenty years of membership in the GEMA.<sup>17</sup> It should be stressed that from the perspective of the incumbent publishers, the rents that the royalty regime offered were not illegitimate, but necessary to sustain a life-long career in the business of fads and fashions. For newcomers with new musical ideas, however, this regime worked as an obstacle.

Secondly, music publishers benefited from a labour market regulation which ruled out free labour agents and claimed a monopoly for the state-run job centre. In theory, a record company or music promoter who was looking for a performer would have had to turn to the job centre. In practice, it meant that this service was provided by those who had contacts and could operate as agents as part of their general business. These people were quite often the established music publishers. In effect, the labour market regulation strengthened the position of the publishers to the detriment of rock bands. These stood outside the music industry and would have required professional help by people who both understood their music and could sort out a lot of time-consuming managerial tasks from booking gigs to administering the finances.<sup>18</sup> The importance of effective management for rock bands becomes apparent when one looks at the British case, where independent managers such as Brian Epstein, Andrew Loog Oldham, Tony Stratton-Smith, Chris Wright and Terry Ellis, Chas Chandler, Chris Stamp and Kit Lambert, despite spectacular blunders and fallouts, contributed a great deal to the success of their bands. In Britain, music management was an important starting point for people who would eventually become producers and would set up their own record companies. Immediate (1965), Track (1967), Chrysalis (1969) and Charisma (1969) were among the independent labels that were formed

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<sup>17</sup> The European Commission criticised GEMA's uncompetitive practice and urged the association to change several articles in its constitution. See "Entscheidung der Kommission vom 2. Juni 1971 betr. ein Verfahren nach Artikel 86 des Vertrages (IV/26.760 – 'GEMA')," <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31971D0224:DE:HTML>, [14 May 2009].

<sup>18</sup> Siegfried Niedergesäss, "Mit Pop von Pilz auf Promotions-Pfaden," *Der Musikmarkt* 14, 21 (1972), 22f.; Reginald Rudolf, "Die Produzenten des Schlagers," in: Helms, *Schlager in Deutschland*, 248f.



by the above mentioned entrepreneurs who had begun their career in the music business as managers or publicists.<sup>19</sup>

### **Windows of Opportunity and the Institutionalisation of Rock: the British Case**

For British publishers, the situation in the late 1950s was in some respects similar to the one in Germany. British publishers experienced the same 'shift from print to plastic' and reacted by investing in recording facilities. Like their counterparts in Germany, the denizens of Denmark Street, a short street in London's West End where much of the British music publishing was concentrated, set up recording studios from around 1960. Bigger publishers founded their own studios; others used the services of Regent Sound, a small studio that opened in July 1961 at 4, Denmark Street, and would soon also be frequented by independent rock producers.<sup>20</sup>

But while German publishers retained an important role in the domestic music business, the role of their British colleagues was weaker due to several circumstances. Firstly and most obviously, songs from the US needed no translation in Britain as they were sung in English already. Even though British audiences may have preferred domestic performers, the common language facilitated the release of original US recordings which had a share of around 75% of hits in 1956, much higher than in Germany, Italy or France. Language, which is sometimes referred to as a factor that contributed to the rise of British music, was at that point in time a disadvantage for British composers, lyricists and publishers, as it opened the market to the American competition.

Secondly and also due to the common language, American hits were imported not simply as copyrights like in continental Europe, but generally arrived as matrices which could be pressed and distributed instantaneously. This minimised the opportunities for British publishers to generate income from a foreign copyright, while in a country like Germany publishers, but also lyricists and arrangers got their share from an imported hit by translating and re-recording it for the domestic market.

Thirdly, US publishing interests had already taken hold in Britain, so that the services of domestic publishers to administer rights were often not required. Unlike in Germany, in Britain the established actors did not want to or could not prevent American publishers acquiring British firms or forming subsidiaries in the UK. According to a statement by the Songwriters' Guild of Great Britain to a government committee on broadcasting in 1970, by 1959 'eighty-four London music publishing companies

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Loog Oldham, *2Stoned* (London, Vintage, 2003<sup>2</sup>), 238, 392f.; Brian Southall, *The A-Z of Record Labels* (London: Sanctuary, 2000), 52, 59f., 132, 269.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon Thompson, *Please, Please Me. Sixties British Pop, Inside Out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45.

were controlled as to 50 per cent or more by foreign (almost entirely American) interests.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas in the German case publishers played the key role in importing predominantly American music, British publishers had a much lesser influence on this. The only way they could benefit from foreign hits was to spot a promising song and negotiate with the original publisher the terms of a new recording with a domestic performer. But even on what can be seen as their very own terrain the publishers faced competition from a new breed of independent producers like Micky Most or Andrew Oldham who went over to the US and searched for songs to produce in Britain.<sup>22</sup>

With the position of the established publishers weakened, the British record companies did not rely on their expertise or their catalogues to bring out commercially viable music. American providers would turn to them directly, or newcomers would search for potential hits, stepping on the publishers' turf. In addition to that, the major British record companies, first and foremost EMI and Decca, opened their studios to domestic talent, and this is where the new beat and rock bands enter the scene. The bands were hired to reproduce American tunes, but occasionally recorded their own compositions, which became the rule after the success of the Beatles and other groups in the mid-1960s.

