“DRESSED IN BLACK”: THE SHANGRI-LAS AND THEIR RECORDED LEGACY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first ever full-length study of the Shangri-Las, a female teenage pop group from Cambria Heights in Queens, New York. Sisters Mary and Betty Weiss, and twins Mary Ann and Marguerite Ganser formed the group while attending school together in the early 1960s, and are most famous for their single “Leader of the Pack.” Despite enjoying an enduring following among rock fans and musicians, the Shangri-Las have been trivialised in a variety of important and lastingly influential ways by mainstream rock criticism, which is the context in which the bulk of commentary on the group has been published. This study examines the reasons for and manners in which this has received expression, which are complex, interconnected, and not always immediately obvious. As very young women, the Shangri-Las had relatively little agency within a male-dominated recording industry that perceived teenagers as fodder for manipulation and exploitation. Typically, this has been used as an excuse to devalue the musical input of the group members, and marginalise their recordings within a canon of perceived ‘authentic’ rock music. This thesis argues for a substantial rethinking and acknowledgment of the Shangri-Las’ considerable abilities, talent and musicality, and the centrality of their performances to the Shangri-Las’ largely unacknowledged artistic achievement.

This thesis is divided into three sections. Part One examines the critical reception of the Shangri-Las, which has been dominated by their rigid inclusion within an anachronistic ‘genre’ known as ‘girl groups.’ I unpack the origins of this terminology, and demonstrate that it was not in use as a term denoting a specific genre (as it is currently understood) until the early 1970s, when it gained currency among rock journalists in conjunction with particularly problematic understandings of the place of girls and women in rock music. This has had significant implications for the young performers categorised in this gendered manner, but particularly for the Shangri-Las.

Part Two consists of Chapters Two, Three and Four, and is an historical examination of the group as a functioning entity. In Chapter Two, I look at the post-WWII development of Queens, and particularly Cambria Heights, the neighbourhood in which the Weiss and Ganser sisters grew up and formed their singing group. Chapter Three examines the circumstances and personnel involved in the formation of the Red Bird record label, and the events leading up to the signing of the Shangri-Las. The early months of the Shangri-Las as a famous, touring group are detailed in the context of exploitative and largely unregulated music industry practices, sometimes involving mafia figures. These would eventually lead to the collapse of the Red Bird label, an event from which the Shangri-Las never recovered. This resulted in an ill-fated move to the Mercury label, and the eventual demise of the group for reasons largely beyond their control is examined in Chapter Four. This is followed by a short postlude.

Part Three consists of Chapters Five, Six and Seven, in which key recordings by the Shangri-Las are examined thematically. In Chapter Five, I look at “Leader of the Pack” in the context of motorcycle culture, its ties to various forms of juvenile delinquency, and the manner in which societal norms are reflected and subverted. “Remember (Walkin’ in the Sand)” and “Past, Present and Future” have strong ties to the nineteenth-century European Romantic tradition, and both are examined in detail in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven examines the final recordings made by the Shangri-Las: two singles which are generally perceived to be failures; nevertheless, they constitute a telling window into the professional decline of the group. This chapter also contributes to a re-reading of the notion of ‘the sixties’ as an era characterised by unanimous youth protest, particularly against American involvement in the Vietnam War.

My examination of the Shangri-Las locates the group and their recordings within a wider and more informed historical, artistic and musical context than those within which the group is routinely considered. This provides a new framework through which to understand the significance of the

Shangri-Las and their recordings, resulting in a complete overhaul of their perceived musical and artistic achievement, and their place in the narratives of popular music.

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Shangri-Las were a rock vocal group that formed in Queens, New York City, while the four members – sisters Mary and Betty Weiss, and twins Mary Ann and Marguerite Ganser – were still attending high school.[1] The Shangri-Las had a string of hits between 1964 and 1967, the most famous of which was "Leader of the Pack,"[2] released late in 1964.[3] It reached Number One on the *Billboard Hot 100*, achieved substantial notoriety, and was banned in England for lyrics that concerned dating bikers 'from the wrong side of town' and death.[4] The group achieved considerable fame, and performed at the Paramount Theatre in New York City with the Beatles in 1964. They toured extensively on bills with, among many others, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Del Shannon, Herman's Hermits and The Beach Boys.[5] As 'happening' teenagers, they also did endorsements for Revlon's *Natural Wonder* Make-Up, and in 1965 promoted a national Revlon-sponsored contest called 'Swingstakes' – first prize was a trip to England to meet the Dave Clark Five.[6] In short, by 1965 the Shangri-Las were a hugely popular group, and the Weiss and Ganser sisters famous pop stars, before any of them had turned eighteen.[7] However, by 1968 it was all over, the group in tatters and its members burnt out amidst a mire of collapsed labels, lawsuits and circumstances that remain murky to this day.

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[1] Alan Betrock, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*, London: Omnibus, 1982, p. 98.
[2] Throughout this thesis, double quotes are used for song titles, italics for album titles, and single quotes or indents for all other quotations.
[3] Betrock, p. 102; see also the Shangri-Las discography, (http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/discog.html) included in Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/ (accessed 28 February, 2010). This is a lengthy interview with Mary Weiss, and will be discussed in more detail shortly.
[4] Betrock, p. 102; the Shangri-Las, "Leader of the Pack" (Barry/Greenwich/Morton), RED BIRD 014, October, 1964.
[5] Betrock, pp. 106-8.
[6] John J. Grecco, *Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas2.htm (accessed 11 October, 2010).
[7] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas2.htm (accessed 11 October, 2010).

Despite a relatively small body of recorded work (around thirty songs over a four year period), the Shangri-Las have enjoyed an enduring and passionately devoted following among baby boomers who grew up listening to them, as well as rock fans and musicians of a variety of ages and persuasions. In 1973, David Johansen poutily introduced the New York Dolls' "Looking for a Kiss" with 'When I say I'm in love, you best believe I'm in love L-U-V', quoting from the Shangri-Las' 1964 hit, "Give Him a Great Big Kiss."[8] Johansen explained,

> 'We saw the Shangri-Las many, many times. I used to see them every chance I had, they were our local band, on local TV a lot. Really, they're my favourite band from the sixties.'[9]

Blondie covered a Shangri-Las song, "Out in the Streets," on their first EP, recorded in 1975.[10] The Shangri-Las reformed briefly in 1977 for 'one magical performance before the leather-jacketed elite of Lower Manhattan,' which took place at the legendary rock club CBGBs. The New York punk scene coalesced around this club on the Bowery, at which Television, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, the Ramones, Blondie and Patti Smith performed regularly. On the night the Shangri-Las performed, their backing group included sound engineer Andy Paley and two members of the Patti Smith Group.[11] Artists as diverse as Aerosmith, Bette Midler, and Rowland S. Howard have released versions of songs by the Shangri-Las.[12] Their influence is clearly evident in the work of Sonic Youth, and

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[8] New York Dolls, "Looking for a Kiss", http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8iWzkmDfIQ (accessed 5 August, 2010); the Shangri-Las, "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" on *Shivaree*, 1965: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOdP_VvPKHU (accessed 5 August, 2010). The opening chords of "Looking for a Kiss" are also borrowed from "Give Him a Great Big Kiss." "Looking for a Kiss" is from the New York Dolls first, self-titled album, released in 1973; their second album, *Too Much Too Soon*, was produced by George 'Shadow' Morton, who is most famous for the body of work he made in conjunction with the Shangri-Las.

[9] Quoted in Kris Needs & Dick Porter, *Trash! The Complete New York Dolls*, London, Plexus, 2006, p. 12.

[10] This EP was recorded and produced by Alan Betrock, author of *Girl Groups* (see note 1); Lester Bangs, *Blondie*, London: Omnibus, 1980, pp. 40-41.

[11] For a thorough discussion of the 1977 reunion, which also included recording sessions for a never-released album, see Phil Milstein, *Shangri-Las 77!* , http://www.spectropop.com/Shangri-Las/ (accessed 5 August, 2010).

[12] Aerosmith recorded "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand), with Mary Weiss singing backing vocals, on *Night in the Ruts* (1979); for a live version from 1980, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-CKVgCndZk (accessed 5 August, 2010). Bette Midler's live album *Divine Madness* (1980) contains a version of "Leader of the Pack" -

more recently, Amy Winehouse and Bat for Lashes, all of whom have incorporated aspects of the Shangri-Las' style and knowing nods to the group in their songs.[13]

I include myself with the 'rock fans and musicians' among whom the Shangri-Las have 'enjoyed an enduring cult following.' I worked in record shops for eighteen years, and have been playing guitar and organ in various rock contexts for just as long.[14] I first heard the Shangri-Las when in my early twenties (close to twenty years ago), and was hooked immediately, identifying strongly with their intense emotionalism and themes of heartbreak and parental conflict, which mirrored my own experiences closely. While working in a book and record store in around 2002, and in charge of ordering titles for the music book section, I realised that there had never been a book, popular or academic, published about the Shangri-Las. I was incredulous, and found it nothing short of extraordinary that a group as significant and influential as the Shangri-Las had not been deemed worthy of a dedicated study or biography. Although

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see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJEH9K04U5g (accessed 5 August, 2010). Australian guitarist Rowland Howard, formerly of the Boys Next Door, the Birthday Party (both bands featuring Nick Cave), and These Immortal Souls, included a version of "S/he Cried" on his critically acclaimed 1999 album "Teenage Snuff Film," see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nr5DyVLiW0 (accessed 5 August, 2010) for a live performance. Sadly, Howard died in December, 2009. In the last conversation I had with him, a couple of years earlier, he had been beside himself with excitement that I was working on this study, as he was a great fan of the Shangri-Las and cited them as a significant influence.

[13] "Little Trouble Girl" from Sonic Youth's 1995 album *Washing Machine* is a darkly knowing teen-themed song that quotes from "Give Him a Great Big Kiss", touches on themes in "I Can Never Go Home Anymore," and is almost entirely spoken: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ocn7NirwCXM&feature=related (accessed 5 August, 2010). I will discuss the 'spoken' aspect of the group's style in later chapters. In a live performance of her 2006 hit "Back to Black", Amy Winehouse segued into the Shangri-Las' "Remember" (Walkin' in the Sand): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weR7XPPv0Lw (accessed 5 August, 2010). Winehouse has regularly cited the Shangri-Las as a significant influence, and her critically acclaimed album *Back to Black* is replete with doo wop and vocal group stylings. The name of Bat for Lashes 2007 single, "What's A Girl to Do" closely recalls "What's a Girl Supposed to Do," from the album *Shangri-Las 65!*, and incorporates a breathy, Mary Weiss-style spoken-word delivery of teen-themed boy/girl breakup subject matter: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1wnOUH2jk8 (accessed 5 August, 2010).

[14] See http://www.myspace.com/lisamackinney (accessed 5 August, 2010); see also Cat Hope, 'The Wonderment of the Bleak: Sculpting the Static,' *Art Monthly Australia* 225 (November, 2009), pp. 45-47.

bringing it to fruition would be a long and circuitous process, this project began at that moment.

After five years of research and writing, and two trips to New York City, I now understand perfectly well why there has never been a book-length study, academic or otherwise, devoted to the Shangri-Las. The reasons are complex and interconnected, and go to the heart of many of the issues explored in the following chapters. They were teenagers, and they were girls – two groups that have been consistently neglected historically. Furthermore, despite the following the group enjoys, the Shangri-Las have been trivialised in a variety of important and lastingly influential ways by mainstream rock criticism, the context in which the bulk of commentary on the group has been published.[15] In Chapter One I explore the reasons for the development of these simultaneously held but contradictory positions, which, to make matters more complicated, are often not immediately obvious. I closely examine accepted understandings of 'girl group' as a genre, the origins and development of this terminology within a specific framework of rock journalism, and the effect on the Shangri-Las of their persistent categorisation as a 'girl group.' Deeply embedded in this nomenclature are assumptions about age, gender, authenticity and race that have remained largely unquestioned in rock mythology, to the point where they are virtually invisible.[16]

Furthermore, the credibility and musical reputation of the Shangri-Las (and other vocal groups from this era) has suffered terribly because the fact that they did not write their own material or play instruments is now viewed in a pejorative manner. Today it is an unquestioned assumption that the composition and performance of musical material constitutes the artistic expression of any 'serious' musical artist; performers who are

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[15] See also the comments of Laurie Stras in the 'Introduction' to *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*, ed. Laurie Stras, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010, p. 23.
[16] See the related comments of Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly in 'Re-viewing Rock Writing: Narratives of Popular Music Criticism' in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002, p. 21.

singers without being songwriters and/or instrumentalists are simply not accorded the same critical regard.[17] It routinely goes unnoticed that during the early years of the 1960s the roles of 'songwriter' and 'singer' *began* to be inextricably conflated for the first time, most notably and spectacularly with the Beatles.[18] Before this time, it was *not* the norm for singers, especially pop singers, to write their own material – they sang songs written by professional songwriters. Inherent in the assumption that 'an authentic artist' must write their own material is the notion that this has always been the yardstick by which authenticity has been measured, and that those who did not write their own material were incapable of doing so.[19] As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, this was not the case. The Shangri-Las need to be located within an earlier era in which singers were totally credible without being songwriters, and to have their music reassessed within its historical context and on its own terms.

This is not to say that the Shangri-Las' *recordings* are not respected and or enjoyed, more that the members of the group are not perceived as having any great input into them.[20] To a large extent, there has been no full-length study of the Shangri-Las because we have been informed repeatedly by well-respected rock journalists that, as a 'girl group' whose material was written by professional songwriters and strongly shaped by a producer, the *group itself* is unworthy of any sustained examination. Academic writing on popular music of the late-1950s and early 1960s has, until very recently, largely accepted this schema, but a growing body of work is providing much-needed revision. This includes studies that reclaim 'the girl' from a devalued, pejoratively-viewed, subaltern status, and will be

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[17] Jacqueline Warwick also noted this issue, adding that 'girl group' music has been 'denounced by some feminists who embrace instead the apparently unmediated expressions of personal experience by individual singer/songwriters.' See Jacqueline Warwick, *I Got All My Sisters With Me: Girl Culture, Girl Identity and Girl Group Music*, Los Angeles: UCLA Ph.D thesis (Musicology), 2002, p. x. This has been revised and published as *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music And Identity In The 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007.

[18] The Beach Boys were also writing their own material in the early 1960s. Ideas about authenticity and songwriting are discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

[19] See Warwick (2007), pp. 89-91.

[20] Warwick (2007) discusses this issue in detail in a chapter entitled, 'He's Got the Power: Production and Authorship,' pp. 113-162, esp. pp. 117-121.

discussed in more detail in the next chapter.[21] Of particular importance for this study is the work of Jacqueline Warwick, whose *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s* constitutes a ground-breaking reassessment of these consistently marginalised teenaged singers.[22]

The other significant factor that has prevented a full-length study of the Shangri-Las concerns the group members themselves. There is a wall of silence around the Shangri-Las, and the staunch gatekeeper of the fortress is Mary Weiss, former lead-singer of the group. Mary and her sister Betty, who has remained largely out of the public eye since the demise of the group in the late 1960s, and of whom Mary is reportedly extremely protective, are the only surviving members. Mary Ann Ganser died in 1970 of complications resulting from an overdose, probably of barbiturates, and her twin sister Marguerite died of breast cancer in 1996.[23] Despite several attempts, both directly and via others with closer access, Mary Weiss has steadfastly refused to be interviewed for this project, meet with me, or be involved in any way.[24] As a researcher and fellow musician deeply committed to reassessing the Shangri-Las' perceived place in the trajectory of popular music, Weiss's position is of course tremendously disappointing. However, it is also one that I understand and respect, deeply rooted as it is in her experiences as a teenage performer contracted to an industry notorious for eating its young.[25]

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[21] Those with particular application for this study include Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*, London: Penguin, 1994; Norma Coates, 'Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s,' *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15:1 (2003), pp. 65-94; Lisa Rhodes, *Electric Ladyland : Women and Rock Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. Especially important is *She's So Fine,* ed. Laurie Stras; this will be discussed in more detail shortly.
[22] Warwick, (2007).
[23] These events are discussed in more detail in the postlude which follows Chapter Four.
[24] It goes without saying that access to archival material in the Weiss's personal collection, including photos, fan club material and fan mail, was also not accessible to me.
[25] This is discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Four.

Mary Weiss has also made clear her disapproval of 'unauthorised biographies,' as she sees it, so her opposition to this study has placed me in a complex position ethically. I have attempted to balance requirements for historical accuracy with considerations for the privacy of Mary and Betty Weiss, all of which is tempered by my acute awareness of Mary's repeated complaint that 'there's lots of BS written about our group,' a statement with which I certainly concur.[26] Mary's opposition to this project has unfortunately rendered others involved with the group, whose first loyalties are understandably not to an unknown Australian researcher, also reluctant to co-operate or participate in interviews. Others have their own reasons for keeping silent, possibly involving ongoing litigation.[27] My location on the opposite side of the world, in Australia, exacerbated these difficulties. Generous funding from my university enabled me to travel twice to New York City, and spend a few months there each time, but I was not able to communicate with those who did not want to be contacted, nor put sustained effort, in person, into gaining the trust of those burned to varying degrees by the events of forty years ago.[28]

Source material has been a complex issue, and my earlier training as a medieval historian has had unexpected applications for this project.[29] The historian of the Middle Ages regularly encounters a paucity of documentary material, enormous gaps in records, as well as damaged and fragmentary materials. In short, one is required to do a lot with a little. The absence of serious critical attention to the Shangri-Las in the decades

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[26] See Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/03.html (accessed 11 October, 2010).
[27] See also Ken Emerson, Always Magic In the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era, New York: Viking Penguin, 2005, pp. 225-6.
[28] Happily, several people did agree to speak with me - producer George 'Shadow' Morton, engineer Brooks Arthur, and engineer Rod McBrien (now deceased). After initial scepticism, their co-operation and enthusiasm resulted in voluntary promises, in all three cases, to attempt to persuade Mary to rethink her position, all of which were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, these meetings were tremendously buoying, provided me with some excellent material, and strengthened my conviction that it was imperative to bring this project to fruition.
[29] Lisa MacKinney, *Recovering the Late Medieval Devotional World of Margery Kempe and her* Book, unpublished MA thesis, Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2001; 'Rosaries, Paternosters and Devotion to the Virgin in the Households of John Baret of Bury St. Edmunds,' *Parergon* 24:2 (2007), pp. 93-114.

following the demise of the group has resulted in a marked lack of press material, newspaper coverage and interviews in magazines. The teen magazines in which the Shangri-Las received coverage while a functioning group are represented in library collections in an extremely piecemeal fashion, having, by and large, not been regarded as worthy of preservation.[30] By the time a journalism was developing that endeavoured to cover rock and popular music seriously, in 1966-7, the landscape of popular music was changing so much that the focus of attention was on the counter-cultural rock groups and singer-songwriters, rather than vocal groups like the Shangri-Las, who appeared passé and outdated, and their concerns trivial by comparison.

Given the circumstances outlined above, it was a complete and fortuitous coincidence that, approximately a year after I embarked on this project, it was announced that Mary Weiss would be recording and releasing her first post-Shangri-Las solo record. To stimulate interest in and promote the forthcoming release on Brooklyn's Norton Records, label owners Billy Miller and Miriam Linna conducted a long interview with Weiss that was posted on the label's website, along with rare photos from Weiss's collection.[31] This was Mary Weiss's first interview in decades, and certainly the most detailed and lengthy she has ever given. The release of the album, *Dangerous Game*, in 2007, generated substantial press, including several lengthy radio and television interviews, and feature articles in various newspapers and magazines. Although Weiss made it clear on several occasions that certain topics were off-limits, she nevertheless spoke in more detail than ever before about the Shangri-Las and her experiences as a teen star in the mid-1960s.

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[30] Where such material is represented in collections, for instance, at the Bowling Green State University which has an extensive collection of popular culture material, it has rarely (if ever) been microfilmed, and libraries have understandably been reluctant to allow overseas borrowing.

[31] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/ (accessed 6 August, 2010).

These interviews were of immeasurable assistance as I tried to piece together details concerning the Ganser and Weiss families, the formation of the group, and the manner in which the fortunes of the group played out. The combination of factors detailed above has meant that the available evidence has shaped the resulting narrative in quite particular ways. Ironically, given her lack of personal involvement, Mary Weiss is the member of the Shangri-Las most comprehensively represented. By the time I embarked on this project, both Mary Ann and Marguerite Ganser had been dead for many years, and their mother Rita died in 2004. Phil Milstein, a meticulous popular music researcher and writer based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, interviewed Rita Ganser and her son Robert (brother of Mary Ann and Marguerite) in 2001 for a piece about the Shangri-Las' 1977 reunion.[32] Milstein generously supplied me with recordings of his interviews, and allowed me access to all the material he had accumulated in the process of researching his piece. This was absolutely invaluable in affording me some glimpses of Mary Ann and Marguerite Ganser, their personalities, roles in the group, and early lives.

This thesis is divided into three sections. The first examines the historiography of the Shangri-Las, which has been dominated by their rigid inclusion within an anachronistic 'genre' known as 'girl groups.' In Chapter One, I unpack the origins of this terminology, and demonstrate that it was not in use as a term denoting a specific genre (as it is currently understood) until the early 1970s, when it gained currency among rock journalists in conjunction with particularly problematic understandings of the place of girls and women in rock music. This has had significant implications for the young performers categorised in this gendered manner, but particularly for the Shangri-Las.

Part Two is an historical examination of the Shangri-Las as a functioning entity. In Chapter Two, I look at the post-WWII development of Queens

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[32] Milstein, *Shangri-Las 77!* , http://www.spectropop.com/Shangri-Las/ (accessed 5 August, 2010).

and its marketing to young families as an affordable suburban idyll, and a healthier alternative to crowded Manhattan neighbourhoods. It was in the Cambria Heights section of Queens that the Ganser and Weiss sisters grew up, went to school and, when in their early teens, formed their singing group. The influence and significance of doo wop, the experiences of Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, and label owner George Goldner are also examined, as are early encounters with Artie Ripp and George Morton, two music business figures whose actions would have lasting impacts on the group.

Chapter Three examines the circumstances and personnel involved in the formation of the Red Bird record label, and the events leading up to the signing of the Shangri-Las. The role of George Morton, his construction of himself as 'Shadow,' and his early recording experience is examined for the insights it provides into his collaborations with the Shangri-Las. The early months of the Shangri-Las as a famous, touring group are detailed in the context of exploitative and largely unregulated music industry practices, sometimes involving mafia figures. These would eventually lead to the collapse of the Red Bird label, an event from which the Shangri-Las never recovered. This resulted in an ill-fated move to the Mercury label, and the eventual demise of the group for reasons largely outside the control of the (still) teenage singers is examined in Chapter Four. This is followed by a short postlude.

In Part Three of this study, key recordings by the Shangri-Las are examined thematically. In Chapter Five, I look at "Leader of the Pack" in the context of motorcycle culture, its ties to various forms of juvenile delinquency, and the manner in which societal norms are reflected and subverted. The figure of the rider, and his reappearance as a 'type' in other Shangri-Las songs is also examined, and "Leader of the Pack", so often dismissed as a trashy novelty number, is revealed to be an intricate and sophisticated piece of compellingly performed pop music. "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" and "Past, Present and Future" have strong ties to

the nineteenth-century European Romantic tradition, and both are examined in detail in Chapter Six. The ancient symbolism of the sea, oceans and water and its skilful metaphoric employment in “Remember” is an integral component of the emotional intensity conveyed in this song. Similarly, the use of the opening movement of Beethoven’s famous ‘Moonlight’ Sonata as the musical basis for “Past, Present and Future,” brought with it a whole set of cultural resonances that made it spectacularly appropriate for use in conjunction with the Shangri-Las. These connections to older artistic traditions lend both songs a gravitas that transcends their original milieu of mid-1960s New York City, and necessitates their relocation within a wider Western artistic tradition.

In Chapter Seven I examine the two singles recorded by the Shangri-Las for the Mercury label, at the close of 1966 and early in 1967 – the last recordings made by the group. These are rarely discussed, and are generally perceived to be embarrassing failures, as indeed both were commercially, due, again, to factors largely beyond the group’s control. Nevertheless, an examination of “Sweet Sounds of Summer” and “Take the Time” demonstrates the manner in which the group’s management simultaneously attempted to reconfigure the Shangri-Las as a group with a more adult rather than teen appeal, and drive them into inappropriate markets, with disastrous results. This chapter also contributes to a re-reading of the notion of ‘the sixties’ as an era characterised by youth protest, particularly against American involvement in the Vietnam War, and demonstrates that a close examination of songs as historical documents can provide a unique windows into the culture that produced them.

This study is the first devoted solely to an examination of the Shangri-Las and their musical, historical, and cultural significance. The necessity and timeliness of this has been noted in *She’s So Fine: Reflections on*

Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music.[33] This significant contribution to the reassessment of female singers of the 1950s and 1960s has just been published, in August of 2010. In her introduction, editor Laurie Stras, writing on behalf of the scholars represented in this volume, noted their conception of this

> volume as the beginning of a re-evaluation – with the emphasis on value – of the very premises of 1950s and 1960s pop.

Noting that there are multiple books on Phil Spector, but no book on the Ronettes, Stras continued,

> our first directive would be that more scholar hours be devoted to the investigation of girls and women's voices, solo and in concert…
> Book length studies of individual groups and artists would be particularly welcome, especially those that made the transition from "girl" to "woman" in the public eye. Some major figures almost self-select: the Shirelles, the Ronettes, the Supremes, the Shangri-Las, Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, Dionne Warwick, Carole King, Brenda Lee.[34]

This study of the Shangri-Las fills a clear and acknowledged gap in scholarship by producing the first ever book-length, scholarly study of the group. Furthermore, Stras also added,

> A serious study on how girl groups and girl singers fit into the commercial structure of the music business, and indeed, the wider entertainment business, needs to be conducted – they may have been viewed as disposable and ephemeral, but they were nevertheless hugely important for it in terms of financial gain.[35]

A significant component of Chapters Three and Four is an examination of the Shangri-Las and their relationship to the recorded music industry. This includes the manner in which the group was viewed by their record label and management primarily as a vehicle for songwriters and producers, and as a consequence expected to be completely at the record company's disposal in order to *promote* and *sell* their product. Mary Weiss was fifteen years old when her group's first single on the Red Bird label, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand), was a Top Ten hit in August, 1964. The group was immediately locked into a gruelling schedule of live

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[33] See n. 14 for full details.
[34] Stras, 'Introduction,' pp. 23-24.
[35] Stras, 'Introduction,' p. 24.

performances, television appearances, radio spots, and recording dates. They were sent on the road to play one-nighters all over the country for weeks on end, with little appropriate organisation, supervision or security. The Shangri-Las generated enormous amounts of money, but saw little of it themselves, and this was exactly what standard recording contracts in the 1950s and 1960s (and well beyond) were designed to ensure.