Irrespective of how 'good' their compositions were or what they sounded like, the new groups had something to offer that was very attractive for the record companies: they were relatively cheap. Elaborate pop productions of former times had involved a number of session musicians, which caused a good deal of paper work and required dealing with the Musicians' Union. Compared to this, record companies faced lower costs when they contracted a bunch of teens or early twens, especially as these musicians did not have a clue about royalties and were just eager to make a record. At that point, bands like the Beatles or the Rolling Stones drew their income from playing concerts and saw themselves as performers first and foremost. Songwriting and earning money with records would become important when they realised that they could sell millions of them, but until then recording does not seem to have been a priority, maybe something which could draw a bigger concert audience.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, these bands did not demand much money, both in terms of production costs and royalty shares. Hugh Mendl, a former in-house producer for Decca, remembers that his superiors had allowed him to record the music of Chris Barber and Lonnie Donegan, as long as he did not spend too much money on it. The musicians received £35 for their efforts, with no further royalties, and the copyright went to Burlington's, Decca's publishing arm. The result of this was Rock Island Line (1954), a

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Alan Peacock, Ronald Weir, *The Composer in the Market Place* (London: Faber Music, 1975), 114.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, *Please, Please Me*, 83f.; Oldham, *2Stoned*, 191.

<sup>23</sup> With reference to the Beatles Thompson, *Please, Please Me*, 199.

record that remained in the New Musical Express charts for months and laid the foundation for Donegan's solo career.<sup>24</sup>

While the decline of the traditional publisher-centred music business opened a window of opportunity for beat and rock bands to enter the recording studios, it still has to be explained why the recording experiments were continued and had indeed a 'revolutionary' influence on popular music. For British beat and rock to be sustained and eventually become established, success was vital. How did it come about?

One factor that contributed to short-term success was the way the British record charts were compiled. In order to become a number one hit in Britain, a relatively low number of singles had to be sold (often only 40,000 units).<sup>25</sup> Sales figures were sampled from retailers whose names were known. Thus, 'chart hyping' was a common practice and apparently a way for rock bands with a certain following to put their names on the map. Tony Calder, managing partner of Andrew Oldham, describes how the Rolling Stones record "Little Red Rooster" (1964) was pushed to the top of the charts:

We used the fan club to go and buy heavy the first week once we'd bumped up the pre-orders. [...] It was all very primitive. We only had to do about forty-five shops to get results. Shirley Arnold [the Stones' secretary; KN] would organise the autographs and the thank you letters from the Stones to the fans for getting out there for us.<sup>26</sup>

The most important factor contributing to the long-term success, however, was the creation of artistic value that elevated rock above other forms of popular music, turning it into a serious form of cultural expression and a means of social distinction. The success of this move is still evident today, when the albums produced in the second half of the 1960s, the 'golden age' of rock, are considered to be the canonical recordings of the genre.<sup>27</sup> Transforming a musical genre into a form of popular art was a process of institutionalisation that required the interplay of music producers in the wider sense on the one side and cultural intermediaries on the other. Musicians and their managers and producers did their part by distancing their music from the 'mainstream' and breaking its conventions. Rock bands recorded songs that outran the three-minute playing time of normal pop singles, tried out different musical material, wrote 'meaningful' lyrics and experimented with new studio technology to create 'progressive' sounds. In addition to that, bands and their producers sought to associate themselves with established artists and art forms. Record sleeves, for

<sup>24</sup> Louis Barfe, *Where Have all the Good Times Gone? The Rise and Fall of the Record Industry* (London: Atlantic, 2005), 198.

<sup>25</sup> Sanjek, *American Popular Music*, 381.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from Oldham, *2Stoned*, 70.

<sup>27</sup> Ralf von Appen, André Doehring, Helmut Rösing, "Pop zwischen Historismus und Geschichtslosigkeit. Kanonbildungen in der populären Musik," in: Dietrich Helms, Thomas Phleps (eds.), *No Time for Losers. Charts, Listen und andere Kanonisierungen in der populären Musik* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), 33.

instance, became more and more sophisticated. The cover of the Beatles' LP "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band" (1967), held to be the first 'concept album' in the history of popular music, shows the four musicians in colourful uniforms, standing among cultural and political icons from Oscar Wilde to Karl Marx. Designed by pop artist Peter Blake, the cover ironically countered and played with the image of the pop stars, and with its subtle references and irony has invited interpretation up to the present day.<sup>28</sup>

Such strategies, aimed at making rock music meaningful, would have been futile had they not resonated with developments within the music press. Other than in fine art, fashion or advertising, where first and foremost peers consecrate artistic status, popular music's own indicator of value are the charts, an indicator that is not sensitive to artistic merit. Distinguishing between 'valuable' popular music and the masses of average songs requires categories that are shaped by commentators and critics who have access to the mass media. As television and radio at first presented rock and pop music as a stream of fads, and as the visual media television and cinema stressed 'superficial' aspects such as the good looks of performers, the press became the prime medium to develop categories that differentiated between rock and the rest of popular music.

'Serious' writing on rock music began soon after the first success of the Beatles and had its origins in Britain. The beginnings of rock criticism can be traced back to the *Melody Maker*, a journal published in London since 1926 and until the early 1960s devoted mainly to jazz music and the dance bands of the day. In 1963, the weekly paper was in crisis. Its circulation was down to 40,000 copies, and there were rumours that the journal was going to be closed down. In this situation, the magazine changed its policy and began to cover the popular beat and rock groups, the first being the Beatles who had just had their commercial breakthrough as a teenage band and still had to go some way to become associated with music as a form of art. Far from 'selling out' to the latest teenage fad, the *Melody Maker* applied 'critical' standards to beat and rock music, thereby developing an alternative approach to the one that the dominant teen journals as well as the trade press used to take. The *Melody Maker* brought a jazz outlook to the music, focussing on musicians' 'competence', 'skills' and 'authenticity', while opposing the merely 'commercial'. Most importantly, the term 'authenticity', which had formerly been reserved for black Americans performing rhythm and blues, now stood for an 'original' expression that conveyed also the domestic artist's 'inner self'.<sup>29</sup> Rock writing referred to musical innovation, and musical innovators in turn took up new categories to describe what they were doing. In the mid-1960s, rock music and the

<sup>28</sup> Walter Grasskamp, *Das Cover von Sgt. Pepper. Eine Momentaufnahme der Popkultur* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Ulf Lindberg, Gestur Gudmundsson, Morten Michelsen et al., *Rock Criticism from the Beginning: Amusers, Bruisers, and Cool-headed Cruisers* (New York: Lang, 2005), 76-106.

press established a symbiotic relationship that was epitomised at the end of the decade by Pete Townshend, The Who's main songwriter, writing his own column in the *Melody Maker*.<sup>30</sup>

Music and its criticism complemented each other well, not least because in many cases a common art school background facilitated the communication between musicians on the one hand and 'creative people' in other fields of cultural production on the other.<sup>31</sup> One of them was Richard Lester who went on to make films with the Beatles. Fashion, film, photography and advertising changed in a similar way to music, allowing a great number of younger people to enter the cultural industries and venture from one field to the next, taking ideas, resources and contacts with them. Advertising provided many young future film directors with an opportunity to enter the trade, gain practical experience and funds to go on producing feature films.<sup>32</sup> Rock managers like Andrew Oldham, Tony Stratton-Smith, Chris Stamp and Kit Lambert had been working for fashion designers, as publicists and/or in film production before they entered the field of popular music.<sup>33</sup> The institutional changes in these cultural fields followed different paths and occurred at slightly different times. Fashion became 'hip' earlier than music, and whereas rock music depended on categories devised in the mass media to become a distinct genre, in advertising actors from within the industry managed to shape their field by creating an annual award that provided the industry with a new focus. In 1962, a few designers and art directors with aesthetic aspirations formed the Designers' and Art Directors' Association, invited their colleagues to a competition and began to publish what became known in the industry as "The Book", a collection of all the works that received a mention by the judges of the annual competition. The 'D&AD awards' shifted the attention of the advertising industry as well as their customers away from market research, which had long been at the heart of the industry, to promoting brand identities. These were to be highlighted not by sincere copy, but by surprising, creative and 'edgy' campaigns that became the trademark of the young admen of London.<sup>34</sup> So the different fields of cultural production did not emanate from some sort of sixties

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<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *Please, Please Me*, 227.