A reappraisal of the Shangri-Las' small but significant and tremendously influential body of work is long overdue. Repeatedly marginalised in traditional rock narratives, it is time to examine the Shangri-Las in more informed historical contexts and on their own terms, right now and not later. The impact that the Shangri-Las had came not just through the 'genius' of George 'Shadow' Morton or the technological innovations of recording techniques. These are important, of course, but are also the backbone of traditional American historiography and national mythologies – male genius and capitalist technological innovation lead to greatness. Traditionally absent from this story are women and workers. This thesis returns the 'girls' of the Shangri-Las from the dustbin of posterity, and of rock literature's sexist condescension. It emphasises their spectacular abilities as musicians, workers and performers, whose musicality and emotiveness elicited massive popular reaction. Despite their talents, they remained structurally weak in the face of the recorded music industry, which quickly disposed of them, and whose intellectual apparatus – rock journalism – was equally happy to forget them. My examination of the Shangri-Las locates the group and their recordings within wider social, economic, artistic and musical contexts than those within which the group is routinely considered. This provides a new framework through which to understand the significance of the Shangri-Las and their recordings, resulting in a complete overhaul of their perceived musical and artistic achievement, and their place in the narratives of popular music.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Genre and Gender: the Shangri-Las and 'Girl Group' Mythology

'Totally manufactured as they were - the singers mere pawns of the industry - the girl-group records preserve a form of charm as potent as any other.'[1]
Greg Shaw,
Music Critic

'Never get caught up in categories. It's individuals who make the difference.'[2]
Duke Ellington,
Composer and Musician

In 1966, Columbia University journalism graduate Richard Goldstein wrote an article about the Shangri-Las for 'Pop Eye,' his music column in New York's *Village Voice*.[3] He took the intense emotionalism of their music seriously, noting that

> The Shangri-Las, three white girls from Queens, have soul. Their look and their sound is New York.[4]

He observed the continuity of the 'anti-hero' delinquent male in their songs, and that this allowed for the treatment of conflict between 'passion and filial obligation' that characterised much of their material. He described the Shangri-Las as 'mythic' and 'eternal,' and likened the function of backing vocals in 'I Can Never Go Home Anymore' to that of the chorus in Greek tragedy - 'Sophocles on Second Avenue' – and observed that that the use of Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata in 'Past, Present and Future' was symbolic of 'weltzschmertz' (sic), or world-weariness.[5] Goldstein noted the significance of George 'Shadow' Morton to their success, but not in terms that negated the importance of the group members, whose individual personalities and performative abilities he

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[1] Greg Shaw, 'Leaders of The Pack: Teen Dreams and Tragedy in Girl Group Rock', *History of Rock*, 1982, reproduced at Rock's Back Pages, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=1983 (accessed 10 May, 2009).
[2] Duke Ellington, quoted by Nat Hentoff, *At the Jazz Band Ball: Sixty Years on the Jazz Scene*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, p. 1.
[3] Richard Goldstein, 'Pop Eye: The Soul Sound from Sheepshead Bay,' *Village Voice,* 23 June, 1966, pp. 7-8, 30-31; reprinted with substantial amendments in Richard Goldstein, *Goldstein's Greatest Hits: A Book Mostly About Rock 'n' Roll*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.,: Prentice-Hall, 1970, pp. 8-14. See also Lisa Rhodes, *Electric Ladyland: Women and Rock Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, p. 43.
[4] Goldstein, *Village Voice*, p. 8; when revised for his 1970 collection, Goldstein put it slightly differently: 'Their look and sound are the city. And if soul means evoking hyper-reality, the Shangri-Las have it, blue eyes, glottal stops, and all.' See *Goldstein's Greatest Hits,* p. 9.
[5] *Goldstein's Greatest Hits*, pp. 9-11,13.

made considerable effort to convey. At no point, in his original article nor in his revised version from 1970, did Goldstein refer to the Shangri-Las as a 'girl group,' or indicate a perception of the group as belonging to a genre.[6]

If more music critics had noted Goldstein's work and taken leads from his astute observations, the body of writing that has dealt with the Shangri-Las and their recorded legacy might well be very different.[7] As it stands, writing on the Shangri-Las has been characterised by their inclusion within a genre of popular music known as 'girl groups.' This appellation, applied retrospectively by male music journalists, has had far-reaching ramifications for the groups in question, but particularly for the Shangri-Las. As I will demonstrate, it has played a significant role in preventing the attainment of a more sophisticated understanding of their musical and artistic accomplishments. In making this observation, I emphasise that I am in no way suggesting anything pejorative regarding the other singing groups with which the Shangri-Las are routinely compared; the issue is with the *label* and the results of its blanket application, not those who have been labelled. For there are many valid comparisons between the various female singing groups known as 'girl groups,' and perfectly sensible reasons for why they are discussed together. As Jacqueline Warwick's recent study, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s*, demonstrates, there are clear thematic, musical and stylistic continuities that argue for a collective analysis of 'girl groups,' which opens new windows into the study of American girlhood in the 1950s and 1960s.[8] Warwick's work differs from previous work on 'girl groups' most notably in her rehabilitation of girls, and particularly their voices, from the pejorative understandings they have attained in the context of traditional notions of rock authenticity. In doing so, Warwick has made visible and dismantled many of the core rock assumptions integral to these

[6] *Goldstein's Greatest Hits*, pp. 9, 12-13.
[7] For a more detailed discussion of Goldstein's 'Pop Eye' column, and particularly this article, see Rhodes, pp. 72-7, esp. pp. 76-7.
[8] Jacqueline C. Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007.

understandings that I also discuss in the following pages. Warwick's work is part of a growing body of scholarship that explores these themes, and I will return to this discussion in the latter part of this chapter.

However, there are larger issues here that need to be addressed, which can be traced to the *origins* of the term 'girl group', and the development of its usage within a particular framework of popular music criticism that posited the late-1950s and early-1960s as a weak point in the trajectory of rock. As music writer and producer Robert Palmer noted in 1995, the late 50s and early 60s is an era that is 'often dismissed as a dull interregnum between the original fifties rock explosion and the arrival of the "modern pop band" in the person of the Beach Boys and the Beatles.'[9] A typical rendering of the standard narrative is this example, by Timothy E. Scheurer:

> The market was changing because of the controversies and upheavals that rocked the industry in the late 1950s. Elvis's induction into the army, Little Richard's retreat into the ministry, Jerry Lee Lewis's marital controversy, Buddy Holly's death, and the payola scandal were among the most serious blows dealt to the early vitality of the rock revolution. Into the *vacuum* stepped the forces of Tin Pan Alley (as well as rockers like the Beach Boys). Using their own talents (as in the case of Neil Sedaka, Neil Diamond, Paul Anka), or that of *malleable teen-oriented groups and teen idols* (including the Chiffons, the Shirelles, Bobby Vee, and Rick Nelson), *the songwriters and producers allied* to produce a musical product that blended the feel of early rock with the craftsmanship of the songwriters of the Tin Pan Alley era.[10]

According to this accepted rock mythology, 'authentic' rock and roll was forced underground, leaving a 'vacuum' into which 'songwriters and producers' pounced with their 'malleable teen oriented groups and teens idols.'[11] Several additional enduring assumptions are present here. All four supposed torch-bearers of the 'rock revolution' were male singer-

[9] Robert Palmer, *Rock and Roll: An Unruly History*, New York: Harmony, 1995, p. 35.
[10] Timothy E. Scheurer, 'The Beatles, the Brill Building, and the Persistence of Tin Pan Alley in the Age of Rock,' *Popular Music and Society* 20:4 (1996), p. 90 (italics mine).
[11] Kembrew McLeod's discussion of gendered descriptors that are applied to rock and popular music functions also as exploration of what is understood to constitute 'authenticity': Kembrew McLeod, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Gender and Rock Criticism' in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002, pp. 93- 113, esp. pp. 102-105.

instrumentalists; only one (Little Richard) was African-American. This account also privileged Presley et al. over those who were singers only, which, as we shall see in later chapters, was not how rock 'n' roll was perceived in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Furthermore, it implied a disjunction between the work of these performers and 'Tin Pan Alley,' when in fact Presley's hit 'Blue Moon' was a Rodgers and Hart standard, and 'Hound Dog' was written by two professional 'Tin Pan Alley' songwriters, Leiber and Stoller, whose material had also been recorded by Holly.[12] All this effectively characterised the white, male singer/instrumentalist as the 'authentic' rock performer, which, as I will demonstrate, was a belief that gained currency in the late 1960s, some ten years *later* than the period under discussion.

The roots of this widely accepted perception of the late-1950s and early-1960s can be traced to the development of 'serious' rock journalism in the mid 1960s, which Lisa Rhodes has detailed comprehensively in *Electric Ladyland: Women and Rock Culture*.[13] Before this, media coverage of popular music was largely confined to record industry journals, like *Billboard*, which advised record sellers on trends, promotions, and what was 'hot' in terms of sales; and to teen magazines, which featured pin-ups, pop-star gossip, fan-club information and the like.[14] In response to the lack of significant peer coverage of pop and rock music, Boston College student Paul Williams founded *Crawdaddy* magazine in 1966. Along with Richard Goldstein's 'Pop Eye' column in the *Village Voice*, *Crawdaddy* is widely credited with initiating rock journalism by publishing writing on pop and rock music that engaged with it seriously as an art form.[15] Significantly, Williams published and financed *Crawdaddy* himself because 'no publisher could be convinced of a future for a serious rock 'n'

[12] Leiber and Stoller had written "Hound Dog" for Willie Mae 'Big Mama' Thornton; it was subsequently recorded by Presley. I will discuss the issue of self-penned material and notions of authenticity shortly.
[13] Rhodes, pp. 41-88.
[14] Rhodes, pp. 42-3; see also the comments of Gestur Gudmundsson, Ulf Lindberg, Morten Michelsen and Hans Weisethaunet, in 'Brit Crit: Turning Points in British Rock Criticism, 1960-1990,' in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones, pp. 41-2.
[15] Ellen Sander, 'The Journalists of Rock,' *Saturday Review*, 31 July, 1971, p. 47; Rhodes, pp. 43-4.

roll magazine.'[16] The next year, *Rolling Stone* was founded in San Francisco by Jann Wenner. These publications were established with the conscious aim of reporting on the music of the counterculture, as their editors saw it, which defined itself *against* what preceded it, 'malleable teen-oriented groups and teen idols' which included male doo wop groups, and the female singers commonly referred to as 'girl groups.'[17]

The journalism that developed to report on the important developments in late 1960s rock did so within a virulently masculine framework that did not take women, let alone teenage girls, seriously.[18] In fact, as Lisa Rhodes commented, 'reading Goldstein's "Pop Eye" column is to glimpse the possibilities of the field of rock journalism before *Rolling Stone* laid its misogynist hands on it.'[19] Brenda Johnson-Grau observed further that

> In the late 1960s, as the first generation of rockers saw their children reach the age of consent, "rock 'n' roll" was redefined as "rock" to accommodate a new generation's need to trash the past and define itself. In the process, many successful and influential female artists were derided and marginalized as "girl groups" or simply expunged from the record.[20]

This negative understanding of 'girls' in relation to rock was evident in a review of the album 'Mother's Pride,' by the all-female rock group Fanny in *Billboard*, from 1973:

> The excellence of the set should hopefully make people think of music rather than 'that all-girl group' when they think of Fanny…All members are highly competent instrumentalists. Fine production from Todd Rundgren.[21]

The writer of this review was acknowledging quite openly that the term 'all-girl group' had a pejorative connotation. Furthermore, the writer felt the need to point out that, not only did the members of Fanny play instruments (unlike, the implication was, those other 'girl groups' who did

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[16] Sander, p. 47.
[17] For a detailed survey of the major early developments in American rock journalism, see Rhodes, p. 41-9; Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly in 'Re-viewing Rock Writing: Narratives of Popular Music Criticism' in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002, pp. 19-40, esp. pp. 32-4.
[18] See Norma Coates, 'Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s,' *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15:1 (2003), pp. 65-94, esp. pp. 65-8; Rhodes, pp. 41-8.
[19] Rhodes, p. 72.
[20] Brenda Johnson-Grau, 'Sweet Nothings: Presentations of Women Musicians in Pop Journalism,' in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones, p. 205.
[21] 'Radio Action and Pick LP's' (sic), *Billboard*, 17 March, 1973, p. 58.

not), they were good at it, too. And just in case the reader had any lingering doubts, the album was overseen by Todd Rundgren, highly respected producer extraordinaire, thereby lending it his stamp of approval. These few lines encapsulate much of what is problematic about the term 'girl group,' and why it is necessary to rethink this categorisation and terminology. By 1975, these assumptions were so well-entrenched as to be part of rock lore. As Cherie Currie, singer with teenage all-female band the Runaways related,

> The people who did the interviews didn't have a clue what to make of us. Most of the time they were these long-haired, jaded guys who didn't think for a minute that we played our own instruments. In fact, they'd ask us outright to confess to the 'lies,' and demand that we tell them that this whole thing was some kind of scam concocted by [producer] Kim Fowley. They'd ask Joan [Jett] dumb questions like, 'So, uh, what makes you *think* you can play the guitar?'[22]

This ideology regarding girls was also internalised by women. Patti Smith, whose debut album *Horses* was released in 1975, famously took her inspiration from Jim Morrison, Keith Richards and Mick Jagger in part because, as she put it, 'I was always under the impression that girls were silly when I was younger.'[23] In an era characterised by glam rock's 'gender slippage,' Smith immersed herself in New York City's 'downtown post-glam scene' which 'was a mix of Warholian drag queens and glitter boys slumming as women.' [24] Smith deliberately distanced herself from the feminine, and cultivated an androgynous persona that was integral, as she saw it, to her development as an artist in the early 1970s.[25]

All this is tied up with notions of artistic authenticity and the development of the singer/songwriter, both as a solo artist and within groups. Today, in the post Beatles/Bob Dylan/Joni Mitchell/Neil Young singer-songwriter

[22] Cherie Currie with Tony O'Neill, *Neon Angel: A Memoir of a Runaway*, New York: Harper Collins, 2010, p. 92.
[23] Quoted in Aida Pavletich, *Sirens of Song: The Popular Female Vocalist in America*, New York: Da Capo, 1980, p. 243.
[24] See Mike Kelley, 'Cross Gender/Cross Culture,' *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 22:1 (January 2000), pp. 1-9, esp. p. 3; Donna Gaines, 'Let's Talk About Sex,' *Rolling Stone* 773 (13 November, 1997), pp. 91-94.
[25] See Pavletich, pp. 242-6. This observation is not intended as a swipe at Patti Smith (of whom I am a great fan), but to demonstrate how pejoratively girls were regarded in rock lore, and perceived to be antithetical to 'genuine' rock artistry.

era, it is an unquestioned assumption that the composition and performance of musical material constitutes the artistic expression of any 'serious' musical artist. As Jacqueline Warwick observed,

> the necessity of performing self-penned material became central to rock ideology in the mid-60s and after. Music that stemmed from other practices came to be seen as inferior to the supposedly unmediated expressions of pure feeling emanating from the new bands. Ironically, mastery of an instrument became a badge of musical truth, while bringing music out from within the body itself was dismissed as facile and "inauthentic."[26]

It routinely goes unacknowledged that during the early years of the 1960s the roles of 'songwriter' and 'singer' *began* to be inextricably conflated for the first time, most notably and spectacularly with the Beatles, but also before with the Beach Boys. Before the mid-1960s it was *not* the norm for singers, particularly pop singers, to write their own material – singers sang songs written by professional songwriters.[27] This was true of the great singers in many genres – Frank Sinatra, Patsy Cline, Elvis Presley, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday, to name a few.[28] Blues, country and folk musicians also drew on an established repertoire of collective songs. Nevertheless, a strong current in 'countercultural' rock music of the mid/late-1960s looked to blues, folk and R&B traditions as 'authentic' expressions of feeling and oppression.[29]

This established a blueprint for rock that has remained largely intact, with the album as serious artistic statement, as opposed to the single releases of individual songs that characterised the 1950s and early 1960s. In addition to artistic considerations, albums were more costly to purchase than singles. This meant that the margin of profit was greater, both for shops and for the 'rack-jobbers' who supplied record retailers with stock.[30] Albums were larger and thicker, and therefore less fragile than singles;

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[26] Warwick, p. 95.
[27] Rhodes, pp. 18-21; Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977, pp. 77-8.
[28] The entire classical repertoire involves the performance of material written by professional composers; few would argue that the authenticity of Maria Callas was somehow compromised because she did not sing self-penned material.
[29] See Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music,* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 76-132, esp. 122-127.
[30] Rhodes, p. 19; for an explanation of 'rack-jobbing' and changes to the manner in which records were distributed in the 60s, see Chapple and Garofalo, pp. 89-92.

furthermore, the cost of distribution was only marginally greater. Concurrent developments in FM radio fidelity and its adoption as the preferred rock medium, and the use of these new stereo recording techniques by rock producers, all contributed to making the long-play (LP) the dominant format for the sale of recorded music.[31]

All this was industry standard by the late 1960s, and it is through this prism that the Shangri-Las and their vocal group contemporaries are viewed, and judged according to a set of standards that evolved later. One result of this has been that the credibility and musical reputation of *singing* groups has suffered terribly because the fact that they did not write their own material or play instruments is viewed in a pejorative manner. These groups were the product of an earlier era in which singers were regarded as completely credible performers without being songwriters.

Much academic work on this era has derived from the schema established by rock journalists.[32] Academia has been slow to embrace the study of popular music. *Popular Music and Society*, one of the earliest academic journals devoted to popular music, was established in 1971. The International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), an organisation formed specifically to forge academic networks between scholars working in this area of study, was set up in 1981.[33] Despite these advances, as recently as 1988, rock/popular music and musicology were still engaged in something of a standoff, each deeply suspicious of the other. In addition, rock journalists and musicians, generally speaking, remain deeply suspicious of academic work on rock and popular music.[34] The discipline of musicology traditionally defined popular music as 'the enemy,' and indeed, the criteria for analysing western classical music is

[31] Rhodes, pp. 19-20; Chapple and Garofalo, pp. 109-111.
[32] As noted, an extremely important exception is Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture*; other attempts to address and unpack various aspects of rock mythology include *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999, and *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones. I will discuss feminist scholarship and gender in more detail shortly.
[33] See http://www.iaspm.net/ (accessed 11 October, 2010).
[34] This has certainly been my experience, and, since I have a foot in each camp, I am regularly regarded with suspicion by both.

largely irrelevant for the study of pop music, which placed scholars of popular music in something of a 'methodological vacuum.'[35] Not surprisingly, scholarly writing about rock and pop is increasingly cross-disciplinary - by sociologists, scholars of literature, cultural analysts, historians, as well as by musicologists - and this has manifested itself in an explosion of academic writing about various aspects and permutations of popular music.[36]

Academic coverage of the Shangri-Las, however, has been piecemeal, scattered, and almost without exception occurred as an adjunct to the discussion of another subject. This has often led to the obfuscation of important details at the expense of a grand narrative or argument being made by the author. A recent example of this was by Jon Stratton, who argued that

> As Jews, and whites, became disillusioned with suburban life, so the Brill Building sound lost its popularity. I argue that the songs recorded by the Shangri-Las, *a Jewish girl group* singing songs of familial death and destruction mostly written by Brill Building writers, are an expression of this disillusionment.[37]

The Shangri-Las were not Jewish. The Ganser family were Catholics of Austrian descent, and Mary Ann and Marguerite attended Sacred Heart School in Cambria Heights until the eighth grade, graduating in 1962. [38]

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[35] Robert Walser and Susan McClary, 'Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles with Rock,' in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin London & New York, Routledge, 1990, pp. 277-92, esp. pp. 280-81. This deeply perceptive article is a succinct articulation of the complex issues inherent in the academic study of popular music. See also *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. Horner and Swiss, p. 2.

[36] My case exemplifies this: I am a historian and musician but have never studied the discipline of music in an academic context. See, for example, William Mathews Hetzel, *Romanticism in Sixties Rock: Literary Traditions in Anglo-American Folk and Rock Lyrics (1963-1977*), Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland College Park, 2002; John A. Jackson, *American Bandstand: Dick Clark and the Making of a Rock 'n' Roll Empire*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; James M. Salem, *The Late Great Johnny Ace and the Transition from R & B to Rock 'n' Roll*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999; Laurence Coupe, *Beat Sound, Beat Vision: The Beat Spirit And Popular Song*, Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2007; Elijah Wald, *How The Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History Of American Popular Music*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Liverpool Hope University, in the Beatles hometown, has recently introduced a Masters level subject entitled *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society*; see http://www.hope.ac.uk/frontpage-news/hope-launches-worlds-first-beatles-ma.html (accessed 5 October, 2010). I thank Andrew Broertjes for drawing this to my attention.

[37] Jon Stratton, 'Jews Dreaming of Acceptance: From the Brill Building to Suburbia with Love,' *Shofar* 27:2 (2009), p. 102 (my italics).

[38] See John J. Grecco, *Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 22 February, 2010), for a photo of the Ganser twins with a nun at Sacred Heart. When Mary Ann Ganser died in 1970, her funeral was held at the

The Weiss family were also Catholic. Mary Weiss attended a Catholic grammar school, and a lengthy interview on the Norton Records website contains a photo from Mary's private collection showing Mary dressed up for her confirmation.[39] Stratton also asserted that

> Suburbia was thought of as an American Shangri-La...
> By calling themselves the Shangri-Las, the Weiss and Ganser sisters from Queens signalled this reference in their disillusioned regret for a lost American utopia.[40]

However, according to Mary Weiss, who was about fourteen at the time, the group was about to make a record and did not have a name:

> We said, "We better get a name – fast!" We were driving on Long Island and saw a restaurant called the Shangri-La. That's where we got the name.[41]

There was plenty of 'disillusioned regret' to come later for the Shangri-Las, but not at the time they named their group, and certainly not for anything as abstract as lost suburban utopias. This article is a particularly unfortunate example of the manner in which the Shangri-Las are often treated as a blank slate upon which to project already-formulated arguments, and glaringly inaccurate assertions made in the process.[42]

This is also one of the many issues surrounding the use of the 'girl group' genre. The Shangri-Las are almost universally referred to a 'girl group,' and discussed within this category. In this, scholars of popular music have followed the schema established by rock journalists and music critics, which is where the bulk of writing about the Shangri-Las has occurred. In the tradition of rock criticism, 'girl group' is not a hold-all term that refers to female bands, but rather to American female vocal groups who recorded

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Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, adjacent to the Sacred Heart School she had attended as a child; *Long Island Press*, 18 March 1970, p. 47. Henry Petroski, who moved with his family to Cambria Heights in 1954, noted that the suburb 'was now home to so many Catholic families with children that the [Sacred Heart] school was unable to accommodate all the new kids that were moving into the neighbourhood.' See Henry Petroski, *Paperboy: Confessions of a Future Engineer*, New York: Vintage, 2002, p. 32.

[39] See Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 17 August, 2010).

[40] Stratton, p. 119.

[41] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/02.html (accessed 17 August, 2010).

[42] Stratton's direct references to the Shangri-Las are not accompanied by footnotes or equivalent scholarly apparatus. On female singers, especially children and teenagers, as *tabula rasa*, see also Robynn J. Stillwell, 'Vocal Decorum: Voice, Body, and Knowledge in the Prodigious Singer, Brenda Lee,' in *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*, ed. Laurie Stras, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010, pp. 57-87, esp. pp. 60-65.

and performed between approximately 1958 and 1966, and shared certain stylistic and production values. The women were young, often teenaged, and most were African American. The songs they performed were usually written by professional songwriters, generally about boys, love, dating and related concerns of special importance to teenagers. In most cases, the young women did not play instruments on their recordings, and the recording, production and release of the material was usually overseen by producers whose input and control over the end result was considerable. As musicologist Jacqueline Warwick has pointed out, the early 1960s 'marked the first instance in U.S. history of a music centred around adolescent girls and their experiences of coming of age.'[43] The Shirelles, the Ronettes, the Crystals, the Marvellettes, the Supremes and the Shangri-Las, to name a few, jostled for Top Ten spots with the Beach Boys, and, as the decade progressed, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. By the late 1960s, however, popular music had undergone such a transformation in style, content and methods of construction that many of the vocal groups from the early 60s appeared hopelessly outdated, and their 'teen' concerns trivial by comparison.

No-one is quite sure who coined the term 'girl group' or when, but it seems that over time it metamorphosed from being one of a number of descriptors used to describe groups of female performers, into a term that referred to a specific era and type of music. Few writers, if any, have questioned the appropriateness of this nomenclature, nor its consequences, and so have not attempted to unpack the origins of the term. [44] This is especially important, because it seems that at the time, at least for the Shangri-Las, the moniker was either not in general currency, or was not felt to be applicable to them. According to Mary Weiss:

> 'We never thought of ourselves as a "girl group". We were rock and rollers, same as the guys. True rock and roll has no sex – it's rock and roll.'[45]

[43] Warwick, p. 3.
[44] The organisation of events and time periods into named categories is standard practice among historians and (in this case) journalists, as method of enabling manageable analysis. The term 'girl group' is one example of this among a myriad, but as I will demonstrate, its largely unquestioned usage needs to be problematised.
[45] Quoted in Warwick, p. 5.

If, by 'true rock and roll,' Weiss was making reference to the term as it was originally understood in the 1950s and early 1960s, my research certainly supports her claim. When Frankie Laine introduced Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers for their first television appearance on his show in 1956, he described them as an example of 'what is now the most popular style of music in this country: rock and roll.'[46] Similarly, eight years later when the Shangri-Las performed "Leader of the Pack" on *I've Got a Secret*, in November, 1964, it was described as 'the country's top rock and roll hit', and in print on the television screen, as 'the Number 1 rock 'n roll song hit' (sic).[47] In a review of the Shangri-Las first album, from 1965, the Shangri-Las were described as one of the 'new rock vocal teams.'[48] In the late 1950s and well into the mid 1960s, no one spoke of 'doo wop' and 'girl groups,' because this nomenclature had not yet been applied to the music under discussion. It was all rock and roll. This underscores a point that goes to the heart of this study, and that is that artificial genre distinctions imposed later have had serious ramifications for how teen-oriented vocal group music has been perceived historically, be it doo wop, or what is referred to now as 'girl group' music.