<sup>31</sup> Simon Frith, John Horne, *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen, 1987), *passim*. Art schools did not only bring young people in touch with applied arts, but also and often more importantly gave those who did not quite fit into straight career patterns time to consider what they were going to do with their life.

<sup>32</sup> Winston Fletcher, *The Inside Story of British Advertising: 1951-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 38.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Loog Oldham, *Stoned* (London: Vintage, 2001), 263.

<sup>34</sup> Fletcher, *British Advertising*, 63f.; Stefan Schwarzkopf, "Transatlantic Invasions or Common Culture? Modes of Cultural and Economic Exchange between the American and the British Advertising Industries, 1945-2000," in: Joel H. Wiener, Mark Hampton (eds.), *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 254-274.

'Zeitgeist', but were shaped in various ways by different actors using different strategies. Nevertheless, film, fashion, advertising and music were hardly separated from each other. Professional roles were less defined, and with people crossing between these fields and institutional changes happening at around the same time, fashion, film, advertising and music informed each other, making creativity a buzzword for all the cultural industries.

Besides rock criticism, art school socialisation and the influence of neighbouring cultural industries, the resonance with audiences has to be mentioned as another factor that secured the long-term success of rock as 'serious' music. As much as demand is a necessary precondition for the sustainability of all market goods, it is important to avoid the impression that audiences 'interact' or 'negotiate' with content providers and guide them with their choices. As nobody knows what consumers will favour tomorrow, including the consumers themselves who will make their choice when they are presented with what is on offer, the producers of cultural content have to orientate their actions by referring to an imagined audience that is made up of subconscious convictions of 'what the people want', a professional self-understanding and data generated by market research.<sup>35</sup> Taking the fundamental gap between the production and consumption of culture into account, the relationship between audiences and content providers has to be conceptualised as a form of co-evolution with only mediated, indirect, diverted influences and the occasional resonance between the two sides.<sup>36</sup> Seen from this perspective, rock music and its values matched the position and the social aspirations of the fast growing group of young men who attended the expanding universities and art schools and to whom music that was at the same time more accessible than the exclusive and esoteric jazz and classical music and superior to 'shallow' pop would have been an attractive proposition. Rock as an emerging cultural field did not only open up opportunities for new producers and musical experiment, but also for audiences who discovered it as a site for new forms of expression and socialising. Rock's promise to its listeners that 'time' was 'on their side' struck a chord with a generation that had to find its social status and motivated its followers to commit to the music as well as its aesthetic, social and political claims.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> James S. Ettema, D. Charles Whitney, "The Money Arrow: An introduction to Audiemcemaking," in: Idem (ed.), *Audiemcemaking: How the Media Create the Audience* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994), 1-18.

<sup>36</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "The production of scientific change. Richard Peterson and the institutional turn in cultural sociology," *Poetics* 28 (2000), 107-136.

<sup>37</sup> For an analysis of the reception side in Germany see Detlef Siegfried, *Time is on my Side. Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

## The Incompatibility Between 'German' Rock Music and the Anglo-American Canon

The importance of discourse for the institutionalisation of rock as a genre is asserted negatively by the German case. 'Serious' writing about popular music had been 'invented' in Britain and was then quickly taken up in America. With American and British writers observing and conversing with each other, the rock discourse matured in the second half of the 1960s. Fanzines became successful journals, articles were followed by books, and around 1970 rock had its own terms, values and a canon of landmark albums and artistic 'geniuses'. At this moment, the Anglo-American canon was adopted by German music writers as sacrosanct and applied to the domestic scene in a rather uncritical fashion. Before this time, terms like 'rock', 'pop' and '*Schlager*' had been used rather randomly for all kinds of popular music. Now, German publishers brought out books by British and American authors like Nik Cohn and Hunter Davies in German translation, and domestic critics began to write about popular genres on the basis of the Anglo-American literature, carving out the boundaries between certain musical styles.<sup>38</sup>

German music writers, who were often older than the musicians they wrote about and often observed the rock music scenes as outsiders, were informed by the established canon and consequently perceived domestic rock music as a mere copy of the Anglo-American original. They accepted 'authenticity' as the main feature of valuable music, but reserved it for British and American performers who were thought to express experiences of deprivation that musicians in Germany could not make themselves. Musicologist Tibor Kneif, for instance, born in 1930 and one of the most prolific writers on rock music in the 1970s, explained the British and US-American dominance in rock with this questionable argument. In an article published in 1976, he stated that 'rock music is essentially an Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, not only because it originated in the United States and Britain, but also because it is entangled in the history and the mentality of some of the minorities living there (black people, urban youth, colleges, and surfing).'<sup>39</sup> Many German music journalists shared Kneif's view of rock music as the angry expression of underdogs. The cliché that rock and similar musical forms 'came from the slums' proved to be persistent and informed music journalism until the late 1970s, when a new generation of younger writers who were closely connected with the punk scene tried to find a different language.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See the bibliographical references in Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, *Das Buch der neuen Pop-Musik* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1970<sup>2</sup>), 235-237, and Siegfried Schmidt-Joos, Barry Graves, *Rock-Lexikon* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1973), 331-337, two early German books on rock music.