In a 1964 article about the Shangri-Las in English music magazine *New Musical Express*, journalist Richard Green began,

> 'The way the chart-topping Supremes wave their arms about when singing captivated thousands of British fans on their recent visit here. But not many people know that another *girl team* climbing the charts adopt a similar technique on stage.'[49]

The 'girl team' in question was the Shangri-Las. Furthermore, in an eight-page feature article on the Supremes in *Ebony* magazine, from June, 1965, a variety of terms were used to describe them. These included 'world's hottest female vocal group', 'girl vocal trio', 'vocal group', 'female

[46] Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," Frankie Laine Show, 1956, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q96ylFiQK_I (accessed 18 June, 2010).
[47] The Shangri-Las and Robert Goulet on *I've Got a Secret*, including a performance of "Leader of the Pack," 1964, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WA5I2t26w (accessed 18 June, 2010). This performance is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.
[48] The Shangri-Las, *The Shangri-Las* (also referred to as *Leader of the Pack*) RED BIRD 20-101, February, 1965. This album is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.
[49] Richard Green, 'Searchers talk about the Shangri-Las,' *New Musical Express*, 20 November, 1964, p. 13 (my italics).

group', and 'girl vocal group', but not 'girl group.'[50] Further on, the writer tried to convey the Supremes' sonic qualities in a little more depth:

> The Supremes feature what the record industry calls that "Detroit Sound", a mixture of blues, gospel, rock 'n' roll, and pop music. "It's less wild than most of the big beat music you hear today," says Diana, "but it still has feeling to it. We call it sweet music."[51]

The Supremes, it seems, did not think of themselves as a 'girl group' either, and neither did the author of this article, who described them as having 'that "Detroit Sound."' In that same year, in the Summer edition of *16 Magazine Spectacular*, the results of '16's Fourth Annual Geegee Gold Star Awards' were published. This was a poll voted for by the teen readers of *16 Magazine* – and the voting categories were significant. The 'Best American Female Group' went to the Supremes, 'Most Promising American Female Group' to the Shangri-Las, and 'Best LP American Female Group' to the Dixie Cups for *Iko Iko*.[52] These three groups are now considered prime exemplars of the 'girl group' genre, but here, in 1965, there was no mention of the term.

In 1966 *Ebony* ran a special on the Ronettes that was similarly styled to the earlier Supremes feature.[53] The headline of the article was 'The Ronettes: Rock 'n' roll girls trio teams up with the Beatles on a whirlwind, 14-city, U.S. entertainment tour.' In the body of the article they were described as 'a trio of rock 'n' roll singers', after which the writer observed that they had been named 'The Best Girl Group in England,' following the success of 'Be My Baby' there, and then, a year later, 'voted the third top singing group in England,' after the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.[54] This indicates that in the mid-1960s, 'girl group' was just one of a number of terms used to describe a group of young women who performed together.

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[50] 'The Supremes: Sweet-Sounding Detroiters Push To Top as New Rulers of "Rock,"' *Ebony* 20:8 (June, 1965), pp. 80-88, esp. pp. 80, 81, 86.
[51] *Ebony* 20:8 (June, 1965), p. 81.
[52] *16 Magazine Spectacular*, Summer 1965, pp. 4-7.
[53] *Ebony* 22:1 (November 1966), pp. 184-192. Johnson-Grau also mentioned these two *Ebony* features, but did not note their implications for the 'girl group' label.
[54] 'The Ronettes: Rock 'n' roll girls trio teams up with the Beatles on a whirlwind, 14-city, U.S. entertainment tour,' *Ebony* 22:1 (November 1966), p. 184. See also *Jet* 30:24 (September 22, 1966), pp. 60-1 for a very similar article by Bobbee Barbee called 'Rocking Ronettes Rocket Toward Fame: Two Sisters and a First Cousin,' upon which the writer of the *Ebony* piece has clearly drawn. Barbee referred to the Ronettes as 'a singing group' and as an 'impressive, intelligent and individualistic trio.' Both publications were aimed at an African-American audience.

Furthermore, that the Ronettes were included in a poll with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones gives further weight to Weiss's assertion that, at least in the minds of the (presumably) teen voters, the Ronettes too 'were rock and rollers, same as the guys.' Songwriter Ellie Greenwich, who wrote for both the Ronettes and the Shangri-Las, also said, 'we didn't think in terms of "girl groups." We never put a label on it.'[55] Furthermore, two intriguing advertisements appeared in *Billboard* from 1967, in the employment section under 'Help Wanted':

> GIRL GROUPS, VOCAL OR INSTRUMENTAL. Must be young, pretty. Real Pros Only. Apply week of April 17, 1967, 3pm. Leo Stone, 1639 Broadway.

And just below:

> WANTED QUALIFIED GIRL ROCK AND ROLL Lead Guitar or Organ Player for one of country's leading girl groups, with prestige playing credits, pending record contract and strong teen following. Seeking compatible experienced girl to join up.
>
> If qualified, write for audition, giving age, present occupation, music group you belong to, whether union member, etc., to:
> BOX B309, 188 W. Randolph St, Chicago, Ill.[56]

Both these advertisements used the term descriptively, rather than referring to a particular genre. Furthermore, both made clear reference to playing instruments, which was unheard of in the later/current understanding of the term – the 'girl groups' were singing groups, not bands. They recorded with studio musicians, and played live with backing bands.

It seems that in the early and mid-1960s, and as late as 1967, the term 'girl group' did not refer unambiguously to a type of music. By the early 1970s, however, the term was understood so specifically that music critic Greg Shaw could say, in 1973,

> For the uninitiated, Charlie Feathers was to rockabilly what Charlie Patton was to the blues, what the Ronettes were to girl groups, what the Small Faces were to the English Invasion…

[55] Palmer, p. 36.
[56] 'Employment Section: Help Wanted,' *Billboard*, 15 April, 1967, p. 67.

and expect that his audience would interpret the term as referring to a style of music, a genre.[57] In 1974, music critic and cultural analyst Greil Marcus wrote an article called 'How the Other Half Lives: The Best of Girl Group Rock,' in which he enunciated an understanding of 'girl group' as a genre, in terms that have remained largely unquestioned since:

> The girls were usually black, always urban, and the groups featured one completely distinctive lead singer and more or less replaceable back-ups (they met in high school, posed in their prom dresses). If they weren't teenage, they sang as if they were. They neither wrote songs nor played instruments; *all needed a producer for the identifiable, striking sound that was the first necessity of any girl group record*. The music wasn't R&B or soul - it was straight rock, simple but embellished and ornamented, aimed right at Top 40, not the black charts.[58]

Leaving aside for the moment Marcus's characterisation of the music as 'simple but embellished and ornamented,' these very real similarities between the groups are largely responsible for their categorisation into a genre, 'girl groups'. The fact that many of the same song-writing, recording and production personnel were involved with multiple groups has served to emphasise their similarities even more. For instance, Ellie Greenwich wrote material for the Shangri-Las, the Dixie Cups, the Ronettes, and the Crystals, among many others. In New York City, the centre of operations was the Brill Building at 1619 Broadway, in which professional songwriters including Greenwich, her husband Jeff Barry, Neil Sedaka, Gerry Goffin and Carol King, just to name a few, worked writing for singers and vocal groups signed to labels whose offices were likely to be in the same building, or nearby at 1650 Broadway.[59] In Detroit at Motown, staff songwriters, including Smokey Robinson, Eddie Holland, Lamont Dozier, and Brian Holland, wrote songs for the male and female vocal groups to record in conjunction with the 'house' band of staff

[57] Greg Shaw, 'Charlie Feathers: The Minit-Stop', *Phonograph Record*, July 1973, reproduced at Rock's Back Pages, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=8075 (accessed 27 April, 2009).
[58] Greil Marcus, 'How the Other Half Lives: The Best of Girl Group Rock,' *Let it Rock*, May 1974, reproduced at Rock's Back Pages, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=668 (accessed 27 April, 2009, italics mine).
[59] See Ian Inglis, 'Some Kind of Wonderful: The Creative Legacy of the Brill Building,' *American Music* 21:2 (2003), pp. 214-235; Ken Emerson, *Always Magic In the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era*, New York: Viking Penguin, 2005.

musicians. As a consequence, the Motown groups had a more obvious 'signature sound' than the New York City-based groups.[60]

The codification of the term became absolute with the publication of Alan Betrock's *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound* in 1982.[61] Betrock reiterated Marcus's characterisation of 'girl groups,'

> so called because they were, for the most part, both groups and girls. Their story is not one of *females* in rock 'n' roll (for there were hundreds of female stars who had nothing to do with the girl-group sound), but of a musical setting, lyrical direction and business organization that added up to the creation of a unique genre.[62]

Betrock had a great affection for the 'girl groups', his research was thorough, and he wrote with care, enormous enthusiasm, and a keen eye for their musical significance. Implicit in his decision to write this book was that the artistic achievement of the groups in question was worthy of such detailed coverage: in this alone, his work was groundbreaking. Betrock's book contains a twelve-page chapter on the Shangri-Las, which was certainly the most detailed survey of the group until the publication of John Grecco's lengthy online article, 'Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las' in 2002.[63] Alan Betrock was a New York (Queens) native, obsessive record and ephemera collector, as well a music producer.[64] As a consequence, he wrote to some extent as an insider, and, while this was undoubtedly advantageous in many ways, it is also clear that he accepted unquestioningly what Jacqueline Warwick has described a 'hierarchy that places producers and songwriters at the head of the musical enterprise':[65]

> The girl-group sound was primarily based in and around New York, because as a *writer/producer medium*, most of the well-connected writers, arrangers, producers, musicians, and studios were to be found there.[66]

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[60] The Motown house band was the subject of a 2002 documentary, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*; see http://www.standingintheshadowsofmotown.com/ (accessed 17 October, 2010).
[61] Alan Betrock, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*, [New York: Delilah] London: Omnibus, 1982.
[62] Betrock, p. 7.
[63] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 27 July, 2010).
[64] Andy Schwartz, 'Remembering Alan Betrock,' *Village Voice*, 7 April, 2001, reproduced at Rock's Back Pages, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=2835, (accessed 27 April, 2009).
[65] Warwick, p. 90.
[66] Betrock, p. 70 (my italics).

Of course, recordings of pop music could not get made without producers, and songwriters, for that matter. Nevertheless, conspicuously absent from this list is any actual groups of singers, which is surely telling in a discussion of a genre called 'girl groups.'[67] Although almost certainly not deliberately, the implication is that singers can be found anywhere; they were so peripheral to the exercise that they did not even rate a mention. It is this hierarchy that plays an important role in constantly undermining the artistic achievement of the groups that Betrock so painstakingly chronicled throughout the rest of his book; the tension between these conflicting positions is never resolved.[68] In a 1982 review, music historian Barney Hoskyns noted that had Betrock 'been a little more alert to the sexual codes that determined the genre we know as "girl groups,"' it may have produced 'a book which rather more radically challenged our assumptions' about the groups and their recordings. Betrock, however, was 'always content to sit this side of popular myth.'[69]

Not the least of this was the absolutely relentless emphasis on the producer (followed closely by the songwriters) in almost all discussions of 'girl groups.' Greil Marcus again, in the *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*:

> Girl group rock was producers' music; the songs came out of the Brill Building, written by contract songwriters. The 'artists' had no 'creative freedom.'[70]

Just as Phil Spector is perceived to be largely responsible for the Ronettes' recorded output, so are the Shangri-Las predominantly seen to be the brainchild of George 'Shadow' Morton. Spector and Morton were, in different ways, spectacularly innovative and creative producers who broke down many established conventions and irrevocably changed the

[67] I am quite sure that Betrock was not including singing groups when he referred to 'musicians.'
[68] This is not an issue unique to Betrock, as will be discussed shortly.
[69] Barney Hoskyns, 'Transistor Sisters: Alan Betrock's Girl Groups - The Story Of A Sound', originally published in *New Musical Express*, 1982, reproduced at Rock's Back Pages, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=4201 (accessed 25 April, 2009).
[70] *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*, ed. Jim Miller, New York: Random House, [1976] 1980, p. 160.

way records were made, and heard.[71] The unfortunate by-product, though, has been that, as Jacqueline Warwick put it,

> the music of the girl groups in the early 1960s is typically…dismissed as the inane chirpings of mindless puppets controlled by some behind-the-scenes Svengali.[72]

This notion is reinforced by their 'image' and matching uniforms, as well as their age and sex. Jacqueline Warwick has systematically demonstrated the pervasiveness of this idea, and provided a much needed dismantling of this fundamental tenet of 'girl group' lore, repositioning 'vocalists as the central musicians.'[73]

In the case of the Shangri-Las, however, there is another layer of complexity that might not unreasonably be termed the 'Spector Factor.' For in 'girl group' mythology, Phil Spector is the undisputed king, *the* maverick auteur producer, and 'Be My Baby' by the Ronettes the jewel in his crown. And this is not without some justification, for Spector was driven, eccentric, intense and revolutionary. He applied Wagnerian Romantic agony, and *his* version of a 'wall of sound,' to music written for and aimed at teenagers, famously creating 'little symphonies for kids.'[74] As Craig Schuftan put it,

> Spector had realised that in high school, every time a boy *looks* at you, let alone asks you on a date or dumps you just before the dance, it feels like *Tristan und Isolde*. So Spector decided to treat these teen tragedies with the dignity their protagonists instinctively felt they deserved. He would tell the teens of America that their emotions were every bit as important as they imagined.[75]

Conceptually, this was brilliant, and clearly an influence on George 'Shadow' Morton, who took similar notions into new terrains of sonic

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[71] See Warwick, pp. 139-143; Mark Ribowsky, *He's A Rebel: Phil Spector, Rock and Roll's Legendary Producer*, New York: Dutton, 1989; Richard Williams, *Phil Spector: Out of his Head*, London: Omnibus, 2003.
[72] Warwick, p. 97.
[73] Charlotte Greig, *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow: Girl Groups From the 50s On*, London: Virago, 1989, p. 8; Warwick, esp. pp. xii, 93-107, 121-35.
[74] Craig Schuftan, *Hey! Nietzsche! Leave them kids alone: the Romantic Movement, Rock & Roll, and the End of Civilisation as We Know it*, Sydney: ABC [Australian Broadcasting Commission], 2009, pp. 182-185.
[75] Schuftan, p. 184.

emptiness that were quite different but every bit as innovative as Spector's.[76]

Rarely are these seen on their own terms, however.[77] Morton is routinely presented as something of a second-rate Spector, and the Shangri-Las, as his 'vehicle,' suffer accordingly:

> If the Ronnette's (sic) represent the high water mark of the Girl Group music, the Shangri-Las represent its ebb tide. In their work, the form plays itself out - there is no place left for the music to go after this group exposes the limitations of the Girl Group ideology.[78]

For Paul Gripp, 'girl group' is not merely a genre, but an 'ideology.' What exactly he meant by this is unclear, but it serves to illustrate the manner in which this terminology, categorisation and conception of the groups in question had become rigidly understood. More importantly, it assumed that the groups were consciously adhering to some kind of codified philosophical framework in the creation of their records under the 'girl group' banner, which, as we have seen, was not the case. The impact on the Shangri-Las of generalisations about 'girl groups' and various manifestations of the cult of the producer is even more apparent in a discussion by James M. Curtis:

> When the girl group sound broke, it broke big. 'Leader of the Pack', 'He's a Rebel', 'Da Doo Ron Ron', 'My Boyfriend's Back', 'Chapel of Love' and 'Be My Baby' all went to #1 in the early sixties. So we need to ask why this happened at this particular time. I think that we cannot explain the appeal of the girl groups by simply listening to the records or praising Phil's genius. Rather, we need to turn to television, the ground against which rock and roll was the figure.[79]

Only three of the six songs listed by Curtis were Phil Spector productions. The first, 'Leader of the Pack,' was of course by the Shangri-Las, produced and co-written by Morton. It went to number one in November,

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[76] Schuftan's comments are equally applicable, if not more so, to Morton. Morton's use of emptiness, space, echo, and reverb is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, where the Shangri-Las' own version of Romantic agony is also examined.

[77] A welcome exception is the discussion of Spector, Morton, and Motown founder Berry Gordy by Rhodes, pp. 29-30.

[78] Paul Gripp, 'Party Lights: Utopic Desire and the Girl Group Sound,' in Diane Christine Raymond, *Sexual Politics and Popular Culture*, Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990, pp. 59-67. Gripp also misspelt Ronettes throughout the entire article.

[79] James M. Curtis, *Rock eras: Interpretations of Music and Society, 1954-1984*, Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987, p. 85.

1964, which was not exactly 'the early sixties.' Nevertheless, *all six songs* were presented as though they somehow coexisted in one happy conglomerate under the guiding hand of his chum 'Phil's genius.' In one of the more spectacularly misogynist explanations for the popularity of 'girl groups', Curtis went on to argue that

> There was one television star in the early sixties who outshone all the others and who mesmerized the American people…I believe that President Kennedy was so much the man of the hour and we were so infatuated with the way he was obsolescing the distinction between politics and showbiz that we were not interested in other male heroes. But we were very receptive to young, nubile girls who sang about male heroes. So it makes sense to say that the girl groups enjoyed great success because they were properly positioned (to use a marketing term) between Phil Spector on the one hand and President Kennedy on the other.[80]

This patronising and reductive assessment, deeply sexist and laden with innuendo, was constructed within an established set of frameworks that treated 'girl groups' as interchangeable components of a genre, the male producer as Svengali, and the late-1950s and early-1960s as a low point in Rock between Elvis and the Beatles. Furthermore, Jacqueline Warwick's observation that the 'conventional girl' is a powerful cultural emblem is also relevant to this discussion:

> She has served and continues to serve as a token of nostalgia for some idealized past; an icon for a bright future; an embodiment of innocence to be protected at all costs; a symbol of hope and inspiration; a helpless and tragic manifestation of pathos; an unspoiled object of lust; and a model of pouting selfishness and egocentrism.[81]

Most of these are evident in Curtis's discussion, in which young female performers were reduced to 'nubile girls who sang about male heroes,' and nostalgically linked to a societal 'infatuation' with John F. Kennedy.

Other work demonstrates the dangers of projecting already-formed conclusions and unquestioned assumptions onto evidence. In an article on the image of 'girl groups,' Cynthia Cyrus discussed the importance of matching costumes, and argued that

[80] Curtis, pp. 85-6.
[81] Warwick, p. 3.

> even when nominally off-stage, the members of a particular girl group frequently dressed alike. Take, for example, recording sessions. Because the focus was on the sound and not the visual image, the studio session demanded less pageantry than did the public performance. The girl groups, however, responded not with mutual independence, but rather with a different kind of costume. The look might be informal, merely a shirt paired with comfortable pants, but all members of the group would be carefully dressed alike.[82]

Cyrus then cited as evidence two images, one of the Cookies, and one of Martha and the Vandellas. References were not provided, but Cyrus's descriptions strongly suggest images reproduced by Alan Betrock on pages 51 and 158 of his *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*.[83] The Vandellas photograph was clearly a staged, photo studio shot – there is no equipment visible, nor anything to suggest that the group is in the *process* of recording. Betrock's caption reads, 'Martha and the Vandellas at their earliest recording session where they backed Marvin Gaye,' so possibly this photo was taken before or after a recording session, in which case they were dressed alike because it was a publicity photo, not because the Vandellas were so wedded to their 'girl group' identity that they were unable to respond 'with mutual independence' while engaged in the recording process.[84] The Cookies photo (p. 51), although in a recording studio, is also clearly staged – the professionally-lit group is carefully arranged around the microphone, the two tallest members on the outer sides, arms arranged in harmonious lines. Most tellingly, the two Cookies on the left are squashed against each other, not in a manner that will allow for the unencumbered breathing required for singing, but so that all members fit in the shot. Genuine *in situ* recording shots are characterised by non-professional lighting, and show singers concentrating on their craft, with notes, music stands, plenty of space

[82] Cynthia J. Cyrus, 'Selling an Image: Girl Groups of the 1960s,' *Popular Music* 22:2 (May 2003), p. 181.
[83] Betrock's book is listed in Cyrus's bibliography (pp. 192-3).
[84] This is especially so given that, as I have demonstrated in Chapter One, this codified notion of a 'girl group' genre/identity did not exist at this time. Furthermore, on the page opposite (159) is another photo, clearly from the same session and without Marvin Gaye, that is captioned 'The first Martha and The Vandellas group photo.' See Betrock, pp. 158-9.

around each other and not dressed identically.[85] This demonstrates the pitfalls of an uncritical approach to source material without even the most basic of visual analytical skills, or appreciation of the practicalities of the recording process, and is a serious issue for an article which purports to shed light on the 'image' of 'girl groups.' More importantly, it demonstrates the manner in which evidence assembled uncritically around unquestioned notions of a 'girl group' genre serves to artificially perpetuate understandings of that genre, which, as I have demonstrated, is far from unproblematic.

Little wonder Shangri-Las' lead singer Mary Weiss will have none of being called a 'girl group.' In a 2006 interview conducted by Miriam Linna (ML) and Billy Miller (BM) in conjunction with the recording and release of Weiss's solo album *Dangerous Game*, Weiss (MW) made her antipathy clear:

> BM: When you gals...
>
> MW: You gals?! At least you didn't say Girl Groups.
>
> BM: Sorry Mary. No, I know better than to mention Girl Groups.
>
> MW: Oh, kill me now! Thank you. How do you take an entire sex and dump them into one category? Girl Groups, I mean, please! What if we all had penises?
>
> BM: Uh, that would have seriously affected the crush I had on you as a kid.
>
> ML: People tend to categorize...
>
> MW: Count me out. If Girl Groups were products, what were Boy Groups?[86]

[85] See, for example, Brooks Arthur's (the engineer on many of their sessions) photos of the Shangri-Las recording: http://www.brooksarthur.com/phototheshangrilas01.htm, http://www.brooksarthur.com/phototheshangrilas03.htm, http://www.brooksarthur.com/phototheshangrilas04.htm, http://www.brooksarthur.com/phototheshangrilas05.htm; the Chiffons in the recording studio: http://www.brooksarthur.com/photogallery02.htm; the Ronettes with Phil Spector: http://macleans.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/74158947.jpg (accessed 30 June, 2010).

[86] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las* , http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 13 June, 2009). BM: Billy Miller, ML: Miriam Linna, owners of Norton Records, the Brooklyn-based label upon which Mary Weiss's first post-Shangri-Las solo record, *Dangerous Game*, was released in 2007. This interview was conducted to promote *Dangerous Game*. See also Dugan Trodglen, Trodglen, D., 'Who Says You Can Never Go Home Anymore? The Shangri-Las Once Did. But Mary Weiss is Proving That Wrong with a Swell Return to Rock' in *Stomp and Stammer*, November, 2008, http://stompandstammer.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=1575&Itemid=51&task=view&limit=1&limitstart=0 (accessed 20 August, 2010).

Weiss raised two significant and related issues here - the categorisation of the groups together, and the naming of the category with its pejorative 'product' implications. Firstly, the dumping of an entire sex in one category, as Weiss put it, has implications beyond 'girl groups.' Brenda Johnson-Grau has demonstrated that the persistent discussion of 'women in rock' and the equally persistent characterisation of rock as 'a male domain' and 'inhospitable to women' since at least the late 1960s has ensured that female musicians are routinely compared on the basis of gender, and presented as anomalies in the 'male dominated' sphere of rock:

> These stories, seemingly magnanimous (and inevitably self-congratulatory) in their tributes to female rock 'n' rollers, rob women of their historical presence in rock 'n' roll. Each female musician, in effect, must start from scratch. Each generation (girls and boys) believes that women in rock are somehow 'new.' As a hegemonizing action, it works well. Women artists get defined more by their gender and less by their music. Therefore they (as well as their music and their ideas) are continually marginalized.[87]

The 'girl group' category is a micro version of this macro trend. The actual terminology, 'girl group,' is another, albeit closely connected, issue.[88] Returning for a moment to Marcus's characterisation:

> Girl group rock flourished between 1958 and 1965, and though, with the passing of the Brill Building and the coming of the sophistication of the soul beat, the tradition thinned out, it's still around…
>
> 'Group' is merely a convention; the crucial word is 'girl.' Tina Turner's 'River Deep – Mountain High' doesn't fit, because that is a *woman* singing. Raitt and Midler sing as women too, not girls, but it seems to me they look for some of that crazy, blind innocence and simple joy when they take on the classic girl-group songs.[89]

It is noteworthy that Marcus posited the '*sophistication* of the soul beat' against the decline of the Brill Building 'hit factory' style of record making, as if one was a replacement of sorts for the other.[90] Implicitly, soul music

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[87] Johnson-Grau, p. 209.

[88] On the wider issue of the "lumping together" of female artists in "women in rock" books, see Coates, p. 88, n. 5.

[89] Marcus, 'How the Other Half Lives,' http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=668 (accessed 27 April, 2009).

[90] See also Brain Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 124. Ward observed that black pop music is perceived to be less 'authentic' and 'legitimate' than 'undiluted' 1950s R&B, and later 1960s soul music.

was worthier, more authentic, performed by adults - a notion reinforced by Marcus's nostalgic characterisation of 'that crazy, blind *innocence* and *simple* joy' of '*classic girl-group* songs' (italics mine). Echoes are present here of Theodor Adorno's famous excoriation of 'inauthentic' mass-produced popular music, but also, as Norma Coates has pointed out, the Modernist notion (as identified by Andreas Huyssen) of a 'mass culture as feminine/high culture as masculine binary' which informed the work of early rock critics.[91]

This idea of songs by 'girl groups' as 'simple' and 'innocent' is a pervasive and recurrent one.[92] Marcus, as we have seen, described them in 1974 as 'simple but embellished and ornamented.' Greg Shaw, writing about 'girl groups' in 1982, began his piece with

> Of all the musical *fads* that came and went in the early Sixties, the *girl-group phenomenon* has succeeded best in retaining its appeal.
>
> For while most of the male teen singers of the period were being groomed for the Vegas route, becoming tame and predictable 'all-round entertainers', girl groups continued to aim directly at the teenage market. *The singers, for the most part, had little original talent themselves* - the songs were written by contract songwriters and brought to life by producers - but the raw emotion often expressed in their tales of teen anguish captured the hearts and imagination of teenagers everywhere.[93]

Shaw then lauded the merits of the Chantels and the Marvelettes, *without mentioning* that both songs on the first single by the Chantels, 'He's Gone' b/w 'The Plea'[94] were written by Arlene Smith, lead singer of the group, who was fifteen at the time.[95] The Marvelettes first and most famous

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[91] See Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,' reproduced in Stephen Duncombe, *Cultural Resistance Reader*, London: Verso, 2002, pp. 275-303; Coates, pp. 65-6.
[92] See also Rhodes, p. 70.
[93] Greg Shaw, 'Leaders of the Pack,' http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=1983 (accessed 10 May, 2009, italics mine).
[94] I use here, and throughout this thesis, the standard abbreviation used by trade journals including *Billboard*, of "b/w" ("backed with") to indicate and distinguish between the A and B-sides of 7" singles. The A-side was expected to receive airplay and/or chart; often less care was taken with the B-side and it was regarded as somewhat throwaway. A double A-sided single was indicated by the use of "c/w", which stands for "coupled with". See http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/1352/in-the-record-business-what-do-b-w-and-c-w-mean (accessed 24/4/2010).
[95] Betrock, p. 10; John Clemente, *Girl Groups: Fabulous Females that Rocked the World*, Iola, WI: Krause, 2000, p. 49; BMI Repertoire 'He's Gone',

single, and Motown's first *Billboard* Number One, 'Please Mr Postman,' was co-written by Georgia Dobbins, one of the original members of the group, which Shaw also neglected to mention. It was covered by the Beatles on their *With the Beatles* album, from 1963.[96] Shaw then went on to praise the 'urgent, *unsophisticated'* voice of Shirley Alston, lead singer of the Shirelles.[97] His two paragraphs on the Shangri-Las celebrate their 'unforgettable gems of teen melodrama', but entirely in terms of 'Shadow' Morton and the Brill songwriters. In conclusion, he decided,

> The Girl Groups had made the most honest music of their time. The singers had rarely pretended to be anything more than *naïve teenagers* willing to go along with whatever ideas their producers might have. And the producers for their part never cared about sounding slick – they were after raw emotion which, by and large, they succeeded admirably in capturing. Totally *manufactured* as they were - the singers mere *pawns of the industry* - the girl-group records preserve *a form of charm* as potent as any other.[98]

Shaw managed to laud this music while completely trivialising it as a 'fad,' a 'phenomenon' performed by 'naive teenagers' with 'little original talent.'[99] Norma Coates identified a similar set of contradictions at work with regard to the Monkees:

> The critical strategy used in hindsight to evaluate the Monkees is to accept and even celebrate their music as great pop, but to continue to disparage both their origins as a network television band-for-hire who did not write and perform its own music and the audience who catapulted sales of their records and related merchandise to Beatle-esque heights in the mid-1960s.[100]

In the case of the Marvelettes, the Chantels, and the Shangri-Las, significant input by performers was obfuscated by Shaw in favour of grand

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http://repertoire.bmi.com/title.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&keyID=539895&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 10 May, 2009). The Chantels were instrumentalists too, see Charlie Horner and Pamela Horner, *The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett Part Three: Richard and the Heroines of Harmony*, http://www.classicurbanharmony.net/Barrett%20Legacy%203%20copy%208.pdf (accessed 11 October, 2010), pp. 1-9, esp. p. 4.

[96] See Warwick, pp. 46-8; Marc Taylor, *The Original Marvelettes: Motown's Mystery Girl Group*, Aloiv, 2004, pp. 19-41, esp. pp. 19-21. Dobbins was forced to leave the Marvelettes before the song was recorded because her father refused to sign her recording contract, which she, as a minor like the rest of the Marvelettes, could not sign herself.

[97] See Russell A. Potter, 'Race' in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. Horner and Swiss, pp. 78-9; Potter noted that the early blues folklorists 'treated its performers as necessarily naive and untutored practitioners of an oral tradition.'

[98] Greg Shaw, 'Leaders of the Pack,' http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=1983 (accessed 10 May, 2009, italics mine).

[99] Coates, p. 72.

[100] Coates, p. 72.

‘girl group’ narrative that posited the performers as talentless putty, ripe for moulding by genius producers.[101]

The not-so-subtle undercurrent here was that liking this music was a kind of kitsch indulgence, a guilty pleasure that needed to be explained and apologised for. In addition, Greil Marcus and Greg Shaw are (or were – Shaw died in 2004) extremely well-respected music writers acknowledged as luminaries in the field; that their work has been extremely influential is not open to question.[102] As Norma Coates commented,

> Early *Rolling Stone* writers, especially Greil Marcus, became creators and keepers of rock mythology, heavily inflected with a masculine accent, thus inscribing spiritual and musical significance into rock music and culture.[103]

Both Shaw and Marcus contributed multiple chapters to the *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*, and in a 2001 documentary about the Brill Building songwriters, Shaw, interviewed as an expert commentator, described the Shangri-Las as ‘the tough sluts...who would go out with “Leader of the Pack” kind of guys.’ [104] The degree to which these ideas remain deeply resilient and pervasive in relation to all-female groups is evident in a 2010 review of the self-titled album by Beaches, a critically acclaimed five-piece guitar-based rock group from Melbourne who toured the US earlier this year.[105] The reviewer called them ‘the Australian equivalent of Vivian Girls[106]...fuzzy and shimmeringly hip gal-rock,’ and went on to note that they ‘stomp on the wah pedal with enough masculine force’ to, among other things, ‘make Kim Gordon proud.’[107] After referring to Beaches as ‘some Australian birds,’ the reviewer concluded:

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[101] See also Gayle Wald’s discussion of ‘stereotypical assumptions of black artistic naïveté’ in ‘One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender and Popular Music,’ in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill, New York: New York University Press, 1997, p. 159.
[102] *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*, ed. Jim Miller, New York: Random House, [1976] 1980.
[103] Coates, p. 78.
[104] See this excerpt from the *Songmakers Collection*, a documentary about the Brill Building from 2001: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANJGTyZ6v_A (accessed 6 August, 2010). This excerpt also contains rare footage of the Shangri-Las recording with Morton, and the manner in which most of the interviewees describe the Shangri-Las in relation to Morton should be noted. See also the comments of Coates, pp. 77-8.
[105] Rich K. ‘Beaches S/T’ in *Record Reviews Spring 2010*, http://www.terminal-boredom.com/reviews26.html (accessed 15 August, 2010).
[106] The Vivian Girls are an all-female rock trio from Brooklyn, New York City.
[107] Kim Gordon is the bass guitarist in experimental rock group Sonic Youth. The writer of this review was implying that, at 57, she a ‘mother-figure’ for younger women who play in rock groups with experimental leanings.

> I can't deny liking this a bit (and I'd have liked it even a bit more in 1994) just as I can't deny past ownership of some Velocity Girl records. Could be a massive college radio hit, if college radio meant something anymore.[108]

This reviewer approached Beaches as women first and musicians second, compared them only to other females, then apologised to his readers for being unable to 'deny liking this a bit.' The implication is that the reviewer, as a member of the rock cognoscenti, *knows* that music made by women is fundamentally second-rate and inauthentic, but is unable to make the tough decisions and banish it altogether. He has completely absorbed an ideology concerning female musicians, and particularly all-female groups, which can be traced to the patronising and reductive assessments of 'girl groups' that became codified into rock journalism in the 1970s. Furthermore, it constitutes another example of the manner in which a superficially positive assessment, in this case an album review, simultaneously undermined and trivialised its female subjects.[109]

As I have demonstrated, recognising the manner in which this gendered categorisation works is fundamental to understanding why there has been so little serious discussion of the Shangri-Las and their body of recorded work. For the Shangri-Las were not 'innocent,' nor was their music 'simple and straightforward.' Their recordings are passionately performed, highly complex, subtle, intricately arranged, replete with layers of meaning. The subject matter of their songs, and the intense emotionality of their performances, engages in a deeply sophisticated manner with ancient currents in the Western artistic tradition. Yet they have been lumped into a diminutive, gendered category to which sweeping generalisations of naivety, innocence, industry pawns, simplicity and an array of other reductive monikers are routinely applied. For the Shangri-Las, this has meant that the complexities inherent in their music are regularly overlooked. David Quantick, writing in 1983, did a better job than most at

[108] Rich K. 'Beaches S/T' in *Record Reviews Spring 2010*, http://www.terminal-boredom.com/reviews26.html (accessed 15 August, 2010). Velocity Girl were an American guitar-based rock band active in the early 1990s that featured predominantly female vocals.
[109] That this review is from 2010 is further evidence of the timeliness of this study, and others that seek to unpack fundamental tenets of rock mythology.

a sensitive appraisal of their legacy, but of 'I Can Never Go Home Anymore,' commented that

> It's pro-family propaganda, it's ideologically appalling, but it's a sparkling record. And when the despairing cry of "*Mama!*" rends the air, followed by the whirling violins...pardon the cliché, but *this is pop*.[110]

As I demonstrate in Chapter Five, this deeply complex song is far from straightforward 'pro-family propaganda.' Quantick, for all his enthusiasm, was swept away on a wave of 'girl group'/producer oriented/glories of Brill Building *gushing* and completely missed the point. Worse still, in the concluding paragraph of his 1974 'girl group' article, Greil Marcus, running through a quick checklist of those he had not had the space and/or inclination to discuss in depth, said

> There's the Shangri-Las, great but overrated by critics because their concepts are so perfect for criticism.[111]

It is difficult to imagine anyone dismissing Bob Dylan for having 'concepts...so perfect for criticism.' In this one telling sentence, Marcus acknowledged the quality of their work, but dismissed it as unworthy of any kind of in-depth analysis. In the Marcus schema, the output of 'girl groups' was 'music of celebration – of simple joy, of innocence, of sex, of life itself, at times.'[112] Rather than questioning the applicability of the 'girl group' moniker, and reflecting on the ramifications of genre, Marcus excoriated the Shangri-Las because they did not fit his criteria, and transcended a genre that did not *exist* when they made their records.[113] As Brenda Johnson–Grau observed, 'the parameters of rock are frequently redefined – after the fact – to exclude the achievements of women musicians.'[114]

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[110] David Quantick, 'Leaders of the Teen Beat: Remember (Walkin' in the Sand) with the Shangri-Las,' *New Musical Express*, 17 September, 1983, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=890 (accessed 12 October, 2010).
[111] Marcus, 'How the Other Half Lives,' http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=668 (accessed 27 April, 2009).
[112] Greil Marcus, 'The Girl Groups,' in *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*, ed. Jim Miller, New York: Random House, [1976] 1980, p. 160.
[113] It seems that Greil Marcus, in the intervening years, has rethought this position somewhat. In an article about Mary Weiss's return to music in 2007, for which he was also interviewed as an expert consultant, Marcus stated that the Shangri-Las were often categorised as a 'girl-group' for 'lack of imagination.' He also praised their 'storytelling', 'characters' and the 'cinematic sense to the songs' that 'left wounds in their listeners.' See Anna Blumenthal, '40 Years Between Records: A Shangri-La Returns', *New York Times*, 4 March, 2007, p. 25.
[114] Johnson-Grau, p. 204.

In the case of the Shangri-Las, there were other significant differences. Not the least of these is race – the Shangri-Las were white, but are considered to be part of a genre that was predominantly African-American.[115] Of course, I am not suggesting that no one noticed this – although Mary Weiss has related that

> Right after *Remember* came out, James Brown hired us to do a Coliseum show in Texas. They had signs put up COLORED GIRLS' and WHITE GIRLS' bathrooms and I got in a huge fight with a cop because I used the black women's bathroom and he drew his gun on me. I was absolutely amazed. This is backstage in a Coliseum and the white bathroom is on the entire other side of the floor. I really had to go and then get onstage! Earlier, when we did the afternoon sound check, James Brown's mouth fell open! He turned around and looked at me - here's this little blonde girl. He thought we were black. All the other performers were black and we were very nervous because we didn't know how the audience was going to respond.[116]

The assumption made by Brown was telling. Other prominent, chart-topping female vocal groups coming out of New York City at the time and performing songs by Brill Building songwriters *were* predominantly black, and it is likely that to Brown, the Shangri-Las sounded like a black group that had 'crossed over.'[117] Furthermore, the famous song-writing team of Leiber and Stoller, co-owners of the Red Bird label to which the Shangri-Las were signed, had encountered a similar confusion. Jerry Leiber recounted that, when taking some new material to R&B singer Wynonie Harris, Harris had said

> 'If you don't mind boys, I must admit, I didn't know you were white.' We'd run into this a number of times. James Brown thought we were black, too.[118]

The deeply lived experience of racial segregation that characterised American society and extended to the record industry was surely largely responsible for the racial assumptions made by Harris and Brown. The RCA, Paramount and Columbia record companies set up subsidiary 'race' labels in the 1920s in order to market 'black' music to a 'black'

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[115] Rhodes, p. 30.
[116] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/03.html (accessed 10 May, 2009).
[117] At the end of 1964, after the success of "Leader of the Pack," the Shangri-Las tied with the Four Tops to win the Best New Vocal Group in the *R&B* section of *Cashbox* magazine's end-of-year survey. See the discussion of 'black pop' by Ward, pp. 123-169, esp. p. 146.
[118] Friedman, Josh Alan, *Tell The Truth Until They Bleed: Coming Clean in the Dirty World of Blues and Rock 'n' Roll*, New York: Backbeat Books, 2008, p. 23.

audience.[119] By the 1950s, 'race' music had become 'rhythm and blues,' shortened to R&B, and white teenagers were listening to the 'black' music that would become known as rock and roll on the radio.[120] But what is particularly significant about the Shangri-Las' whiteness is that, in the racially charged atmosphere of mid-1960s America, it gave them more freedom to present an image of rebelliousness, both visually, and musically.[121] This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

By now it should be clear that 'girl group' is far from neutral terminology, and that deeply embedded it are historical understandings of the 'girl', and, more specifically, the place of girls and women in rock and popular music. Teenagers, and particularly girls, have been consistently neglected historically, as Jacqueline Warwick has pointed out:

> Girls have little social power, and their interests and concerns are often regarded with derision (if they are noticed at all).[122]

A continually expanding body of work has resituated children and teenagers in historical narratives. These include Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* and Jon Savage, *Teenage*: *the Creation of Youth Culture*.[123] Of more specific importance for this study is scholarship which reclaims 'the girl' from well-established pejorative connotations, and reconfigures understandings of girlhood and the experiences of young women and teenagers, especially in relation to popular music. In 'Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun,' Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs argued that 'Beatlemania' was a powerful expression of empowerment for young women, and that a crucial component of this was the direction of intense and fervent sexual desire at the Beatles. Rather than pathological hysteria, as it was routinely characterised, the authors demonstrate that these responses were in fact

[119] Potter, pp. 73-4.
[120] See Potter, pp. 71-84.
[121] See Warwick, pp. 189-92; Mina Carson, Tisa Lewis, and Susan M. Shaw, *Girls Rock!: Fifty Years of Women Making Music*, Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004, p. 32.
[122] Warwick, p. 2.
[123] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004, Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History*, New York: Basic Books, 1996; Jon Savage, *Teenage: the Creation of Youth Culture*, New York: Viking, 2007.

far more complex, and that through them young women were able to envisage a more exciting set of life options than a suburban existence, as their former Beatlemaniac interviewees testify.[124] This has implications for an understanding of the overt emotionality that characterises the Shangri-Las' recordings, which even recent writing on the group seems to have trouble taking seriously, as I will demonstrate shortly.

Susan Douglas's *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* also acknowledged the empowering qualities offered to young women, including Douglas herself, by the Beatles. Douglas also examined the significance of the Shirelles enunciating specifically female adolescent sexual dilemmas on commercial radio in the early 1960s, and in doing so was one of the first scholars to discuss the female teenage singers known as 'girl groups' in an academic context. In doing so, she drew attention to the manner in which traditional accounts of rock 'either ignored...or trashed' the performers and their recordings, which, as she demonstrated, were narratives of considerable complexity that 'helped cultivate inside us a desire to rebel.'[125] Douglas's discussion of working women also has applications for an understanding of the relationship of the Shangri-Las, and other young women, to the music industry in the mid-1960s, which I discuss in detail in Chapter Three.

Lisa Rhodes' analysis of early American rock journalism and close readings of primary source material in *Electric Ladyland: Women and Rock Culture* have informed my own analysis of the origins of the term 'girl group' and the context in which it came into usage, as the preceding discussion demonstrates. This terminology and categorisation began to gain currency among rock journalists in the early 1970s, and has been integral to pejorative understandings of women and girls in relation to rock

[124] Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs, 'Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun,' in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, London & New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 84-106. See also Sheila Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young Popular Music, Age And Gender,* London & New York: Routledge, 2005.
[125] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*, London: Penguin, 1994, pp. 56-60, 83-98, 113-21. Other significant early studies include Barbara Bradby, 'Do-Talk and Don't-Talk: The Division of the Subject in Girl-Group Music,' in *On Record,* ed. Frith and Goodwin, pp. 341-368.

and popular music. In 'Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques,' Norma Coates explicated the profoundly negative understandings of very young girls who followed in the footsteps of Beatlemaniacs and became known as teenyboppers. The manner in which the 'inauthentic' fan was characterised as young, female, and unable to distinguish 'real' music from 'superficial' is central to understanding how the Shangri-Las and many of their vocal group contemporaries came to be relegated to the footnotes of narratives of rock.[126]

A new study that builds on these themes is *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*, edited by Laurie Stras and with contributions from Stras herself, Warwick, Coates, and Annie J. Randall, whose recent penetrating study of Dusty Springfield illuminates the complexities inherent in her life and work.[127] The essay included by Stras examines the vocal technique of young female singers in the 1960s, and of the Shangri-Las she observed that their nasal Queens accents added to their 'apparent vocal honesty,' which allowed them to connect in a very real way with their teen audience 'as if they were speaking (or whining, or shrieking, or sobbing, or yelling).'[128] Stras also argued that this, along with her spoken-style of address, gave Mary Weiss a unique and recognisable vocal identity. This has applications for an understanding of the emotional conviction conveyed by the Shangri-Las, which quickly became their trademark, and throughout this thesis I argue that this is central to a greater recognition of their tremendous abilities as performers. In her Introduction, Stras also observed that

> Until very recently, few academic articles and even fewer books have discussed girls' contributions to pop music as integral parts of popular culture and social history on their own terms.[129]

She's So Fine is a series of detailed and sophisticated analyses of girl singers from the 1950s and 1960s, and is a valuable contribution to a

[126] Rhodes, Coates, Johnson-Grau.
[127] *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*, ed. Laurie Stras, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010; Annie J. Randall, *Dusty!: Queen of the Postmods*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
[128] Laurie Stras, 'Voice of the Beehive: Vocal Technique at the Turn of the 1960s,' in *She's So Fine*, ed. Stras, pp. 52-3.
[129] Stras, p. 6.

growing body of work addressing this gap in scholarship, and was published just as this study was being finalised.

These analyses contribute immeasurably to a greatly enhanced understanding of teenage girls, women, and popular music, especially during the 1960s, and this study engages with their scholarship throughout. However, few of the aforementioned scholars, with the exception of Jacqueline Warwick, discuss the Shangri-Las in more depth than a page or two. And for all the strengths of Warwick's work, which, as I have demonstrated in the preceding discussion, are considerable, an informed understanding of the collaborative process that took place between George 'Shadow' Morton and the Shangri-Las is not enhanced by the discussion of the Shangri-Las within the 'girl group' genre. Warwick downplays Morton's role with the group, no doubt as a response to the chronic *overemphasis* on the role of the producer which characterises much writing on 'girl groups,' and the Shangri-Las. This is central to the perception of 'girl groups' as interchangeable and talentless puppets in the hands of producers, as both Warwick and I have demonstrated.[130] However, in all Warwick's discussions of the Shangri-Las, Morton is only ever referred to as the producer of 'most Shangri-Las recordings,' which of course he was, but he also *wrote* approximately one third of the songs the group recorded for Red Bird.[131] Furthermore, in a discussion of the roles of Carole King and Ellie Greenwich at the Brill Building, Warwick noted that

> By the time they wrote "Leader of the Pack" in 1964, Jeff Barry and [Ellie] Greenwich had married and decided to collaborate professionally only with one another.[132]

This implies that Barry and Greenwich were the sole writers of the song, when in fact Morton is also credited as a co-writer. Morton has also claimed that he wrote the song himself, and, as I demonstrate in Chapter Five, there is some evidence aside from Morton's own statements that supports this claim, despite his considerable truth-obscuring abilities. I am

[130] Warwick, pp. 93-107.
[131] Warwick, p. 193.
[132] Warwick, p. 118.

not attempting to make a case either way about "Leader of the Pack," but I am seeking to make informed assessments based on available evidence, with an emphasis on primary source material, about the collaborative process that took place between Morton and the Shangri-Las. Morton's role, while far from unproblematic, *was* central to the unique aesthetics of the Shangri-Las' recordings, and it is not necessary to elide Morton's involvement in the process in order to 'rehabilitate' the Shangri-Las.

This may also be connected to Warwick's treatment of the emotionality of the Shangri-Las, and it is the material penned by Morton that is the most overtly anguished in their repertoire.[133] If this material is located within the context of other 'girl groups,' it *is*, by comparison, completely off the emotional scale. As a consequence, Warwick commented that

> melodrama is undoubtedly the most apt term I could use to describe the oeuvre of the Shangri-Las.[134]

After noting that the 'stormy emotions' enunciated by the protagonist of "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" were

> heightened by the sound of waves crashing on the beach and a veritable army of seagulls crying overhead,

Warwick commented that

> "Past, Present and Future"...consists solely of a portentous spoken monologue about suffering in love and trepidation about future romances over a piano part borrowing heavily from the well-known first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata.[135]

Although in musicological terms, a 'melodrama' is 'a dramatic work, or a part of one, in which the dialogue is spoken over a musical accompaniment,' the term undeniably carries with it pejorative notions of exaggerated emotional sensationalism that are contrived and not to be taken particularly seriously, especially in conjunction with Warwick's somewhat distant and irony-tinged tone in this passage.[136] I have found no evidence that the group members regarded their performances in this manner, as 'melodramatic' and 'portentous.' Mary Weiss has commented

[133] I am referring particularly to "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)," "Past, Present and Future," and "I Can Never Go Home any More."
[134] Warwick, p. 194.
[135] Warwick, p. 194.
[136] 'Melodrama,' *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

that she 'always thought "Past, Present and Future" was a unique sounding record,' and in a long conversation with Suzi Quatro, in which Quatro described "Past, Present and Future" as 'the Shangri-Las' greatest moment,' Mary reflected,

> I had no conception of what love was at the time. But I really, I had to have almost every light in the studio out on that one, and I was crying my brains out.[137]

The emotion with which the Shangri-Las imbued their performances was unremittingly sincere, and my study acknowledges this as absolutely central to their artistic achievement, their relationship with Morton, and the enduring power of their recordings.[138] My reading locates "Past, Present and Future" and "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" within the heightened emotionalism of nineteenth-century Romanticism, which is self-suggested by the Beethoven 'sampling' in the song.[139] This offers fresh insights into both songs, which demonstrates that the 'girl group' category is but one context through which to examine the Shangri-Las; other frameworks have much to offer, and argue for a vastly reconfigured understanding of the Shangri-Las' and their recordings.

As I have demonstrated, the unquestioned acceptance of the term 'girl group' to describe a 'genre' is deeply problematic for a complicated set of interconnecting reasons. The term was not in use during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and as late as 1967, except as a descriptive term; it did *not* refer to a genre. It seems that the young female singers did not think of or describe themselves in this way, nor did the songwriters, nor the music trade or teen press at the time. Rather, 'girl group' was an appellation originally applied retrospectively by male journalists within a largely misogynist rock journalism framework. Both the terminology *and*

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[137] Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/04.html (accessed 12 October, 2010); Suzi Quatro, 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08); see also Goldstein, *Village Voice*, p. 30.

[138] See also Warwick's (p. 118) characterisation of "Leader of the Pack" as 'histrionic' but 'nevertheless...an earnest and meaningful exploration of the heightened emotions of teenage girls.' Even so, Warwick still felt that the emotionality of the song had to be justified, by pointing out that 'Greenwich asserts that she and the Shangri-Las took the piece seriously and found it moving.'

[139] See Chapter Six.

the categorisation on the basis of sex, age, and a variety of recording production values have played an integral role in trivialising and marginalising these teenage groups. In a 2006 book on the New York Dolls, immediately after lead singer David Johansen was cited lauding the Shangri-Las as his favourite band from the 1960s, the following paragraph appeared:

> There were a lot of girl groups, mainly puppets in the hands of avaricious producers who used them to realise their own musical vision (and make pots of money in the process). The subject matter of their songs had a narrow constituency, being rooted in pure teenage angst, lust and love...handclaps, glamour and sass gave otherwise vapid post rock 'n' roll pop an injection of sexy street smarts. Records like 'He's So Fine' by the Chiffons were simple perfection and struck a potent chord with young lovers everywhere.[140]

"He's So Fine" stayed at Number One on the *Billboard Hot 100* for four weeks in 1963, which hardly indicates that the 'subject matter' of the record 'had a narrow constituency.'[141] Furthermore, it was a crossover hit in 1971 for Jody Miller, peaking at #5 on the *Billboard* Country Singles chart, #53 on the *Billboard Hot 100*, and #2 on the Easy Listening chart.[142] It is clear that the term 'girl group' has survived with much of its complex set of deeply-rooted pejorative connotations intact.