<sup>39</sup> Tibor Kneif, "Über die Schwierigkeit, deutschen Rock zu hören," *Musik und Bildung* 8, 4 (1976), 217f. [translation KN].

<sup>40</sup> Wolfgang Rumpf, *Pop & Kritik: Medien und Popkultur. Rock 'n' Roll, Beat, Rock, Punk. Elvis Presley, Beatles/Stones, Queen/Sex Pistols in Spiegel, Stern & Sounds* (Münster: LIT, 2004),

As German music writers perceived 'authenticity' to be rooted in Anglo-American deprivation, the biggest praise that domestic rock musicians could expect from them was that they were 'really good for a German band', a rather ambivalent accolade.<sup>41</sup> That German bands were almost by default excluded from 'authenticity', rock's most important resource, turned out to be another major obstacle for rock music made in Germany and stresses the importance of genre conventions for the production and evaluation of musical content. The example of 'Krautrock' – the music of German bands from the early 1970s like Kraftwerk, Amon Düül, Faust, or Tangerine Dream – is a case in point. The very fact that the generic term was coined most probably by British critics – 'Krautrock' playing with the derogative term 'Krauts' for Germans – shows who had the power to legitimise this sound as valuable rock music.<sup>42</sup> 'Krautrock' also found more appreciation among British and American critics than among domestic music writers who held the firm conviction that German rock could not be the 'real thing'. Moreover, the sceptical view of domestic critics informed the policy of German record companies who faced the problem of how to sell rock music that could almost by definition not be 'authentic'. While labels like BASF, Polydor and Philips signed 'Krautrock' bands in a move to somehow participate in the 'Underground' boom of the late 1960s and early '70s, they lacked the longer-term commitment that rock music generally required. They treated 'Krautrock' albums like any other pop record and waited for the product to sell itself. As this did not happen, the companies dropped the bands, and 'Krautrock' petered out like any other fad in 1973/74.<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

This article has sought to explain changes in popular music that are commonly referred to as the 'Rock Revolution' and which centrally involved British protagonists. The paper contrasted the British case with the West German experience and has identified factors that explain the difference between the two national cases firstly in the structure of the music business and secondly in the role of the discourse on rock music.

Concerning the music business, the British situation until the early 1960s was characterised by a bigger market share of American imports than in continental Europe. While in Britain the US imports sidelined many domestic publishers and songwriters, German publishers, composers and authors benefited from adapting foreign hits to the home market. To some extent this difference was due to the common language

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<sup>41</sup> Henning Dedekind, *Krautrock. Underground, LSD und kosmische Kuriere* (Höfen: Hannibal, 2008), 197.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, 16f.

<sup>43</sup> Idem, 166.



and long-established Anglo-American business connections. On top of that, however, German actors also employed the GEMA to secure their position when it was clear that the translation work of publishers, arrangers and lyricists was not necessary for an imported copyright to become a hit. German publishers also benefited from a labour market regulation that blocked the path for independent managers. This sort of protectionism and market regulation played a far lesser role in the British case, where attempts to restrict the influx of American music were made, but were unsuccessful. The relatively swift decline of the old publisher-centred system of music production in Britain can be seen as a precondition for the unproven protagonists of beat and rock to get a chance to record their music, while the strong position of publishers in Germany was a major obstacle for rock producers in that country.

Another set of factors to promote the 'Rock Revolution' in Britain was the 'invention' of rock criticism and the close connection between music writers and performers. Creating not only certain sounds, but also words and images to understand and interpret them required that rock music resonated with other branches of the creative industries such as the press, fashion, film or advertising. This resonance was facilitated by a common socialisation of a new generation of young creatives in the expanding art schools and also the transfer of people and knowledge between the cultural industries that underwent similar changes at roughly the same time, enabling new actors to acquire positions and implement alternative ideas. The importance of the lively interchange between performers, critics and what could be labelled as image providers is confirmed negatively by the German case, where the conventions of rock were imported by music writers as a finished article. This obedience to an Anglo-American rock canon assigned German musicians the role of imitators and made it difficult for them to create something new from foreign influences.