The implications of this for the other singers routinely characterised as 'girl groups' are beyond the scope of this study; at the very least, the term needs to be problematised, and its usage rethought. When asked by an interviewer about competition between the Shangri-Las and other 'female groups of the sixties,' Weiss replied:

> "Everybody asks me that. I never felt that. I don't feel that the Shangri-Las fit with the other girl bands. We were just…us."[143]

Mary Weiss's oft-repeated refusal to allow the Shangri-Las to be categorised as a 'girl group' needs to be taken seriously, respected and

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[140] Kris Needs and Dick Porter, *Trash! The Complete New York Dolls*, London, Plexus, 2006, pp. 12-13.
[141] Jay Warner, *American Singing Groups: A History From 1940s to Today*, Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2006, p. 344.
[142] *Billboard*, 24 July, 1971, p. 38; *Billboard*, 7 August, 1971, p. 56; *Billboard*, 17 July, 1971, p. 30.
[143] Trodglen, 'Who Says You Can Never Go Home Anymore?' http://stompandstammer.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=1575&Itemid=51&task=view&limit=1&limitstart=1 (accessed 20 August, 2010).

examined. Despite their persistent categorisation within this 'genre', it has been widely acknowledged that the Shangri-Las were unusual, remarkable and compelling, and that their recordings possess unique qualities that set them apart from other 'girl groups.'[144] It is time to go one step further, and focus closely on the group and their recordings in a wider historical context, and 'on their own terms,' as Laurie Stras put it.[145] I now wish to widen the lens through which the group has been persistently viewed, by focussing closely on the group members and their place within the music industry in mid-1960s New York City. The members of the Shangri-Las grew up within blocks of each other in Cambria Heights, Queens, and it is to this pocket of New York City that we must now travel.

[144] Palmer, pp. 37-8; Greig, pp. 78-84; Donna Gaines, 'Girl Groups: A Ballad of Co-dependency,' in *Trouble Girls: The Rolling Stone Book of Women in Rock*, ed. Barbara O'Dair, New York: Random House, 1997, pp. 111-12; Ritchie Unterberger, 'Shangri-Las,' entry on allmusic.com website, http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:gpfyxqegld6e~T1 (accessed 6 October, 2010).
[145] Stras, p. 6

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWO

Queens, Doo Wop, and Two Pairs of Sisters

‘There was a lot of street corner singing. I grew up hearing a lot of doo wop.’

Mary Weiss

Sisters Mary and Betty Weiss, and twins Marguerite (Marge) and Mary Ann Ganser grew up within blocks of each other in Cambria Heights, Queens, New York. Their neighbourhood was in many ways typical of the post-WWII housing boom: modest homes for working class families who aspired to something a little better. The borough of Queens was marketed to young white families as a suburban paradise – plenty of space, grass, clean air, and, most importantly, affordable. In the early 1960s, the Ganser and Weiss sisters, drawn together through their love of singing and harmonising, coalesced into the singing group that would become known as the Shangri-Las. At the time they began singing together, in the early 1960s, vocal group singing, particularly doo-wop, was the primary mode of musical expression for teenagers. This began to be reflected in record sales charts in the mid-1950s, as records made by teenagers for teenagers began to be purchased with teenagers’ money in large quantities. Although the roots of doo wop were African American, and doo wop was in the main performed by teenaged males, various combinations of African American, Puerto Rican, white American and Italian groups quickly proliferated in New York City, Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island. The Shangri-Las emerged as a late, pop expression of this particular tradition of vocal harmonising, not from the band tradition which later became the norm.[1] They were singers, and their interests revolved around

[1] The singers categorised as ‘girl groups’ are to a large extent female doo-wop groups.

harmonising, like the groups that influenced them. The majority of the record industry identities that were involved with the Shangri-Las, especially before the group became famous, also had strong connections to this musical tradition.

Of these, George Goldner is of particular importance, and his role in the independent music industry in the 1950s has significant applications for an understanding of later events involving the Shangri-Las. Goldner was one of the partners that established the Red Bird record label in 1964, on which the bulk of the Shangri-Las' material was released. Goldner had a deep understanding for and love of the music he worked with, recorded and released. Unfortunately, his business dealings and chronic gambling also facilitated the involvement of unscrupulous of music industry and mafia figures, particularly Morris Levy, owner of the Roulette record label. Goldner's actions would have devastating consequences for the young artists on his rosters, and this is illustrated by his involvement with Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, who became instant stars in 1956 when their single "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" rocketed to Number One. Although Goldner cannot be held solely responsible for the horrific aftermath of their success, their case demonstrates the manner in which talented, vulnerable, impoverished teenagers were easy fodder for a ruthless and exploitative industry. These events function as an important antecedent and valuable context for what transpired later with the Shangri-Las.

Queens

Queens was created in 1683 as a county of the province of New York.[2] It was a predominantly agricultural economy until late in the nineteenth century, when industries, particularly heavily polluting ones, began to

[2] Jeffrey A. Kroessler, *Building Queens: The Urbanization of New York's Largest Borough*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, City University of New York, 1991, p. 7; see also Kenneth T. Jackson, 'Introduction,' in Claudia Gryvatz Copquin and Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Neighbourhoods of Queens*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. xxi-xxvii.

relocate there from Manhattan.[3] The opening of the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) in 1861 led to the establishment of suburbs along its route, including Queens Village, Richmond Hill and Flushing, which were an easy commute (by rail and ferry) to the business districts of New York City.[4] In the early decades of the twentieth century, urban expansion of Queens took place at a rapid rate, and the opening in 1909 of the Queensboro Bridge, which provided a direct link between Queens and Manhattan, further hastened this development. By 1929 the population of Queens had grown by 750 percent, and exceeded a million inhabitants.[5] Many new suburban developments were established; some, like Jackson Heights and Sunnyside Gardens, were planned as middle-class white collar suburbs.[6] The majority of the suburban housing developments, however, were intended for working families of modest means, like those built in Astoria, Sunnyside and Woodside by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1922, whose aim was to 'build healthy homes for working class families and realize a profit at the same time.'[7]

The expansion of Queens continued apace during the inter-war period.[8] As demand for affordable housing increased, particularly after World War II, Queens enjoyed a reputation for affordable, family-oriented housing in a 'pastoral environment.'[9] In October, 1948, Carol Taylor, journalist for *World Telegram*, wrote:

> Ten miles as the crow flies from the Manhattan maze of vertical dwellings...is a street named Utopia. It is a street of pretty, one-family houses, of backyard tomato patches and front yard flower gardens, of television sets in the living room and automobiles in the garages.

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[3] For a detailed examination of the early agricultural history of Queens, see Kroessler, *Building Queens,* pp. 7-39; for the relocation of industry, see pp. 184-9.
[4] Jeffrey A. Kroessler, 'Suburban Growth, Urban Style and Patterns of Growth in the Borough of Queens,' in *Long Island: The Suburban Experience*, ed. Barbara M. Kelly, Interlaken NY: Heart of the Lakes, 1990, p. 25.
[5] Kroessler, *Building Queens,* pp. iv-v, 2-3, and for a more detailed discussion of the rapid urbanisation of Queens and its context, pp. 230-385; see also Sylvie Murray, *Suburban Citizens: Domesticity and Community Politics in Queens, New York, 1945-1960*, Ph.D. Dissertation, New Haven: Yale University, 1994, pp. 15-16.
[6] Kroessler, 'Suburban Growth,' p. 31.
[7] Kroessler, 'Suburban Growth,' pp. 32-3.
[8] Murray, pp. 18-22.
[9] Murray, p. 26.

> This is Utopia Parkway, in Bayside, Queens, the borough of homes.
>
> Less than two decades ago, the section was farmland. It is still reminiscent of open fields ablaze with black-eyed Susans; of crickets chirping at dusk and woodpeckers a-pecking in the morning.[10]

Taylor consciously contrasted Manhattan's 'maze of vertical dwellings' with (horizontal) 'backyard tomato patches' and land 'reminiscent of open fields,' portraying an ideal, verdant paradise for families.[11]

For many, escaping overcrowded neighbourhoods in Brooklyn and Manhattan, the opportunities afforded by a house in Queens were irresistible, as well as economically viable. This certainly the case for the for the family of future engineer Henry Petroski,[12] who moved from Park Slope, Brooklyn to Cambria Heights, Queens, in 1954, when he was twelve. In his memoir *Paperboy*, Petroski related that

> We traded a world of curbs, sidewalks and stoops for one of driveways, lawns and porches...On the drive from the old to the new house, my father repeated what he had been saying for weeks: that we were moving up in the world. We were leaving behind an icebox for a refrigerator, a bathtub for a shower, a party line for a private phone, the subway and trolleys for buses and a car.[13]

For Petroski's father, a piece of the spacious suburban idyll that was Queens meant also the attainment of a middle class identity, 'moving up in the world.' Some of the more upmarket suburbs in Queens, like Kew Gardens, advertised this a little more forthrightly:

> 'a most charming community both as to architecture and personnel...completely safeguarded by beneficial restrictions and by its physical surroundings. These protect it permanently from any possible future contact with undesirable neighbourhoods.'[14]

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[10] Carol Taylor, 'Queens has a street named Utopia,' *World Telegram*, 14 October, 1948, quoted in Murray, p. 27.
[11] For a detailed discussion of Queens as an idyllic, affordable place to raise a family, see Murray, pp. 26-34.
[12] For Petroski's career and publications, see http://www.cee.duke.edu/fds/pratt/cee/faculty/petroski (accessed 11 April, 2010).
[13] Henry Petroski, *Paperboy: Confessions of a Future Engineer*, New York: Vintage, 2002, p. 3; see also Copquin and Jackson, p. 21
[14] Quoted in Kroessler, 'Suburban Growth,' p. 29.

This suburb, said the advertisement, was, and would remain, homogeneous. In other words, like many others in Queens, Kew Gardens was a white suburb. In her study of community politics in postwar Queens, Sylvie Murray noted that, for many grassroots neighbourhood activists, 'the defence of a segregated home was central to forging a middle class identity.'[15] Suburbs were consciously constructed quite literally along racial lines by restrictive covenants, which were in use throughout the country.[16] As George Lipsitz explained,

> Between 1924 and 1950 realtors throughout the United States subscribed to a national code that bound them to the view that "a realtor should never be instrumental in introducing to a neighbourhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individual whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in the neighbourhood." [17]

In Queens, parts of Flushing and Jamaica were home to growing African American communities, with active NAACP members and community organisations that promoted 'brotherhood' and inter-cultural understanding.[18] St. Albans, which bordered Cambria Heights, had been a predominantly middle class African American suburb since the 1940s, and its prestigious Addisleigh Park enclave was home to many musicians, including Fats Waller and James Brown. This will be discussed in more detail shortly.[19] These suburbs were important exceptions, however,

> as late as 1957, New York City's special census of population revealed that, of all the boroughs of New York City, Queens had the largest proportion of all-white census tracts (61 percent, as compared to Manhattan, which had the lowest proportion with 8 percent).[20]

Throughout the 1950s, Queens remained a predominantly white borough.

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[15] Murray, p. 42.
[16] Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long as They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000; Kevin Fox Gotham, *Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience 1900-2000*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2002; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race And Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, esp. pp. 33-88.
[17] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006, p. 26, see also pp. 24-33.
[18] See Murray, pp. 163-180.
[19] Copquin and Jackson, p. 193.
[20] Murray, pp. 23-4.

In his 1947 study of restrictive covenants in the New York area, John Dean found that 'the race clause is becoming customary among restrictive covenants today,' and the larger the housing development, the greater the likelihood that a racially restrictive covenant would be applied.[21] Furthermore, over the course of his research,

> the influence of the Federal Housing Administration on race restrictions began to stand out with embarrassing clarity. Covenants with those special building and occupancy restrictions associated with the FHA house almost invariably included a race clause.[22]

In New York, such clauses aimed to restrict both ownership *and* occupancy, and were aimed 'primarily at Negroes.' The following wording was typical:

> 'Said [premises] shall be maintained for the use and occupancy of persons of the Caucasian race, and no race or nationality other than those for whom the premises are intended shall use or occupy any building or lot.'

Exceptions were allowed in the case of domestics and servants.[23] Further out past Queens, the first Levittown development at Hicksville, Long Island, employed racially restrictive policies even more blatantly, with its founder, William Levitt, famously refusing to sell to African Americans. This was, Levitt argued,

> 'not a matter of prejudice, but one of business...if we sell one house to a Negro family, then 90 to 95 percent of our white customers will not buy into the community.'[24]

Sylvie Murray found that, for many members of the community groups she examined, protecting the value of their investment was of paramount importance, and that maintaining a racially homogeneous neighbourhood was perceived to be integral to this.[25] Such groups could and did exert considerable pressure on tenants. As Stephen Grant Meyer observed, racially restrictive housing covenants

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[21] John P. Dean, 'Only Caucasian: A Study of Race Covenants,' *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics*, 23:4 (1947), pp. 429-30. His study covered the counties of Queens, Nassau and Southern Westchester.
[22] Dean, p. 430.
[23] Dean, pp. 430-32.
[24] Quoted in Ellen K. Feder, *Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 30; on Levittown and whiteness, see also pp. 25-44.
[25] Murray, pp. 83-88.

> reflected a popular unwillingness on the part of whites to have African Americans living in their midst. Before the states and cities enacted restrictive zoning statutes and real estate boards and government agencies developed policies to maintain residential segregation, white homeowners used violence and intimidation to scare blacks out of white neighborhoods.[26]

William Durham was the first African American to move into Cambria Heights in 1960. He recalled rocks thrown at his windows, and crosses burnt on his lawn by white neighbours protesting the presence of him and his family in the suburb.[27] This was despite the Supreme Court declaring restrictive covenants unconstitutional in 1948, an indication that community sentiment often lagged well behind the law.[28]

The early inhabitants of Cambria Heights were mainly of Italian, German and Irish descent, many coming from overcrowded neighbourhoods in Manhattan and Brooklyn.[29] In 1950, 16 percent of the white residents of Queens had been born in another country, and of these the highest percentage (23.8) was German.[30] Herman Ganser was born on 2 May, 1909.[31] He was of Austrian (Viennese) descent, worked as a mechanical engineer, and married Rita Conrad (b. 18 November, 1915) in Manhattan on June 14, 1936.[32] They lived for a time in Laurelton, Queens, an area with a large Jewish population, but settled in nearby Cambria Heights on 219th Street.[33] Rita and Herman Ganser had five children – two boys, Robert and Fred; and three girls – Gail, and twins Mary Ann and

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[26] Meyer, pp. 7-8; see also David Theo Goldberg, '"Polluting the Body Politic": Racist Discourse and Urban Location,' in Malcolm Cross and Michael Keith, *Racism, the City and the State*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 45-60, esp. pp. 51-2.
[27] Copquin and Jackson, p. 21.
[28] See Sugrue, esp. pp. 209-229; Olivia Frost, 'The Housing Market in Queens,' *The Crisis*, 67:6 (June-July 1960), pp. 349-354.
[29] Copquin and Jackson, p. 21; see also Janet E. Lieberman and Richard K. Lieberman, *City Limits: A Social History of Queens*, Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1983.
[30] Murray, p. 25, n. 20.
[31] *Social Security Death Index*, entry for Herman Ganser, http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/ssdi.cgi (accessed 7 June, 2009).
[32] *German Genealogy Group, NYC Groom's Index* entry for Herman Ganser, http://www.germangenealogygroup.com/NYCmarriageresults.asp?soundex=&kind=exact&Esurname=ganser&Efirst=herman&CertNbr=12974+&StartYear=&EndYear=&County=Manhattan&B1=Submit (accessed 7 June, 2009); 'Mary Ann Ganser, Singer, Dies at 22,' *Long Island Press*, March 18, 1970, p. 47.
[33] 'Mary Ann Ganser, Singer, Dies at 22'; *New York City Phone Directory 1964-5: Queens*, p. 441; Phil Milstein, interview with Robert Ganser, 14 October, 2001.

Marguerite, born in Laurelton on February 4, 1948.[34] The twins attended Sacred Heart Catholic School, located nearby on 221st Street, graduating after completing eighth grade in 1962.[35] After this, they attended Andrew Jackson High School in Cambria Heights.

Mary Ann and Marguerite's musical talent manifested itself early, and both had piano lessons, as well as some training in theory and composition.[36] According to their brother Robert, both twins had a natural, innate musicality and 'ear' that he attributed to their mother Rita.[37] Rita Ganser was a pianist, and, when she was young, a sometime nightclub singer who would 'work around in small lounges,' as she put it.[38] She remembered that 'in those days they didn't have...microphones,' and commented,

> now if I had had a mike, I would have probably done a little better, but of course I didn't...I had to sing a couple of times with a megaphone, believe it or not![39]

Rita particularly praised her daughter Mary Ann's musical talent, noting that she was an accomplished guitarist in addition to her considerable abilities as a singer. Marguerite (Marge) had also written some songs, and the twins sang and harmonised together.[40]

Marge and Mary Ann Ganser knew of sisters Mary and Betty Weiss, as they lived close by on 220th Street.[41] Mary, born at Jamaica Hospital in Jamaica, Queens in 1949, was the youngest of three Weiss siblings; sister Elizabeth (Betty/Liz) was two years older, brother George eight

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[34] 'Mary Ann Ganser, Singer, Dies at 22'; Jeremy Simmonds, *The Encyclopedia of Dead Rock Stars: Heroin, Handguns, and Ham Sandwiches*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008, p. 33.
[35] John Grecco, J., *Out in the Streets: the Story of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 22 February, 2010).
[36] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 8 June, 2009). According to Grecco, they had lessons for seven years.
[37] Milstein, interview with Robert Ganser.
[38] Phil Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser, 14 October, 2001; see also Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 8 June, 2009). Rita Ganser died in 2004.
[39] Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser.
[40] Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser.
[41] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 8 June, 2009).

years Mary's senior.[42] The Cambria Heights neighbourhood they shared with the Gansers was, as she put it, 'middle to low-middle class' with 'a lot of kids.'[43] According to Henry Petroski,

> Cambria Heights in 1954 was a community of upwardly mobile, or at least upwardly striving, families, most of whom did not require or expect their children to work to earn money.[44]

If this was the case, the Weiss family were poorer than the average family in their neighbourhood. Mary described the Weiss's childhood and upbringing as 'difficult':

> 'My father died six weeks after I was born,' she says. 'He worked for the phone company and they found him dangling from a pole. People who die young never believe in insurance. We had to raise my mother.'[45]

The effect of this death, which in the absence of evidence to the contrary must be presumed an accident, was devastating. Weiss commented further that

> I never knew him. This actually bothered me more than anyone knows. My father did not believe in insurance, intense poverty ensued for years to come. To men out there that think they are in charge of only supporting your children you are just so wrong. My father was a self taught person, an excellent photographer, and an exceptional builder. I found a complete set of blue prints in my mom's attic, after she died. He designed and built the first house they ever lived in, from the ground up.[46]

Their mother 'had periodic jobs on occasion, but nothing really substantial.'[47] The family was 'pretty poor' and struggled to make ends meet, a situation Mary later described as 'a hell of a way to grow up.'[48]

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[42] Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[43] Terry Gross, 'Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game*', interview for Fresh Air on NPR (National Public Radio), 6 March, 2007, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[44] Petroski, p. 71.
[45] Iain Aitch, 'The Leader's Back,' *The Telegraph*, 14 April, 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3664489/The-Leaders-back.html (accessed 1 July, 2010).
[46] 'In What Ways Did Your Father Influence Your Life? : Mary Weiss,' *Growing Bolder*, 13 June, 2008, http://growingbolder.com/thoughtleaders/in-what-ways-did-your-father-156322.html (accessed 6 October, 2010).
[47] Gross, 'Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game,* http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009).

For a while, all four sisters attended Andrew Jackson High School, located close by on 116th Avenue in Cambria Heights.[49] Henry Petroski remembered that, as he put it, 'the school and its environs had a questionable reputation':

> It would have been very convenient for me to walk to the school or even to ride my bike and then go to the [*Long Island*] *Press* office [where he had a paper route] after school. According to my mother, however, Jackson was a school where there were a lot of gangs and where a lot of gang fighting went on. I had heard about and on occasion seen at the *Press* office brass knuckles, chains, zip guns, and switch blade knives, but I had never seen any of them used in a fight.[50]

John Grecco, who also grew up in Queens, made the point that a degree of toughness and street-wisdom was necessary growing up in the neighbourhood:

> It was not uncommon to have small groups of kids, some gangs and some just neighborhood kids, dividing up the blocks into territories...nothing as drastic by today's standards, but still enough that you would want to stand up and call anyone's bluff.[51]

Henry Petroski did not attend Andrew Jackson – his parents chose to send him to Holy Cross High School, which was still under construction but taking enrolments for its first classes, for the fall of 1955. Petroski commented further that

> Jackson was also attended by many black kids from St. Albans, and we were not used to going to school with them. Just as they did not deliver the *Press* out of our circulation office, so blacks did not attend Sacred Heart with us. Though we cheered for Jackie Robinson and other blacks who

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[48] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 14 October, 2010); Kurt Loder, 'Where Are They Now? The Shangri-Las,' *Rolling Stone*, 12 September, 1985, p. 50; see also Ken Emerson, *Always Magic in the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era*, New York: Viking, 2005, pp. 225-6.

[49] For a former student's description, photos and anecdotes see Lee Somerstein, 'The Corner,' *LeeZard on Life - Commentary; Humor; Politics; Life; People*, 2005, http://leezardonlife.blogspot.com/2008/12/corner.html (accessed 25 August, 2010).

[50] Petroski, pp. 127-8.

[51] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 18 April, 2010).

followed him into baseball, dark-skinned people were virtually unknown to us on a personal level.[52]

This observation seems perfectly in keeping with the kind of deliberately constructed homogeneous white neighbourhood ideology that characterised Cambria Heights, and much of Queens. It is no coincidence that Petroski's mother associated Andrew Jackson High School with gangs and violence, as these were perceived to be a product of 'lower class' culture and 'undesirable' neighbourhoods, which, as we have seen, were inextricably linked to race.[53] Andrew Jackson High was located very near the border of Cambria Heights and St. Albans, one of the few neighbourhoods in Queens with a predominantly African-American population.

St. Albans' prestigious Addisleigh Park enclave featured stately free-standing neo-Tudor style houses on large allotments, and the suburb was marketed as an elegant 'English'-style development.[54] It was bound by racially restrictive covenants until Henry Neely and his wife, despite court action against them, sold their house to an African American in 1942.[55] This set in motion an uneasy process of white flight which would see Addisleigh Park, after another major court case in 1947, transformed into a suburban haven for African Americans who could afford to buy their way out of the overcrowded neighbourhoods, particularly in Harlem and Brooklyn, to which African Americans were confined.[56] Departing white families seized the chance to inflate their profits by demanding higher prices, knowing that their prospective buyers were subject to severely

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[52] Petroski, p. 128.
[53] Walter B. Miller, 'Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency,' *Journal of Social Issues* 14:3 (1958), pp. 5-19.
[54] *Addisleigh Park: Report Prepared by Jane Cowan for the Historic Districts Council*, Spring 2008, http://www.hdc.org/Addisleigh_Park_Report.pdf (accessed 27 August, 2010), pp. 5-15; see also Robert A.M. Stern and John Montague Massengale, *The Anglo American Suburb*, London & New York, N.Y.: Architectural Design; distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1981.
[55] For details of the court proceedings, see *Addisleigh Park: Report Prepared by Jane Cowan*, pp. 15-18.
[56] See Andrew Weise, '"The House I Live In": Race, Class and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States', Kevin Michael Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 99-119, esp. pp. 105-110; *Addisleigh Park: Report Prepared by Jane Cowan*, pp. 18-21.

restricted buying options and would have little choice but to pay.[57] Those could afford to included Count Basie, who relocated to Addisleigh Park from Harlem in 1946; Cab Calloway recommended the neighbourhood to Lena Horne, who moved there in 1946.[58] Others included Fats Waller, whose home contained a built-in Hammond organ, Milt Hinton, John Coltrane, and James Brown.[59] This vibrant musical neighbourhood was a mile or two away from the Ganser and Weiss sisters. In fact, Mary would later comment that

> We worked with James [Brown] a few times. I was at his house once. He lived in St. Albans, the next town over from Cambria Heights. He had 'JB' on the gate. We were just BS'ing there, basically. I liked him.[60]

Mary also remembered visiting gospel tents in St. Albans.[61] These were large tents erected to function as portable churches, in order to accommodate the revival meetings of travelling evangelists. Music was an integral component of the services. In 1951, a case involving a gospel tent in West Harlem was reported in the *New York Times* due to noise complaints from nearby residents. They described

> gospel meetings [which] were the source of "singing, screaming, organ playing, screeching, and hand-clapping in unison, all interspersed with blood-curdling screams that pierce the air."[62]

The complainant was describing this music in pejorative terms in order to emphasise its alleged disturbance, and it was likely that this was also a conflict between an older established family and more recent Southern arrivals.[63] Despite this, it is clear that the music emanating from this gospel tent was intensely devotional, loud, and passionate. As noted

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[57] *Addisleigh Park: Report Prepared by Jane Cowan*, p. 21.
[58] *Addisleigh Park: Report Prepared by Jane Cowan,* p. 21-2; James Gavin, *Stormy Weather: the Life of Lena Horne*, New York: Atria Books, 2009, p. 184.
[59] Copquin and Jackson, p. 193. On jazz and jazz musicians in Queens, see Nat Hentoff, *At the Jazz Band Ball: Sixty Years on the Jazz Scene*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, pp. 133-8.
[60] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/03.html (accessed 28 July, 2009).
[61] Aileen Jacobson, 'Mary Weiss is Trying to Get Back in the Rocker Pack,' *Los Angeles Times*, 6 April, 2007, http://articles.latimes.com/2007/apr/06/entertainment/et-weiss6 (accessed 7 October, 2010).
[62] 'Gospel Tent's "Screaming" Services Drive Neighbours to Court Protest,' *New York Times*, 11 September, 1951, p. 31.
[63] See Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, pp. 155-192.

earlier, African American families began moving into Cambria Heights in 1960, beginning with William Durham. School photographs from PS [Public School] 147, one of the local public grammar schools in Cambria Heights, show an increasing proportion of African American students from about 1960 on.[64] An anonymous poster on the *Gotham Center for New York City History* discussion board remembered moving into Cambria Heights:

> I lived at 118-45 204th Street, between 118th & 119th Avenues. When my family moved there in 1963, we were the first black family on the block. Our next door neighbors were the named Lucas. They owned a dry cleaning shop on Farmers Blvd. In less than 10 years after we moved in it seemed like all of the white people were gone...except the Lucas'. They loved their home and were determined to stay regardless of who else moved into the neighborhood. Mr Lucas had a train set up on a platform that filled his entire basement. He used to always have the neighborhood kids over to see all of his different trains. By 1960s standards that was very cool.[65]

All this suggests that by the time the Weiss and Ganser sisters were approaching high-school age, their neighbourhood was becoming increasingly, if tensely, integrated.

For Mary Weiss, music was both a refuge and outlet. She remembered that

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[64] See *Cambria Heights, NY in the 50s and 60s* Facebook group page, which contains, at this point, 129 publicly accessible photographs. These include school photographs dating from the late 1950s and early 1960s, mainly from PS [Public School] 147, now known as Ronald McNair School. See #68, Class 7-1, 1960: http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=30411859&o=all&op=1&view=all&subj=47261667831&aid=-1&id=1581763223&oid=47261667831&fbid=1192716229684#!/photo.php?pid=2043195&o=all&op=1&view=all&subj=47261667831&aid=-1&id=531070134&oid=47261667831&fbid=59842970134 (accessed 25 August, 2010); and # 29, 6th Grade, from 1962 http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=30411859&o=all&op=1&view=all&subj=47261667831&aid=-1&id=1581763223&oid=47261667831&fbid=1192716229684#!/photo.php?pid=4648970&o=all&op=1&view=all&subj=47261667831&aid=-1&id=634877576&oid=47261667831&fbid=338550387576 (accessed 25 August, 2010). See also #102, #108, #113, #114 and #120. For Lee Somerstein's account of the vilification he received at PS 147 from a particularly anti-Semitic teacher, see http://leezardonlife.blogspot.com/2009/02/far-from-seventh-heaven.html (accessed 25 August, 2010).

[65] *Gotham Center for New York City History,* 23 March, 2007, http://www.gothamcenter.org/discussions/viewtopic.php?id=854&p=3 (accessed 23 August, 2010).

> I always kind of supported myself – it was a question of survival. And I always sang, I sang since I could talk.'[66]

As a child, harmonising vocal quartet the Ink Spots, who will be discussed more shortly, were a favourite. A little later, via older brother George's record collection, Mary was exposed to Elvis Presley, Neil Sedaka and the Everly Brothers, who she has regularly cited as a formative influence.[67] While in grammar school, Mary went on a school excursion to Freedomland, an American History-themed fun park in the Bronx, which had opened in 1960. Freedomland was the creation and brainchild of Cornelius Vanderbilt Wood, who had worked closely with Walt Disney on Disneyland until the pair had a dispute that resulted in Wood's dismissal from the company. In1962, in an attempt to bolster falling visitor numbers, Freedomland began featuring performances by celebrity artists in the newly built 'Moon Bowl,' which had '4000 seats and a 15,000-square foot dance floor.' In a season that ran from 27 May through September 9, 1962, 'big names' including Paul Anka, Xavier Cugat, Stan Kenton, Bobby Rydel, Benny Goodman, and the Everly Brothers were booked to play at Freedomland.[68] The Everly Brothers played there on 20 August, 1962, with, it seems, a young Mary Weiss in the audience.[69] She remembered being

> very influenced by the Everly Brothers...I think a lot of people were, more so than they've gotten credit for actually, because it's all there, just in those two parts, everything is there, if you're into harmony. I remember the first concert I ever saw was the Everly Brothers. I was in grammar school and I went to Freedomland and I saw them live, it was great.[70]

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[66] Loder, p. 50; see also Emerson, pp. 225-6.
[67] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[68] Milton Esterow, 'Summer Fetes Attracting Stars: Talent Converging on City in Version of the old Rush; Events at Randalls, Freedomland and Forest Hills Set,' *The New York Times*, 29 June, 1962, p. 13.
[69] 'Daily Events – 1962', http://www.history-of-rock.com/daily_events_1962.htm (accessed 7 October, 2010); Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[70] Suzi Quatro, 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08); Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 June, 2009). Good examples of the Everly Brothers' harmonising include

Chris Millius, who lived in Cambria Heights until 1962, remembered Mary Weiss singing the Everly Brothers' "Wake Up Little Susie" at a talent show at Sacred Heart, and that this 'was considered scandalous by the nuns.'[71] Taking inspiration from a variety of influences and drawn together by a love of music-making and singing, the Ganser and Weiss sisters 'climbed trees together and harmonized,' and were singing together in earnest by the time Mary was twelve.[72] According to Mary, song parts came together easily and naturally 'because we were all very much into harmony, so it kind of just fell into place by itself.'[73]

Doo Wop

The emphasis on harmony that is repeatedly evident in Mary Weiss's discussion of her early musical practice is significant. She noted, when discussing her early musical influences,

> 'When I was about 13 or 14 we hung out at a place called Ed's," she recalled. "There was a lot of street corner singing. I grew up hearing a lot of doo-wop.'[74]

'All I Have to Do is Dream' and 'Cathy's Clown,' from the Alma Cogan Show, 1961, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKn6h2x5IcY (accessed 14 June, 2009).

[71] See post by Chris Millius, on *Gotham Centre for New York City History* discussion board, 12 July, 2008, http://www.gothamcenter.org/discussions/viewtopic.php?pid=64340 (accessed 24 August, 2010). The lyrics of this song were considered to be suggestive when it was first released in 1957, and certainly would have raised eyebrows being performed by a young girl; see Sheila Whiteley's discussion of pre-pubescent 1950s star Brenda Lee in Sheila Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age And Gender*, London & New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 26-30. For a late 1950s clip of the Everly Brothers miming "Wake Up Little Susie," see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Icy84NQ9zXY (accessed 28 August, 2010). This Everly Brothers anecdote suggests that Mary Weiss attended Sacred Heart School, yet Mary has indicated that she attended a different grammar school to the Gansers: see Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 24 August, 2010). On the other hand, it is entirely possible that talent shows of this nature were open to neighbourhood children and teens.

[72] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll', http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08).

[73] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll', http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08).

[74] David Chiu, 'Cambria Heights Singer Returns to Music,' *Queens Chronicle*, 4 October, 2007, http://www.zwire.com/site/index.cfm?newsid=18884096&BRD=2731&PAG=461&dept_id=574995&rfi=8 (accessed 1 July, 2010).

Mary remembered that she, Liz and the Gansers sang together at each other's houses, in the playground, and in the street:

> The neighbourhood I grew up in, there were maybe 300 kids around the same age or in the same age bracket, and we used to sing on the street corner, all of us, so that's how we really got started.[75]

The tradition of *a cappella* vocal harmonising, or doo wop, as it came to be known, was, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, *the* teen music of New York City and Long Island. Noteworthy forerunners were The Mills Brothers, who formed in Ohio the 1920s, and were the first African American vocal group to achieve widespread commercial success with both black and white audiences. Significantly, when the group first began having hits in 1931, the members were teenagers, ranging in age from sixteen to twenty.[76] The Ink Spots followed in their footsteps, forming a few years later and having their first hit in 1939. With their emphasis on vocal harmonising and smooth ballads, the Ink Spots also achieved significant mainstream success, performing with Glenn Miller's Orchestra, appearing in movies and regularly breaking attendance records.[77] The Ink Spots were an important antecedent of the teenage vocal groups that formed in the late 1940s and 1950s, singing in a style that would later be known as doo wop.[78] Their popularity was such that a young Mary Weiss heard enough of their harmonising to cite them as an influence. And for

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[75] Gross, 'Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game,* http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009); Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 June, 2009).

[76] Jay Warner, *American Singing Groups: A History From 1940s to Today*, Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2006, pp. 44-5.

[77] Warner, pp. 38-9.

[78] The *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for 'Doo Wop' lists the earliest occurrence as a review of "Kiss Me Again and Again" by the De Villes, in *Billboard*, 5 May, 1958, p. 118. The B-side of this single was called "Do Wop," of which the reviewer noted: 'Male lead shouts a fair chorus with "do wop" rhythm backing by the group.' This is descriptive: the reviewer is describing a literal backing of singers singing the nonsense syllables 'do wop do wop,' so the term is not being used to refer to a genre. Like 'girl group,' 'doo wop' was applied retrospectively as a stylistic descriptor, and it seems largely untraceable before 1969: see Anthony J. Gribin and Matthew M. Schiff, *Doo-Wop: The Forgotten Third of Rock 'n' Roll*, Iola WI: Krause, 1992, p. 14. Gribin and Schiff also note that doo wop 'didn't have a name until its popularity had already waned. It was never considered as a separate entity in its heyday, being subsumed under the general categories of rock 'n' roll, rhythm and blues, '50s music or oldies (after 1960).' See also Jeffrey Melnick, '"Story Untold": The Black Men and White Sounds of Doo-Wop,' in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill, New York and London: New York University Press, 1997, p. 137.

young African American teenagers, the influence of the Ink Spots was not only stylistic – it demonstrated that an African American group in America could make it big and be a commercial success. For poor adolescents looking at a bleak and severely racially restricted future, this possibility was, needless to say, an alluring one.[79]

Such adolescents were extremely vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous music industry operators, and there are countless tales of the manipulation and abuse of teenagers and young people in the music industry that extend well beyond the 1950s and 60s. As Grace Palladino observed,

> Rock 'n' roll offered teenagers opportunities, but it did not provide protection or guarantee success. As countless would-be stars learned the hard way, desire and ambition counted for very little unless teenagers had the discipline to work hard and learn the industry's ropes, something they were rarely willing to do when visions of easy money and celebrity danced in their heads.[80]

Implicit in this is the notion that 'work[ing] hard' and learning the 'industry's ropes' could somehow enable high school kids to transcend the machinations of ruthless industry professionals who had a vested interest in making sure that they did not. Furthermore, the exploitation of artists was enshrined legally in standard music industry contracts, which were specifically constructed to direct revenue away from the artist.[81] The experiences of groups like the Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, which will be detailed shortly, have ensured that it is *now* common knowledge not to sign contracts without legal advice, but this was not the case in 1956. Furthermore, prevailing racial codes make the presumption patently ludicrous that music attorneys would be even remotely accessible, financially or otherwise, to impoverished African American adolescents in

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[79] Gribin and Schiff, p. 25; Mike Evans, *NYC Rock*, London: Sanctuary, 2003, pp. 16-19; Philip Groia, *They All Sang on the Corner: A Second Look at New York City's Rhythm and Blues Vocal Groups*, West Hempstead NY: Phillie Dee, 1983, pp. 28-9.
[80] Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History*, New York: Basic Books, 1996, p. 142.
[81] See discussion of recording contracts by Hank Bordowitz, *Dirty Little Secrets of the Record Business: Why So Much Music You Hear Sucks*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006, pp. 259-70.

Harlem. Even in cases where attorneys where accessible, this was not automatically advantageous; Katherine Anderson of the Marvelettes recalled that

> My mother did have a copy of the contract and she had gotten together with a couple of the other parents and did try to find an attorney that could help them in regards to the contract, but no one [in Inkster] was aware of entertainment and entertainment law...there was no such thing as an entertainment lawyer.[82]

The actions of unscrupulous operators in a largely unregulated industry were allowed to remain unchecked, and the financial rewards such opportunities presented were enjoyed by label managers at the expense of their vulnerable teenaged performers.

Doo wop had its roots in African American ghettos, a product of the great postwar northern migration of African Americans to industrial centres like Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.[83] Restrictive covenants, like those effective in Queens, were operative across America, confined African Americans to specific areas of cities and were integral to the creation of overcrowding and poverty.[84] Impoverished teenagers, many still in school, some with training in the gospel vocal traditions of harmonising and call-and-response, as well as exposure to rhythm and blues, sang. Typically, this took place in the street, getting them out of their overcrowded tenement apartments and away from their parents.[85] This was a common practice in New York, especially in African-American and Puerto Rican neighbourhoods:

> Street-corner talent-spotting became the normal way for a group to obtain a record contract. An audition from the guy who crossed the road to listen might mean gifts for all the folks and a shiny Cadillac. As groups proliferated the age at which they turned professional took a nosedive. They called

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[82] Marc Taylor, *The Original Marvelettes: Motown's Mystery Girl Group*, Aloiv, 2004, pp. 23-25.
[83] Gribin and Schiff, p. 24.
[84] Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 35; on overcrowding and the racial politics of space, see Goldberg, pp. 51-54.
[85] Gribin and Schiff, p. 25.

> themselves The Classmates, The Juniors, The Sixteens, establishing a solidarity between themselves and their audience.[86]

Doo wop groups generally consisted of four or five members with 'wide ranging voices' singing in group harmony. Usually this was some configuration of lead, first tenor (sometimes falsetto), second tenor, baritone and bass. No expensive instruments were required; voices cost nothing. Rhythm came from handclaps, finger snaps, or punctuating bass singing (bom bom bom BOM, for example).[87]

In the main, doo wop was sung by teenagers for teenagers, and often written by them too. Lyrics tended to be uncomplicated and repetitive, and focussed almost solely on teenage concerns – the confusion and longing of love and its various entanglements. Doo wop commentators Gribin and Schiff observed that

> Taken together, the lyrics and melodies of doo-wop songs reach the hormones and emotions but do not offer much in the way of intellectual stimulation.[88]

Doo wop almost always employed nonsense syllables, like ooo-wah, shoo-wop, mmm-bop and similar variations, which provided a vehicle for the harmonic vocalising accompaniments of the other members around the lead singer.[89] In 1954, two significant doo wop releases, "Gee" by the Crows, and "Sh-Boom" by the Chords, were 'crossover' hits on the pop as well as R&B charts.[90] In early 1955, reviewing the previous year in music, *Billboard* ran several articles in a section entitled 'Spotlight on Rhythm and Blues: Talent, Tunes and Records.' It was noted that

> the most important story in the r.&b. field last year was its new-found sales versatility, with r.&b. disks breaking into the pop market with amazing regularity thruout (sic) 1954,

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[86] Bill Millar, 'Frankie Lymon: Why Do Fools Fall in Love?' *Pye Records*, 1972, reproduced by http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=779 (accessed 24 April, 2010).
[87] Gribin and Schiff, pp. 17, 20, 25.
[88] Gribin and Schiff, p. 21.
[89] Gribin and Schiff, p. 14.
[90] Melnick, p. 137; Groia, pp. 84-5.

and that 'the demand for the platters in the pop field was mainly sparked by teen-agers.'[91] In addition to the spending power of teenagers, this also acknowledged that white teens (the 'pop' market) were buying records by black ('r.&b.') artists. The power of radio was central to these developments, as Susan Douglas observed,

> whites themselves – the DJs, the performers, and their fans – embraced a hybridity that confounded and defied the existing racial order. And it was precisely because of radio's invisibility that such hybridizations could flourish.[92]

In many ways, George Goldner's approach to releasing records epitomised this idea of hybridity.

George Goldner, Frankie Lymon and Artie Ripp

Teenage rock and roll / rhythm and blues singing, or doo wop as it would later be known, was firmly put on the national map with a record released early in 1956 by a group of Harlem high school students. When *Billboard* reviewed "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" by Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, in February, 1956, the writer noted that it was 'a hot new disk' that 'could easily break pop.'[93] It did, reaching #1 on the R&B charts, #6 on the pop charts, and #1 in England.[94] It was released on the Gee label, which was started, owned, and managed by George Goldner. Goldner was born in New York City in 1918, and worked briefly in the garment industry before opening a chain of dance halls. He became increasingly fascinated with Latin music, partly due to the influence of his wife Gracie, who was Puerto Rican.[95] Goldner established Tico Records in 1948 as a means to release music in the United States by Latin stars Tito Puente and Machito, among others. In 1953 he began releasing rhythm and blues

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[91] June Bundy, 'R&B Disks Sock Pop Market; Major Firms Jump into Ring', *Billboard*, 29 January, 1955, p. 56.
[92] Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*, Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. 222.
[93] 'The Billboard Music Popularity Charts, Rhythm & Blues, Review Spotlight on…Records: The Teenagers-Frankie Lymon,' *Billboard*, 4 February, 1956, p. 58.
[94] Warner, p. 244.
[95] Stuffed Animal, 'Mambo Gee Gee: The Story of George Goldner and Tico Records, Part One' http://www.spectropop.com/tico/TICOpart1.htm (accessed 25 April, 2010).

records on his newly created Rama label, including the "Gee" by the Crows, which, as noted earlier, was one of the first doo wop songs to be a hit on the pop charts.[96] He named his next label Gee, after the Crows hit, and the second release on Gee was "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" by Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers.

"Why Do Fools Fall in Love" was an immediate, enormous hit, and significantly, Frankie Lymon, who was thirteen at the time, and George Goldner were credited as the authors.[97] Newspaper articles, concert bookings and television appearances speedily ensued. Fellow teenager Jimmy Merchant recalled that the first few months of 1956 were a whirlwind of performances, television appearances, record hops, photo-shoots newspaper and magazine interviews:

> They took us out of public school and by February we were in a private school, Quintano's School for Young Professionals, located in mid-town. When we were in town, we attended Quintano's. When we were out of town, we did correspondence and had a private tutor.[98]

As the Teenagers' popularity increased, so did demand for their public appearances. In a scenario that will become increasingly familiar as this study progresses, the Teenagers were 'pulled out on the road for strings of thirty, forty and even sixty one-night shows.' These tours were gruelling, chaotic, physically and emotionally dislocating, and largely unsupervised; this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. In mid-1957, while on tour in London, the group imploded amid mounting frustration that Lymon was being marketed with increasing prominence, and the other members marginalised. Matters came to a head when the rest of the

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[96] Stuffed Animal, 'Mambo Gee Gee: The Story of George Goldner and Tico Records, Part Two,' http://www.spectropop.com/tico/TICOpart2.htm (accessed 25 April, 2010.

[97] The Teenagers featuring Frankie Lymon, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" (Lymon/Goldner) b/w "My Girl," GEE 1002, 1956. See Charlie Horner, Pamela Horner, and Val Shively, *The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett Part Two: Richard Barrett and the Teenagers*, http://www.classicurbanharmony.net/Barrett%20Legacy%202%20copy%201.pdf (accessed 29 August, 2010), p. 3 for the original Gee pressing naming Lymon and Goldner as authors.

[98] Horner et al., *The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett Part Two*, pp. 3-4. Mary Weiss also attended Quintano's; this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

group found out that Lymon was in the process of recording a solo album, *Live at the London Palladium*. Their new manager, Morris Levy, apparently decided that the best way to solve the dissension was for Lymon to leave the group and pursue a solo career.[99]

How Morris Levy came to be managing Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers can be traced to his relationship with George Goldner. As noted earlier, Goldner established a series of pioneering Latin and rhythm and blues labels, including Gee, to which Lymon and the Teenagers were signed. In 1956, also Goldner co-founded the Roulette label with Levy. However, early in 1957, *Billboard* announced that

> George Goldner has sold his interests in the Roulette, Rama, Gee and Tico labels outright to the Morris Levy combine and has resigned from his artist and repertoire duties with Rama, Gee and Tico.[100]

In addition to owning a record label, Morris Levy owned the famous Manhattan jazz club Birdland. His ties to the mafia and close involvement with the Genovese crime family were something of an open secret, and Levy regularly engaged in extortion, and employed mafia figures as brutal enforcers.[101] What the *Billboard* article neglected to mention, not surprisingly, was that Goldner was a chronic gambler (horse racing) and had been in the habit of borrowing funds from Levy to cover his often crippling debts. The mass label sell-off by Goldner was one of Levy's methods of debt recovery.[102] Another was the false attribution of songwriting credits, as we shall see shortly. If the song was in question was a hit, these could be incredibly lucrative, and were far more substantial than the performance royalties received by the artist(s).[103]

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[99] Horner et al., *The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett Part Two*, pp. 7-8; Art Peters, 'Comeback of a Child Star,' *Ebony*, January 1967, pp. 46, 48.
[100] 'Goldner Sells Out to Levy; Stays in Field,' *Billboard* 6 April, 1957, pp. 16, 44.
[101] Fredric Dannen, *Hit Men: Power Brokers and Fast Money Inside the Music Business*, London: Helter Skelter, 2003, pp. 31-57; Justine Picardie and Dorothy Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers of Rock and Roll,* Rev. edn.; London: Fourth Estate, 1993, pp. 41-47. Morris Levy and Gaetano Vastola (a mobster from the DeCavelcante family who had financial interests in the Roulette label) were both indicted by a federal grand jury for extortion in 1986: see 'N.J. Jury Issues Indictments in Cutout Probes,' *Billboard* 4 October, 1986, pp. 1, 91.
[102] Dannen, pp. 40-41.
[103] Bordowitz, pp. 259-70.

Frankie Lymon, and the rest of the Teenagers, through no fault of their own, were caught in the middle of all this. Levy acquired Lymon as part of his buyout of Goldner's Gee label, which took place in April, 1957, while the Lymon and Teenagers were in London. Levy already had Lymon working on *Live at the London Palladium*, which was issued on his label, Roulette, later in 1957. Since Lymon was clearly a phenomenal talent, and was credited as the writer of "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," Lymon was Levy's primary concern. It is likely that the impetus for Lymon's departure from the Teenagers came from Levy; Lymon recalled in 1967 that

> At that time, it was felt that we could make twice as much money with two separate and independent acts as we could with one.[104]

The Teenagers kept recording for Goldner without Lymon. After selling his labels to Levy, Goldner then established two new ones, End, and Gone, and the Teenagers released two singles on End in 1960.[105] Neither the Teenagers nor Lymon were able to recapture separately the success they had achieved together, and after some brief success, Lymon's career foundered. With the benefit of hindsight, it is not difficult to comprehend that Lymon's impoverished childhood, characterised by 'reefers' and 'hustling prostitutes,' would render him, barely into his teens, completely ill-equipped to handle the pressures that came with having a nationwide hit, and vulnerable in the extreme. He recalled later that

> 'In the neighbourhood where I lived, there was no time to be a child. There were five children in my family, and my folks had to scuffle to make ends meet. My father was a truck driver and my mother was a domestic in white folks' homes. While most kids my age were playing stick ball and marbles, I

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[104] Peters, p. 48; Charlie Horner, Pamela Horner and Val Shively, *The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett Part Five: The Lewis Lymon and Jimmy Castor Stories*, http://www.classicurbanharmony.net/Barrett%20Legacy%205%20copy%201.pdf (accessed 30 August, 2010), p. 3; the Teenagers were described as 'reeling from the loss of Frankie Lymon going solo.'

[105] The first album produced and released by Goldner on End, in October 1958, was by the Chantels, whose hit "Maybe" was later covered by the Shangri-Las. See http://www.bsnpubs.com/roulette/end.html (accessed 14 October, 2010) for a brief biography of George Goldner, and discographies for Tico, Gee, Rama, Gone and End Records (accessed 19 June, 2009).

> was working in the corner grocery store carrying orders to help pay the rent.'[106]

While partying with other musicians, in all likelihood after a show and/or on tour, he was introduced to heroin in 1958 at the age of fifteen, and quickly developed a chronic addiction. He spent the next ten years making various abortive attempts to record again and overcome his addiction, as well as lengthy periods as a down-and-out street addict and a stint in the army. In 1967 he was hospitalised and, after treatment, emerged with new management and hopeful about making a comeback, but died of an overdose in the Harlem apartment where he had grown up, in February, 1968. He was twenty-six.[107]

While all this was going on, Levy and Goldner were engaging in unscrupulous manoeuvring with the writing credits for "Why Do Fools Fall in Love."[108] Richard Perez-Pena, covering the 1992 federal court case over the song for *The New York Times*, described what had taken place as a 'tangled history of music-business chicanery' in which 'Mr. Lymon and Mr. Goldner, not [fellow Teenagers] Mr. Merchant and Mr. Santiago, were named in the copyright as authors':

> "We were ignorant," Mr. Merchant said. "We did not understand contracts. We didn't know what publishing was. We didn't know about percentages.

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[106] Peters, p. 43. Lymon recalled: 'I've known all about women as long as I can remember. When I was ten, I made a good living hustling prostitutes for the white men who would come up to Harlem looking for Negro girls. I knew every prostitute in our neighbourhood and I'd get a commission for every customer I brought them. I was a fresh young kid and some of them thought I was cute. Sometimes, they'd pay me off with something extra...the kids in my neighbourhood grew up fast. Smoking 'pot' (marijuana) was so commonplace that kids 11 and 12 years old puffed reefers on the street corners. I had been smoking marijuana when I was in grade school. But I didn't start using the real stuff (heroin) until I got into show business.' Peters, p. 43.

[107] 'Frankie Lymon Dies in Apartment Here,' *The New York Times*, 28 February, 1968, p. 50; Mary Koval, *Opiate Use in New York City*, New York: New York State Narcotic Addiction Control Commission and New York City Narcotics Register, 1969, p. i.

[108] In 1992, a federal jury in Manhattan ruled that 'Frankie Lymon might have had some role,' but Teenagers Jimmy Merchant and Herman Santiago 'were the true and rightful authors' of the song. Their legal team estimated that they stood to receive something in the order of US$4,000,000 each in royalties. Lymon, named as a writer, *was* receiving royalties, but as Merchant explained, 'In the beginning, I was angry at Frankie, but through the years, I began to realize that he was completely manipulated by these people.' See Richard Perez-Pena, 'Here's Who First Asked Rock's Big Question,' *The New York Times*, 19 November, 1992, pp. A1, B8.

> They said, 'We'll take care of you; the money will be there when you turn 21' and we believed them."[109]

Perez-Pena reported further that

> Most of the royalties went to Mr. Goldner and Morris Levy, who was an important promoter and music company owner in the early days of rock-and-roll, and the music companies they owned. In 1964, Mr. Goldner mysteriously signed over the copyright to "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" and other works to Mr. Levy, asserting that he had mistakenly taken songwriting credit that belonged to his colleague.[110]

Attempts by Merchant and Santiago to redress this situation were received with threats and intimidation, and Santiago testified that 'a record company executive told him in 1969 that his life would be in danger if he pursued his claim.' In its coverage of the trial, *Billboard* reported that

> In its verdict, the jury found that Goldner and Levy had 'deliberately' concealed the accrual of royalties for the song from Merchant and Santiago, both of whom were fifteen when the song was written...
>
> Jurors also found that Levy had threatened Merchant and Santiago with 'physical force' which partly explained why the lawsuit was not commenced sooner.[111]

The jury's findings were entirely consistent with other reports of Levy's behaviour.[112] Tommy James, who, with his group the Shondells, had a nationwide hit with "Hanky Panky," signed with Roulette in 1966. He remembered the first time he visited Morris Levy in his office:

> Morris excused himself and walked out into the hallway. Even though they were trying to be quiet, I could hear every word clearly. Evidently they had just beaten up some guy in New Jersey with baseball bats who they believed was bootlegging their records. They were giving Morris the details. Everybody in the room was trying to pretend they could not hear.[113]

In a decision that Merchant and Santiago must have found devastating, the jury's findings from the 1992 case were overturned on appeal in 1996,

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[109] Perez-Pena, A1, B8.
[110] Perez-Pena, A1, B8.
[111] '2 Members of The Teenagers Awarded Royalties for "Fools"', *Billboard*, 28 November, 1992, pp. 6, 96; see also Michael Goldberg, 'Lawsuit Over Lymon Song Settled,' *Rolling Stone*, 1 July, 1993, p. 19.
[112] See Fredric Dannen, 'The Godfather of Rock and Roll,' *Rolling Stone*, 17 November, 1988, pp. 88-97, 164.
[113] Tommy James with Martin Fitzpatrick, *Me, the Mob and the Music: One Helluva Ride with Tommy James and the Shondells*, New York: Scribner, 2010, p. 62.

largely, it was argued, because legal proceedings should have commenced earlier. To this day, there are 339 songs on the BMI[114] listing for Morris Levy (who never wrote a song in his life), that is, that Levy is listed having written or co-written. These include "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," and "Gee," the Crows hit that George Goldner named his label after.[115]

As the appalling circumstances surrounding "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" demonstrate, no amount of hard work and learning the ropes on the part of Frankie Lymon or the Teenagers could have given them any control over the behind-the-scenes skulduggery engaged in by Goldner and Levy, particularly the latter's mafia-connected intimidation, which rendered him victorious even from the grave (Levy died in 1990). The actions of unscrupulous operators in a largely unregulated industry were allowed to remain completely unchecked, and, unfortunately, provided inspiration at least one other young industry hustler determined to connive his way into a share of the financial rewards such opportunities presented.

In 1956, at the age of about sixteen, Artie Ripp had been part of a white Queens-based doo wop group called the Four Temptations, and it should be noted at this point that, although the roots of doo-wop were African American, by the mid-1950s there were an enormous number of white doo-wop groups.[116] Ripp's group recorded a single that was released in 1958 on ABC-Paramount, a major label formed in 1955 in New York City. Unlike other major labels at the time - Decca, RCA, Columbia – who were not particularly interested in marketing music to teenagers, ABC-

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[114] Broadcast Music Incorporated, an American organisation that records and administers copyrights: see http://repertoire.bmi.com/startpage.asp (accessed 30 August, 2010).
[115] BMI listing for Morris Levy: http://repertoire.bmi.com/writer.asp?fromrow=1&torow=25&keyname=LEVY%20MORRIS&querytype=WriterID&keyid=201119&page=1&blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&affiliation=BMI&cae=17979249; for "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," see http://repertoire.bmi.com/title.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&keyID=1668557&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 30 August, 2010).
[116] Melnick, pp. 134-150; see also *White Doo-Wop Collector*, http://whitedoowopcollector.blogspot.com/ (accessed 2 September, 2010).

Paramount did see their market potential, and would often license recordings from independent producers. [117] It is likely that this is how ABC-Paramount came to release the Four Temptations single, "Cathy" / "Rock n Roll Baby", on which Artie Ripp was credited as co-writer of both songs.[118] The single was reviewed favourably in *Billboard*:

> **Cathy** Rocka-rhumba has a fair sound from male group and combo. Bears watching.
>
> **Rock and Roll Baby** Driving rocker is nicely handled by lead and group, with guitar solo work. Can do some business.[119]

The moderate success of the single led to two more, for which the group dropped the 'Four' and used the name The Temptations – "Barbara" / "Someday", and "Letter of Devotion" / "Fickle Little Girl." Again, Ripp was credited as co-writer on all four sides.[120] Both singles were released in 1960 on the Goldisc label, and "Barbara" was given four stars in *Billboard*, with the reviewer noting that it 'features an appealing vocal by the lead with an okay group assist' and 'can sell.' The B-side, "Someday" had a 'pleading vocal by the lead on the pounding rockaballad...nicely backed by the group.'[121] A few weeks later, an advertisement taken out in *Billboard* proclaimed:

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[117] David Edwards, Patrice Eyries, and Mike Callahan, 'The ABC-Paramount Story,' http://www.bsnpubs.com/abc/abcstory.html (accessed 21 June, 2009); see also Bundy, 'R&B Disks Sock Pop Market, p. 56.

[118] See *Singles Discography for ABC Paramount Records*, http://www.globaldogproductions.info/a/abc-a.html (accessed 18 June, 2009); songwriting credits for "Cathy", http://repertoire.bmi.com/title.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&keyID=191155&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 18 June, 2009) and "Rock and Roll Baby" http://repertoire.bmi.com/title.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&keyID=1259764&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 18 June, 2009). The other writers, Mario Scarpa and Stewart Silverman, do not appear on BMI as having composed other songs. They are listed among the group's personnel, along with a picture and discography: see http://www.blogg.org/blog-65325-themes-four_temptations-231974.html (accessed 18 June, 2009).

[119] 'Reviews of New Pop Records,' *Billboard*, 5 May, 1958, p. 115.

[120] See Goldisc singles discography: http://www.globaldogproductions.info/g/goldisc.html (accessed 18 June, 2009) and BMI listing for Arthur M. Ripp: http://repertoire.bmi.com/writer.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&page=1&fromrow=1&torow=25&querytype=WriterID&keyid=288839&keyname=RIPP%20ARTHUR%20M&CAE=26128406&Affiliation=BMI (accessed 18 June, 2009). Artie Ripp's group is unconnected with the Motown group the Temptations, who released their first single, "Oh Mother of Mine", in July, 1961; see Warner, pp. 462-3.

[121] 'Reviews of New Pop Records,' *Billboard*, 22 February, 1960, p. 45.

> First release on Goldisc an overnight hit! "BARBARA" The Temptations GOLDISC #3001.[122]

The Goldisc label was started, owned, and run by George Goldner. Ripp would later explain that 'I saw George Goldner and bugged him about a job and taking the song,' that is, "Barbara."[123]

Artie Ripp, who was once described as being able to 'hardly hit the right keys' and with 'a voice like a hinge,' was, by his own admission insufficiently adept at both singing and songwriting to make a career out of either. [124] He explained that, in the early 1960s,

> I started walking around Broadway and I'd see these kids who were making records and not getting paid. They could have a Number 1 record on the charts and end up owing the record company half a million dollars.
> I thought, "This business has some system."
> Every party was charged to the artist. "I've got a hundred hookers. Charge them to the artist."
> Here I was, out of high school, no diploma, not going anywhere. The music business seemed terrific, so I decided I needed to learn absolutely everything I could about it – A&R, promotion, sales, publishing.[125]

Having written (or at least, acquired the credit for writing) and performed on a few records, Ripp had grasped clearly and quickly that substantial financial rewards were not made by the artists in the recording industry. He saw that teenage performers were making hits and not getting paid, while those involved in the production, manufacture and distribution of the records seemed to be reaping substantial profits. Since this 'seemed terrific,' Ripp set about learning how to most efficiently get part of the action:

> I looked to find that one guy who owned his own company, who produced his own records, someone who was a creative, entrepreneurial kind of hustler. And that's how I got to George Goldner, owner of Rama and Gee Records...

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[122] Goldisc Advertisement, *Billboard*, 21 March, 1960, p. 42.
[123] Ren Grevatt 'Kama-Sutra Productions: Is Twenty-Three too Young to Own a Record Company?', *Hi Fi/Stereo Review* 15 (1965), p. 28.
[124] Mark Ribowsky, *He's a Rebel: Phil Spector - Rock and Roll's Legendary Producer*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2006, p. 92.
[125] 'Artie Ripp,' in Joe Smith and Mitchell Fink, *Off the Record: An Oral History of Popular Music*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989, p. 134.

> I said, "Mr. Goldner, you're the greatest. I have to work for you. I want to be the next George Goldner. I need twenty dollars a week. I'll come in from Queens. I'll work seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, whatever you want." He must have had pity for me. He gave me fifty dollars a week.
> A year later, I had a car and I was the third-highest-paid person in the company. And learning. All the time learning.[126]

George Goldner was twice Ripp's age, with a track record of high-quality productions and hit releases on his labels. Despite his less than honourable business practices, he was reputed to be a tyrant in the studio but possessed of an infallible ear for a hit. There is little evidence to suggest that Ripp possessed any of these qualities, but by 1960 Ripp had inveigled his way into a job as Goldner's assistant at Gone and End Records. Its offices were in 1650 Broadway, a building that was wall-to-wall record labels and music publishers, and adjacent to the Brill Building at 1619 Broadway. [127] When the Gone and End labels went the way of Gee and Rama, again sold to Morris Levy to pay off Goldner's gambling debts, Ripp stayed in the building and got a job promoting songs at (publishers) Aldon Music.[128] Ripp struck out on his own in 1963, and formed Kama Sutra Productions with Phil Steinberg and Hy (Herman) Mizrahi.[129]

The Shangri-Las

At some point in 1963, Ripp saw a young and as yet unnamed quartet of female singers performing in Queens. The Weiss and Ganser sisters had practiced their harmonising and dance moves, and progressed to performing at 'little hops and dances and things like that,' since they were

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[126] 'Artie Ripp,' p. 135.
[127] Songwriter Jerome Solon Felder, better known as Doc Pomus, described Ripp as 'an obnoxious little shit'; see Ribowsky, p. 68, and for an incident involving Ripp, Spector and two young women described by Ripp as 'crazy nymphomaniacs,' Ribowsky, pp. 72-3; Emerson, p. 77.
[128] Emerson, p. 136.
[129] Grevatt, p. 28.

‘too young to be in a bar ’ or to perform at clubs.[130] Mary and Liz’s other brother George had been accompanying them as a kind of quasi manager/chaperone.[131] Probably in the second half of 1963, Artie Ripp signed the quartet to ‘an exclusive contract’ with Kama-Sutra Productions. According to John Grecco,

> At this point, Kama Sutra Productions was still trying to get a foothold in the industry and would sign acts, record them and then sometimes shop the master tapes around to different labels.[132]

The group had also by this point acquired a manager, Tony Michaels.[133] Although he was not a ‘president’ of, or officially involved with Kama-Sutra, it seems that he must have had some kind of working relationship with Ripp and Kama-Sutra, if not more.[134] Michaels and Ripp were both involved in the recording of the quartet’s first single, which, according to Mary, provided the impetus for the naming of the group.[135] About to make a record and without a name, they went past a restaurant on Long Island called the Shangri-La, and decided to call themselves that.[136]

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[130] Gross, ‘Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game,* http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009).

[131] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 19 June, 2009); ‘The "Shadow" Reappears - A Rare Talk With Producer George "Shadow" Morton,’ *Goldmine*, Vol. 17, No. 14: Issue 286, 12 July, 1991, reproduced at http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 7 October, 2010).

[132]Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 19 June, 2009).

[133] Songwriting credits indicate that Tony Gianna, Tony Giannattasio, and Tony Michaels are all the same person. This use of various publishing aliases seems to have been a common practice.

[134] Tony Michaels is listed as co-writer with Hy Mizrahi on at least two songs, “Girl to Girl” http://repertoire.bmi.com/Title.asp?blnWriter=true&blnPublisher=true&blnArtist=true&page=1&keyid=471725&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 20 June, 2009) and “Seven Strong” http://repertoire.bmi.com/TitleSearch.asp?querytype=WorkName&page=1&fromrow=1&torow=25&keyname=seven%20strong&blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&blnAltTitles=True (accessed 20 June, 2009) but I have been unable to determine when these were composed and who recorded them (if they were recorded at all).

[135] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 October, 2010); ‘Suzi Quatro’s Heroes of Rock ‘n’ Roll’, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08); Warner, pp. 462-3.

[136] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 14 October, 2010).

The Shangri-Las' first single was "Simon Says" / "Simon Speaks" on the Smash label, recorded late in 1963.[137] Essentially the A and B sides of the single were the same song; "Simon Speaks" is a predominantly instrumental version of "Simon Says," which is an infectiously catchy blues-based dance song ('Simon says a-well shake your hips') with a Bo Diddley beat. According to Mary, her older sister Liz sang the lead on this track. A spoken introduction, 'the Four Season(s) proudly present the dynamic Shangri-Las!' and crowd cheering imply that this could be a live recording, but this could also be a studio conceit.[138] According to John Grecco, this record was not released until around a year after it was recorded.[139] The writing credits are instructive - Tony Michaels received sole credit for the A side, 'Simon Says', while the mainly instrumental version of the same song on the B-side is credited to Hy Mizrahi and Phil Steinberg, Artie Ripp's two partners in Kama-Sutra Productions. It is likely that Tony Michaels wrote the song (as he would later co-write some of the groups' strongest material), and Mizrahi and Steinberg received a writing credit as part of Kama-Sutra's cut. Later events will bear this out, and, as we have seen, songwriting credits were not necessarily an indication of authorship.

The second Shangri-Las single was released in April 1964 on the Spokane label - "Wishing Well" b/w "Hate to Say I Told You So".[140] "Wishing Well" is credited to Tony Michaels and Joe Monaco, who, with his brother Marty, owned a house in Hicksville, Long Island, in the basement of which the Dynamic Recording Studio was housed. [141] It is likely that this is where the single was recorded, especially since, as we

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[137] "Simon Says" (Michaels) b/w "Simon Speaks" (Mizrahi/Steinberg), SMASH 1866, December, 1963.
[138] The Four Seasons could be a club, or the doo wop group he Four Seasons, who had released a single on the Gone label, so there was a connection (however slight) via Ripp.
[139] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 19 June, 2009).
[140] "Wishing Well" (Monaco/Michaels) b/w "Hate to Say I Told You So" (Jackson/Steinberg/Steinberg), SPOKANE 4006, April, 1964.
[141] See also Mick Patrick, liner notes for *Girls with Guitars: All Girl Bands Axe Backed Babes and the Like*..., London: Ace Records CDCHD989, 2004. Morton reported, 'The studio in Hicksville was Dynamic Recording Studios, it was in the basement of a house, the house was owned by Joey Monaco,' Lisa MacKinney, interview with George 'Shadow' Morton, 24 April, 2007.

shall see, Monaco and Michaels had been collaborating and using the studio for other projects since the late 1950s. The record was a moderate success locally. Again, Liz sang lead on both of these tracks, and both feature short reverb-laden spoken-word intros, a hint of what was to come later. This in itself is noteworthy, as the Shangri-Las would eventually become famous for their spoken-word song sections. This is an aspect of their work for which Morton is generally assumed to be responsible, but he supposedly had no involvement with the group at this point. It may well have been a technique of their own for which they have never been credited. Furthermore, the Shangri-Las version of "He Cried" (1966), originally recorded as "She Cried" by Jay and the Americans in 1962, features a spoken intro not present in the Jay and the Americans version, nor in other approximately contemporary versions by Del Shannon and Billy Fury.[142]

Around this time, according to Mary Weiss, their manager Michaels arranged a meeting for them with popular and influential WABC radio DJ Bob 'Babalu' Lewis. Weiss remembered that, growing up, they listened to 'Babalu, and Cousin Brucie on WABC,' and would ring up and vote for their favourite new releases.[143] Celebrity disk jockeys wielded considerable power, and their relationships with their teenage audience could mean massive sales for the record companies that were the recipients of their airplay.[144] 'Cousin Brucie' Morrow stated emphatically that

> The mid-fifties doo wop boom was due to the burgeoning relationship of radio and the record industry. Symbiosis between the two was yielding unprecedented success for both.[145]

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[142] The Shangri-Las, "He Cried" (Daryll/Richards) b/w "Dressed in Black" (Michaels/Gormann/Morton) RED BIRD 053, 1966.
[143] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 28 February, 2010); Betrock, p. 98.
[144] Douglas, pp. 229-33.
[145] 'Cousin Brucie' Morrow and Rich Maloof, *Doo Wop: the Music, the Times, the Era*, New York: Sterling, 2007, p. 119.

An audience with Lewis, then, was an important coup for the group. Mary related,

> Tony Michaels...wanted Bob Lewis to hear us singing so he had made an appointment and we went up to his apartment, just to hear us, and we got up and sang for him *a cappella*. George was there, Shadow, sitting there. And that's when I met him.[146]

Again*, a cappella*, vocal harmonising. 'Shadow' was George 'Shadow' Morton, the nickname acquired later due to his propensity for disappearing at short notice. Morton's collaboration with the Shangri-Las as a songwriter and producer would generate the body of material upon which their reputation is based, and, in conjunction with a large amount of self-mythologising, cement his fame as a maverick auteur producer.

The Queens neighbourhood in which the Weiss and Ganser sisters grew up was initially conceived as part of a suburban idyll for white families, but during the 1960s this began to change as more African American families moved into Cambria Heights. The members of the singing group that would become known as the Shangri-Las absorbed a variety of musical influences, and began singing together in the early 1960s. They shared a deep interest in and love of vocal harmonising, and emerged from the doo-wop tradition that was *the* urban teen music of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The music industry figures that would play significant roles in the development of the group also had backgrounds in doo-wop. Of particular significance is George Goldner, whose business dealings with Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers were an important precedent for events that would later transpire with the Shangri-Las. Goldner was also involved with Morris Levy and Artie Ripp, and there is plenty of evidence that all three were operating with extremely suspect motivations, blithely manipulating royalty payments and exploiting the artists with which they were involved, before any of them became connected with the Shangri-Las. None of this was common knowledge or even remotely transparent in

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[146] Gross, 'Mary Weiss Comes Back for a "Dangerous Game"' http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=7728783&m=7728786 (accessed 9 September, 2010).

the early 1960s, and it is not possible to argue that four teenage girls from Cambria Heights could have had any *idea* of just what they were walking into. The actions and what might politely be termed ‘industry methodologies’ of George Goldner, Morris Levy and Artie Ripp would have far-reaching effects on the lives and careers of the Shangri-Las. These cut across race and gender lines, in a largely unregulated ‘system’ in which vulnerable teenagers from modest, often impoverished backgrounds, motivated by the lure of a ticket out of their less than ordinary lives, could be exploited as workers while creating great art, but with scant regard for their welfare or long-term benefit. We have seen how this occurred with Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers; the manner in which this took place with the Shangri-Las will be explored in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

The Shangri-Las, George 'Shadow' Morton, and Red Bird Records

"Give me more PURPLE!"
George 'Shadow' Morton

The events that followed George Morton's meeting with the Shangri-Las are simultaneously very unclear and enshrined in legend. Morton proved himself to be a strikingly unusual songwriter and producer with genuinely groundbreaking ideas. His earlier songwriting and performing experience, which he has repeatedly downplayed, and his construction and mythologising of himself as (a) 'Shadow' allow fresh insights into his collaborations with the Shangri-Las by challenging his presentation of himself as an untutored genius. Instead, a logical trajectory of experience and influence is revealed, and a continuity of theme and technique. By the end of 1964, George Morton would be officially employed as a well-paid professional songwriter, and the Shangri-Las would be signed to the Manhattan-based Red Bird record label and firmly established as teen sensations in the United States. However, an examination of the Shangri-Las' tenure at Red Bird indicates that the process of record manufacturing was geared toward generating income for label owners, promoters, publishers and songwriters. This was established practice, as the examples of George Goldner and Morris Levy, and the effects of their actions on Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers demonstrated. Standard recording industry contracts for performers were highly exploitative, and the artist languished at the bottom of the financial ladder. Almost without exception, teenaged performers were treated as and regarded by the music industry as workers whose primary role was to *sell the song* in its commodified format, the 45 rpm single. This was the case with major labels and independents alike, with the difference largely being that independents, like Red Bird, tended to care more about the integrity of

their material, and worked more closely with their artists. Nevertheless, *all* were in the business of selling records as their primary driving force, not nurturing the careers of their artists.

To conclude from this structural system that the artist's contribution was the least important component, however, is a grave error. This was certainly the way the 'industry' regarded and exploited its teen performers, as this chapter demonstrates, but this was of little concern to the teenagers who flocked to see the Shangri-Las at the Brooklyn Fox and bought their records in droves. The Shangri-Las, as young female singers, have been judged to be less 'authentic' artists than '"the autonomous band of singer/instrumentalist/songwriters"' that was later elevated in rock mythology to a higher status. [1] Rock journalists, and, following their lead, no small amount of scholarship, has played a central role in this. The uncritical acceptance of this hierarchy and its concomitant assumptions is to a large extent responsible for what Jacqueline Warwick and others, including myself, have identified as a chronically diminutive understanding of the artistic contribution of the performer within this structure. A close analysis of particularly well-documented Brooklyn Fox show demonstrates that doo wop and vocal groups predominated, rather than bands, and that this was quite standard and not perceived in any way to abnormal or inferior. A quite different set of markers of authenticity were in operation, and this chapter argues that pejorative understandings of all this are a product of *later* notions of authenticity that simply did not prevail in 1964.

George Morton and 'Shadow'

A lengthy 1991 interview with George Francis Morton in *Goldmine* magazine opened by noting that he was 'born on September 3, 1944' in either Richmond, Virginia or Brooklyn, New York, because Morton was

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[1] Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music And Identity In The 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 95; Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 116.

apparently not sure. Furthermore, the year of his birth is variously listed elsewhere as 1940, 1942, 1944 and 1947. Much of Morton's life and career are similarly difficult to pin down, as will become apparent shortly.[2] He grew up in Brooklyn, and, like the Shangri-Las, had a Catholic background – he was educated at St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in Park Slope. At the age of around fourteen, he moved with his family to Hicksville, Long Island. [3] This was at least in part motivated the Morton family's desire to remove young George from Brooklyn, where it appears that he was becoming increasingly involved with gang culture.[4]

George Morton's first known recordings date from 1958, when he would have been in his teens - probably around sixteen years old - and were with a doo wop outfit called the Markeys.[5] As we shall see, this was the starting point of a long trajectory of involvement in making records, which is significant because Morton has persistently played down his previous work and presented himself as an untutored music industry novice. This is

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[2] 'The "Shadow" Reappears - A Rare Talk With Producer George "Shadow" Morton,' *Goldmine*, Vol. 17, No. 14: Issue 286, 12 July, 1991, reproduced at http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 7 October, 2010) lists the year of Morton's birth as 1944. However, the Wikipedia entry for Morton lists it as 1940 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_Morton (accessed 12 September, 2010); Richie Unterberger's entry on Morton for the All Music website as 1942, http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&searchlink=MORTON,|SHADOW&sql=11:kifrxqygldde~T1 (accessed 12 September, 2010); and Morton's Myspace page, http://www.myspace.com/shadowmorton (accessed 14 October, 2010), which Morton does personally administer, lists his age in 2010 as 63, which would require a birth date of 1947. Morton's first known recordings and writing credits are from 1958, so this is clearly incorrect. Given that Ellie Greenwich (who will be discussed in more detail shortly) was born in 1940, went to high school with Morton in Levittown, and his group 'used to sing back-up for her', a birth date of 1940 or 1942 for Morton seems likely, even more so given the calibre of the recordings I will shortly discuss here and in Chapter Five. See Richard Williams 'Ellie Greenwich, 1940-2009,' *The Guardian*, 27 August, 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/aug/27/ellie-greenwich-obituary (accessed 13 September, 2010); Ralph M. Newman, 'Only the Shadow Knows: An Interview by Ralph M. Newman, *Time Barrier Express* 26 (Sept/Oct 1979), p. 41.

[3] Lenny Kaye, 'Standing in the Shadow of Rock: Shadow Morton, Part 1', *Melody Maker*, 2 March, 1974, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=2458, accessed 25 August 2008. In a quite extraordinary coincidence, this is the same school attended by Henry Petroski, who moved to Cambria Heights from Brooklyn with his family in 1954; Henry Petroski, *Paperboy: Confessions of a Future Engineer*, New York: Vintage, 2002, p. 3; see also Copquin and Jackson, pp. 21, 25, 32.

[4] The implications of this for "Leader of the Pack" are examined in Chapter Five.

[5] Morton's group is not to be confused with and has no connection to Stax session band the Mar-Keys.

important because his some of his early recordings illuminate his later work with the Shangri-Las, and demonstrate a continuity of theme and technique. In addition, some of his fellow Markeys were also involved with the Shangri-Las in the group's early stages, and Morton would call in favours from them when he recorded the demo of "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)." Furthermore, the manner in which Morton has elided his earlier experience, cultivated his identity as 'Shadow,' and mythologised himself and his work, has applications for an informed understanding of the persistence of the biker/anti-hero figure in the songs of the Shangri-Las, which, as I argue in Chapter Five, is based on Morton's fantasy of himself.

George Morton sang the lead part with the Markeys, which he described as his 'high school group' consisting of 'five guys.'[6] Morton has stated that 'Tony Michaels was included in it,' and it is likely that the other personnel included Joseph and Martin Monaco, who are co-credited as writers of all four songs recorded by the Markeys.[7] They released two singles in 1958 as 'The Markeys featuring George Morton' - "Hot Rod" b/w "Yakkaty Yak", and "A Time to Love" b/w "Make A Record, Man." The writing credits for the first Markeys single, "Hot Rod" are George Francis Morton and Joseph J. Monaco; they also co-wrote both sides of the second Markeys single (see above).[8] Monaco had a recording studio called Dynamic on Long Island, and it seems likely that this was where at least the demos for the Markeys tracks were recorded, since Morton later made reference to

> this studio, where my high school group, The Marquees (sic, correct spelling is Markeys), had hung out and done all this singing. It was in Bethpage, off Bloomingdale Road down from Ray's Diner...and this guy, Joe Mondria

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[6] 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow04.html (accessed 7 October, 2010); http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow02.html (accessed 29 March, 2012).

[7] 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow02.html (accessed 29 March, 2012).Michaels will be discussed in more detail shortly; I have been unable to confirm the identity of the other members.

[8] The Markeys featuring George Morton, "Hot Rod" (George Francis Morton and Joseph J. Monaco) b/w "Yakkaty Yak", RCA 47-7256, 1958; and "A Time To Love" (George Francis Morton and Joseph J. Monaco) b/w "Make a Record, Man" (George Francis Morton, Joseph J. Monaco and Martin Monaco), RCA 47-7412, 1958.

> (sic),[9] had set up a small studio in his basement because of us singing down there--he still had my old tape machine there.[10]

Joe Monaco also co-wrote the Shangri-Las second single “Wishing Well”, released in April 1964.[11] The other writer of “Wishing Well” was Tony Michaels, who had been a member of The Markeys with Morton, had written The Shangri-Las very first single, “Simon Says”, recorded in December 1963, and at some point around that time had begun managing the Shangri-Las.[12]

The two Markeys singles were released, not on a small independent label, as one might expect, but on RCA Victor, which itself is noteworthy. In December, 1958, *Billboard* reviewed the second Markeys single, and gave the A-side, “A Time to Love”, three stars:

> George Morton gives a quavering teen-age type lead to this slow ballad. Organ leads the backing with the Markeys giving it their all. This could make itself felt with the teen market.

The B-side, “Make a Record, Man,” got two stars:

> This is an upbeat blues which employs various pop song titles to sell its message. Has a good bit of life and could get action.[13]

The reviewer noted Morton’s ‘quavering teenage-type’ vocalising, and other reviewers would also comment on Morton’s singing abilities. It is also noteworthy that Morton made records as a teenager for a teen audience. “Hot Rod” is a particularly significant release, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Furthermore, the use of pop song titles in “Make a Record, Man” is a technique that Morton would again utilise, as will become apparent shortly.

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[9] All other references to ‘the basement studio’ indicate that it was Joe Monaco’s. This is likely a misprint.

[10] ‘The "Shadow" Reappears,’ http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow04.html (accessed 7 October, 2010). Levittown and Bethpage are neighbouring suburbs, and ‘off Bloomingdale Rd’ is consistent with Billy Joel’s cited recollection, which will be discussed shortly.

[11] The Shangri-Las, “Wishing Well” (Monaco/Michaels) b/w “Hate to Say I Told You So” (Jackson/Steinberg/Steinberg), SPOKANE 4006, 1964.

[12] The Shangri-Las, “Simon Says” (Tony Michaels) b/w “Simon Speaks” (Hy Mizrahi and Phil Steinberg), SMASH 1866, 1963.

[13] ‘Reviews of New Pop Records,’ *Billboard*, 1 December, 1958, p. 44.

Morton was also the lead singer in a group called the Lonely Ones, which may in fact have been the Markeys recording under a different name. The Lonely Ones recorded a single on the Sir label in 1959, "My Wish" b/w "I Want My Girl".[14] It too was reviewed in *Billboard*, who described it as a 'tender rockaballad (sic)...wrapped up in meaningful interpretation by lead singer.'[15] Again, Morton's vocal abilities were noted; Rod McBrien, an engineer with whom Morton worked in the early 60s, concurred that Morton was 'a good singer' with a great sense of drama.[16] Tony Michaels and Morton were credited as co-writers for the A-side, and Morton and Monaco for the B-side.[17] Morton also used the pseudonym Lance Martin for "I Feel Majestic," released on the Mala label in 1963.[18]

Furthermore, the 'Morton George' who released "The Stretch" b/w "Come on In" on the Amy label in 1962, was in fact George Morton.[19] The singles reviewer for *Billboard* thought "The Stretch" was really something, giving it four stars and commenting:

> Another new dance, with a blues and Twist format and with an additional south-of-the-border touch. Hand-clapping rhythm and a lot of excitement in the vocal here. Watch it.[20]

Another of Morton's songwriting aliases was Billy Kell(e)y, to whom, along with Arthur Hilliard, both "The Stretch" and "Come on In" were credited. To some extent, "Come on In" was a blueprint for Morton's 1965 composition,

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[14] The Lonely Ones, "My Wish" (Tony Gianna, Martin J. Monaco and George Francis Morton) b/w "I Want My Girl" (George Francis Morton and Joseph J. Monaco), SIR 270, 1959; see also *45 Discography for Baton/Sir Records*, http://globaldogproductions.info/baton-sir.html, accessed 26 May, 2008.
[15] 'Reviews of This Week's Singles,' *Billboard*, 13 July, 1959, p. 34.
[16] Lisa MacKinney, interview with Rod McBrien, 10 April, 2008.
[17] There is a single on the Swirl label from 1961 by a George Morton, "My Mammy" b/w "Some of These Days", but it is not clear whether this is George 'Shadow' Morton or not, and certainly none of his known associates have song-writing credits.
[18] He wrote the A-Side of "I Feel Majestic" b/w "Send Her Back" (MALA 466); see http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/spectropop/message/42898 (accessed 21June, 2009); MALA discography at http://www.globaldogproductions.info/m/mala.html (accessed 21 June, 2009). In a 1979 interview with Ralph Newman, Morton listed this song as one of his early records, dismissively, and incorrectly (he stated that it was by the Markeys): see Newman, p. 41.
[19] Morton George, "The Stretch" b/w "Come on In", AMY 858, 1962; correspondence between Phil Milstein and Mick Patrick, *Spectropop* bulletin email, 16 April, 2008, http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/spectropop/message/42898 (accessed 20 June, 2009).
[20] 'Reviews of New Singles,' *Billboard*, 15 September, 1962, p. 27.

"Sophisticated Boom Boom," in which lyrical phrases, storyline and the 'feel' of the earlier song were replicated.[21] It was recorded first by another Long Island group called the Goodies, then later by the Shangri-Las; the circumstances of this will be discussed shortly. Morton also used the 'Billy Kelly' writing alias for a single released on the New York label Jubilee in February, 1964, "Only Seventeen" b/w "Now We're Together".[22] It was performed by an all-female group called the Beattle-ettes (sic), and is a catchy, guitar-driven rocker that used the titles of Beatles' songs as lyrics. *Billboard* said:

> The gals do a creditable take-off on the four haircuts duplicating the sound and the snappy beat. A good teen-pegged lyric ads (sic) to the fun. Flip is "Now We're Together."[23]

It was co-written with Joe Monaco, recorded at his Dynamic studio, and was apparently written a few days after Morton had seen the Beatles perform on the Ed Sullivan show.[24] Significantly, the label reads, 'Produced by George Morton.'[25] To this day, the group of young women who sang on this single have not been conclusively identified, and rumours were and still are rife that it was the Shangri-Las – to the point where this single is listed in some Shangri-Las discographies. Mary Weiss has consistently and vehemently denied this.[26]

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[21] Finger snaps, 'Where? Over there!' "Long Live Our Love" (Jackson/Barnes) b/w "Sophisticated Boom Boom" (Morton) RED BIRD 048, February, 1966.

[22] The Beattle-ettes, "Only Seventeen" (Billy Kelly/Joseph J. Monaco) b/w "Now We're Together" (Billy Kelly/Joseph J. Monaco) JUBILEE 5742 (1964), see Jubilee Records Discography: http://www.globaldogproductions.info/j/jubilee.html (accessed 22 June, 2009); for a brief history of the label, see http://www.bsnpubs.com/jubilee/jubjosie.html (accessed 22 June, 2009); BMI listing for George Francis Morton AKA Billy Kelly: http://repertoire.bmi.com/writer.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&page=1&fromrow=1&torow=25&querytype=WriterID&keyid=240977&keyname=KELLY%20BILLY&CAE=16058899&Affiliation=BMI (accessed 22 June, 2009). Audio of "Only Seventeen" with non-original visuals: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJcz8tpxd70 (accessed 22 June, 2009).

[23] 'Pop Spotlights,' *Billboard*, February 29, 1964, p. 43.

[24] Mick Patrick, 'Only Seventeen', liner notes for *Girls With Guitars: All Girl Bands Axe Backed Babes and the Like*..., London: Ace Records CDCHD989, 2004.

[25] For a photograph of the Beattle-ettes Jubilee single with Morton credited as producer, see 'Dan's Garage,' http://theegarage.blogspot.com/2010_03_01_archive.html (accessed 14 October, 2010).

[26] Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, 2006, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/02.html (accessed 28 February, 2010). To make things even more confusing, it seems that there was another group called the Beatle-ettes (as opposed to the Morton-connected one, which was spelled Beattle-ettes). They were from Philadelphia, were more commonly known as the Persianettes, and

As noted earlier, Morton has repeatedly downplayed his earlier experience by denying it outright or discussing it dismissively; on the rare occasions when he has elaborated in more detail, he has wrongly named his groups, and denied it all elsewhere anyway. To cite a few of many examples, in a lengthy interview with Ralph Newman in 1979, who pressed Morton for more details about his early doo wop recordings, Morton said,

> We did a show at the high school, and a couple of guys saw us. A guy named Parsons said he wanted to manage us. He called some people who came and saw us. And the next thing you know, RCA signed us up. It was nothing.[27]

In 1982, Alan Betrock quoted Morton as saying, 'I had never really written songs – it was a complete lie,' and in a lengthy 1991 interview with *Goldmine* magazine, Morton declared that he 'got into this business as a joke,' in order to prove a point to someone (Jeff Barry) who had rubbed him up the wrong way.[28] This version of events has never been seriously questioned; on the contrary, as a mythic construction it has proved remarkably resilient. In 1989, Charlotte Greig, describing the success of "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand), commented that

> This was a triumph for Morton; he had no experience in the business, was unable even to play an instrument, and (he claims) had written the song in twenty minutes.[29]

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recorded two singles in 1964 as the Beatle-ettes: "Dance Beatle Dance" b/w "We Were Meant to Be Married" (JAMIE 1270) on Philadelphia label Jamie, and "Yes You Can Hold My Hand Part One" b/w "Yes You Can Hold My Hand Part Two" (ASSAULT 1893) on the Assault label, about which I have been unable to find any further information. "Only Seventeen" does not appear on the Persianettes discography (see http://www.soulfulkindamusic.net/persianettes.htm (accessed 15 October, 2010), and Morton seems to be unconnected with the Persianettes. Furthermore, "Only Seventeen" was recorded and released in New York, and the songs released on JAMIE and ASSAULT do not appear on Morton's BMI listing; while not conclusive, all this has led me to conclude that the Beattle-ettes and the Beatle-ettes were two different groups.

[27] Newman, p. 41.

[28] Alan Betrock, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*, London: Omnibus, 1982, pp. 98-100; 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow02.html (accessed 7 October, 2010); see also Kaye, 'Standing in the Shadow of Rock, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=2458 (accessed 25 August 2008); Lisa MacKinney, interview with George 'Shadow' Morton, 24 April, 2007.

[29] Charlotte Greig, *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow: Girl Groups From the 50s On*, London: Virago, 1989, p. 78.

In the Shangri-Las entry for the *All Music Guide*, Richie Unterberger remarked that

> The quality of Morton's work with the Shangri-Las on Red Bird (with assistance from Jeff Barry and Artie Butler) was remarkable considering that he had virtually no prior experience in the music business.[30]

In 2007, Billy Joel's biographer Bill Smith, describing the "Remember" session, which will be discussed in more detail shortly, reported that

> Shadow had never written or produced anything before this, but had talked his way in to this recording studio promising a hit song. A little nervous now that he had the studio rented and the musicians waiting to record but no song, Shadow was on his way to the studio, still unsure of how he was going to pull this off, when it came to him as he crossed the railroad tracks. Pulling his car over he jotted down some lyrics to a melody that was in his head, and continued on to the studio. Once there this genius of improvising took the two pairs of sisters...aside and taught them the lyrics...[31]

In 2007, Suzi Quatro interviewed Mary Weiss for the BBC. Leading Weiss into a discussion about Morton, Quatro reiterated the standard understanding of Morton, stating that 'he was kinda green...he wasn't like a professional music business guy.'[32] Not like Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, or Jeff Barry, no, but the available evidence suggests that he was not nearly as inexperienced as he has presented himself either. One important result of all this, as Smith's remarks attest, has been to give Morton the appearance of being an extraordinary untutored talent and possessor of untrammelled genius. It may also be that Morton sought to distance himself, at least publically, from those involved with the Shangri-Las before their signing with the Red Bird label, particularly Artie Ripp and Kama-Sutra Productions, for reasons that will become clearer in the next chapter.

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[30] Richie Unterberger, entry for the Shangri-Las on All Music website: http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:gpfyxqegld6e~T1 (accessed 27 May, 2008).
[31] Bill Smith, *I Go to Extremes: The Billy Joel Story*, London: Robson, 2007, p. 55.
[32] Suzi Quatro, 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).

George Morton had a long trajectory of involvement in making records. By the time he came into contact with the Shangri-Las, probably around March or April of 1964, he had been writing, performing on, and later producing records, for at least six years. He was well-connected, had regular writing partners, and had at least one studio at his disposal, owned and managed by people he worked with on a regular basis. Furthermore, some of these early recordings hint at the innovations that would be more fully realised in his oeuvre with the Shangri-Las – emotion, teen drama, sound-effects, death.[33] The Beattle-ettes record is particularly telling. It is a very fully-realised, well-performed and produced song; raw and rocking, but not amateur. Furthermore, the whole idea of making a Beatle-connected record when, as Mick Patrick put it, 'most people in the American industry were still trying to unravel during those first few weeks of Beatlemania' what on earth all the fuss was about, indicated that Morton was attempting to keep his finger on the pulse, to stay abreast and ahead of important developments in the teen music market.[34] The teenagers who had seen the Beatles perform on the Ed Sullivan show knew exactly what was going on, and Morton was attempting to capitalise on this mounting tidal wave of adulation.[35] Morton's involvement in the record business was not an accident, nor the result of a dare or joke; on the contrary, he had been steadily working at establishing a profile, and his producer-credit on the Beattle-ettes record is a clear indication of the direction he intended moving in. His pre-Shangri-Las work was perfectly appropriate training for the records he would shortly be making at Red Bird, and significant enough to garner regular and positive reviews in *Billboard*, the biggest music trade journal in the country. So, when the big league presented an opportunity, Morton knew exactly what to do to capitalise on it.

The Birth of the Producer

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[33] See my discussion of "Hot Rod" in Chapter Five.
[34] Mick Patrick, 'Only Seventeen', liner notes for *Girls With Guitars*.
[35] Douglas (1994), p. 114.

Today, a record producer is generally understood to be a kind of 'project manager,' someone who supervises or directs a number of processes involved in the recording of a piece of music or sonic art. Most producers have a particular sound or style, and are hired (often at great cost) for their ability to 'stamp' this onto the artists they work with, or 'produce.'[36] Producers are also assumed to possess a somewhat omnipotent critical distance (unavailable to the artist who is too intimately involved) which allows them to conceptualise the project as a whole, and so are 'generally considered the final arbiter of aesthetic judgements throughout the recording process.'[37] It is now, and has been for some decades, completely standard practice to place credits on an album sleeve (and singles, as we have seen) for producer, engineer, and other roles that contribute to the recording process. However, in the context of the history of recorded sound, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. The earliest sound recordings allowed little scope for aesthetic input into the recording process beyond the placement of artists in the studio, room (or field, for that matter) in relation to a single piece of recording apparatus. Such recordings were essentially documents of performances.[38] However, the development of magnetic tape and multi-tracking made the recording process more complicated, allowing for the different instrumentalists and singers of, for example, a band, to be recorded on different 'tracks', so that their levels relative to one another could be adjusted and altered

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[36] A good contemporary example is Rick Rubin, whose production credits include albums by Slayer, Danzig, the Beastie Boys, and the final five albums recorded by Johnny Cash. Rubin's reputation, cachet and power as a producer are such that he was largely credited with resurrecting Cash's career in the early 1990s. Rubin's distinctive and recognisable 'minimal' style is characterised by crisp, almost crunchy guitar sounds with a lot of space and presence around the vocals; Cash's version of "Personal Jesus" exemplifies this: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQcNiD0Z3MU (accessed 31 May, 2010).

[37] *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World Part One*, *Vol. 2: Performance and Production*, ed. John Shepherd, Dave Laing, David Horn, Paul Oliver, and Peter Wicke, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003, p. 196; see pp. 196-7 for an excellent overview of the role(s) of the producer; see also Warwick, pp. 93-5.

[38] Virgil Moorefield, *The Producer as Composer: Shaping the Sounds of Popular Music*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, pp. 1-3; Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 51-55.

separately.[39] Importantly, this introduced the means for aesthetic and creative decisions to be made on the part of the person doing the recording, enabling the creation of a certain effect or mood.[40] As Virgil Moorefield noted,

> For rock and pop, the interest generally lies not in virtuosity or harmonic complexity, but in a mood, an atmosphere, an unusual combination of sounds; these are greatly enhanced by good production.[41]

The rise of what is commonly known as the 'auteur producer' is to a large extent a result of this technological development, and certainly would have been both unnecessary and impossible without it.

Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were a consummate songwriting team responsible for "Hound Dog", "Kansas City", "Love Potion #9" and "Yakety Yak", among many others. They were songwriters who became 'producers' at a time when this role had not yet been codified into what we understand it to mean today, or indeed, into the meaning it had attained by the early 1960s. In the late 1950s, when Leiber and Stoller were working for Atlantic records, they fought to have themselves credited as producers, as Jerry Leiber explained:

> 'We were doing it, but we were not receiving more than the songwriter's royalty, so we were doing two jobs and thought we should be given credit for it and also given a royalty. *This was unheard of at the time*, but I think we were probably the first to break the ice, creating the situation where a [production] credit was given and a royalty established.'[42]

This is significant because Leiber and Stoller trained one of rock's earliest and famously eccentric auteur producers, Phil Spector, who moved from Los Angeles to New York in the early 1960s, and was apprenticed to Leiber and Stoller 'for about a year and a half.'[43] Dissatisfied with

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[39] John Tobler and Stuart Grundy, *The Record Producers*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982, pp. 7-8.
[40] Shepherd, Lang et al., p. 196; Moorefield, pp. 3-5.
[41] Moorefield, p. xv. Moorefield is a musician, composer and producer who ran his own recording studio in New York City for thirteen years (p. xix).
[42] Quoted in Tobler and Grundy, *The Record Producers*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982, p. 18 (emphasis mine).
[43] Tobler and Grundy, p. 18, for more detail about Spector and his early days with Leiber and Stoller, see Moorefield, pp. 5-12; Mark Ribowsky, *He's A Rebel: Phil Spector, Rock & Roll's Legendary Producer*, Cambridge MA: Da Capo, 2006, pp. 49-77.

constantly getting short-changed on royalties, Leiber and Stoller had made a couple of abortive attempts to set up their own labels, Tiger and Daisy. Early in 1964, they established the Red Bird record label with George Goldner, with both parties recognising that their union could be mutually advantageous. Leiber and Stoller were highly respected hit-making songwriters but apparently incompetent when it came to marketing their material themselves; on the other hand, Goldner was "'the best salesman ever.'"[44] Red Bird Records, and its subsidiary Blue Cat, were located in the Brill Building at 1619 Broadway, and around the middle of 1964, Leiber and Stoller found themselves training another aspiring young producer, George Morton.

Leiber and Stoller worked in a manner that has significant implications for an informed understanding of Morton's methods, and his input and contribution to the Shangri-Las' material. Leiber and Stoller became producers 'in self-defence' as they put it, because they envisaged their material

> 'as records rather than as a song that exists on a piece of paper...when we took our songs to an A & R man [they] never came back in the way that we had imagined them.'[45]

The 'Artist & Repertoire' role was the forerunner of the producer, and responsible 'for matching the artist with the material (repertoire) and ensuring that all came together in the studio at the right time.'[46] The role was not an artistic or aesthetic one, in most cases, more an organisational one, although talent-spotting and an ear for sellable artists and/or material was essential.[47] Leiber and Stoller worked quite differently, and it is significant that they conceived of their songs as recordings, not scores. Mike Stoller described how they would

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[44] Ken Emerson, *Always Magic In the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era*, New York: Viking Penguin, 2005, pp. 214-17.
[45] Quoted in Tobler and Grundy, p. 11.
[46] Quoted in Tobler and Grundy, p. 11.
[47] Shepherd, Lang et al., p. 196; Moorefield, p. 27.

> ‘tailor the material to the individual singers...as time went on, we knew exactly what they could do and couldn’t do, and we would create the material that way in the first place...it was like a play, a radio play.’[48]

Here Stoller was speaking specifically of the Coasters, an African-American vocal group that began life as a doo-wop group called the Robins. Their close relationship with Leiber and Stoller resulted in a string of hits, including “Yakety Yak” and “Searchin.’” Jerry Leiber went on to comment that

> ‘they were like mini-rhythm and blues operas, those songs, three-minute operas...and the Coasters were to some extent selected because of their existing personalities...they were almost like characters out of a comic strip, and they always played the same role.’[49]

Leiber and Stoller had clearly conceptualised ideas for their songs, the performers, and how they wanted the end result to *sound*, and had the experience and technical knowledge to convey this to the musicians and singers they worked with. Leiber and Stoller’s methods had a significant impact on George Morton, who Leiber described as having ‘a tremendous amount of raw talent, but was inexperienced, didn’t know the spectrum of the orchestra nor what it would do.’[50] Leiber related further that

> ‘Shadow would come in with pieces of an idea, and I spent many hours showing him how to structure and shape his bizarre little radio dramas, although they were somewhat different from ours. His were soap operas and melodramas, ours were comedies. He had seagulls clacking in the background and surf washing up – they were kind of romantic, teenage romances.’[51]

What is clear here is that, like Leiber and Stoller, Morton also had a ‘vision’ for his material, a concept, feel, mood, aesthetic for his ‘radio dramas.’ Morton had less technical ability (although, as we have seen, he was not the novice that he presented himself as) than his far more experienced supervisors, but, just as Leiber and Stoller tailored their material for and wrote to the strengths of the Coasters, so would Morton with the Shangri-Las. The combination of Morton’s ideas and musical

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[48] Quoted in Tobler and Grundy, p. 13.
[49] Quoted in Tobler and Grundy, pp. 13-14.
[50] I will discuss this with reference to the Shangri-Las and specific songs Chapters Five and Six.
[51] Quoted in Tobler and Grundy, p. 19.

aesthetics with the Shangri-Las' talent, personalities and ability to interpret and convey his ideas, as well as their willingness to immerse themselves in this collaborative process, produced the body of material for which the Shangri-Las, and Morton, are famous. The song Leiber referred to, with 'seagulls clacking in the background and surf washing up,' is the Shangri-Las' first single for the Red Bird label, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)". It was penned by Morton, and the circumstances of its creation and the signing of the Shangri-Las to Leiber, Stoller and Goldner's Red Bird label are inextricably intertwined.

The Creation of "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)

When asked by Suzi Quatro in a 2007 interview to describe George 'Shadow' Morton, Mary Weiss replied, 'He was a maniac.'[52] In a long interview with *Goldmine* magazine in 1991, Morton recounted at length what has become the standard narrative of his entry into the music industry, and his involvement with the Shangri-Las. Morton related that, before getting involved in the production of music, he had no real idea what he wanted to do, 'everything from a priest to owning restaurants.'[53] However, he had

> done some things with a group out on Long Island...Tony Michaels was included in it...We did rock 'n' roll stuff, all kinds of stuff...we got on stage--five guys--and sang. Doo-wop, black, rock 'n' roll--big time...The name of the group was the Marquees [sic; correct spelling Markeys]. RCA was interested. They signed the group for a couple of records....we sang in the basement, we sang at the high schools. That's how I met Ellie Greenwich. She was an accordian [sic] player at Levittown High or maybe East Meadow...down Wantagh Avenue, just before Southern State Parkway.[54]

Like almost everyone involved with the Shangri-Las, Morton's musical background was in doo-wop, vocal harmonising. According to Morton, his

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[52] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).
[53] 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow02.html (accessed 7 October, 2010).
[54] 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow02.html (accessed 7 October, 2010).

friend Jerry Love happened to mention one night that their mutual acquaintance from Levittown, the aforementioned Ellie Greenwich, was working as a songwriter in the Brill Building and had co-written several hit singles including “Be My Baby” (The Ronettes) and “Da Doo Ron Ron” (The Crystals).[55] Greenwich was now signed to Leiber and Stoller’s publishing company, Trio, which released records on their newly-formed Red Bird label, and had a thriving songwriting partnership with her husband, Jeff Barry.[56] Morton apparently called Greenwich and arranged to visit her at her workplace, and, after some verbal sparring with Barry, during which Morton declared that he, like Barry, wrote ‘hit songs’ for a living, left with a loose arrangement to return to their Brill Building office with one.[57]

According to Morton, he ‘went back to Long Island and called a friend, Joe Monaco, who had a studio in his basement’ where Morton had recorded many times before. He hastily assembled some musicians, and got in touch with ‘some girls who were singing in Cambria Heights, Queens.’[58] These ‘girls’ were, of course, the Shangri-Las, and Joe Monaco was Morton’s old songwriting partner from the Markeys. Presumably, the

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[55] Disc jockey Murray ‘the K’ Kaufman referred to Jerry Love as ‘the Jolly Green Giant,’ and ‘the biggest (in height) record promotion man in town;’ Murray Kaufman, *Murray the K Tells it Like it is, Baby*, New York, Chicago and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, p. 28. It should be noted that, even at this early stage, Morton had some solid music industry connections.

[56] ‘Spectropop Presents Ellie Greenwich, interviewed by Charlotte Greig’ http://www.spectropop.com/EllieGreenwich2/index.htm (accessed 5 June, 2010); Betrock, p. 86.

[57] Morton’s description of the encounter is relayed in ‘The “Shadow” Reappears’, http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow04.html (accessed 14 October, 2010) and his composition and recording of “Remember” presented as ‘just a joke,’ and something he did ‘just for the hell of it, just for the sheer craziness of it.’ Of Barry, Morton said, ‘I didn't like his attitude. I mean, I'm originally from Brooklyn and you don't take that attitude with me very long. But he was just being himself. When he turned to me, because he kept his back to me while he was tinkling on the piano and I didn't like that...he turned to me, and I guess to jam me, said, "And what do you do for a living?" To jam him back, I said, "Same thing you do--I write songs." And he said, "What kind of songs?" And I said, "Hit songs!" And he said, "Bring 'em to me." I exited the room, I remember waiting about ten seconds, and then I knocked on the door. When he leaned over to open the door, I guess he figured I was going to apologize or come up with some excuse because he put a smile on his face and said, "Yeah...go ahead." And I said, "We forgot to discuss something. Do you want a fast hit or a slow hit?" He laughed and said, "Kid, bring me a slow hit."’ See also Betrock, pp. 99-100.

[58] Morton, quoted in Betrock, p. 99.

meeting at which Mary Weiss described meeting Morton at Bob 'Babalu' Lewis's apartment had already taken place, and Morton got in touch with the Shangri-Las about singing on a demo through his old friend, their manager Tony Michaels. According to Morton, the Shangri-Las, the musicians, and Morton himself were on their way to Dynamic Studios in Levittown for the recording session, when Morton realised he did not have a song; he then pulled the car over and wrote "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" on 'the side of South Oyster Bay Road' in twenty minutes.[59]

Morton's version of these events is far more colourful than indicated here; I will discuss this in more detail later. Morton then related that

> 'I walked into the studio that day. I didn't know how arrangements went 'cause it was all in my head. I don't play an instrument or anything. So I said to the piano player, "You play bom, bom, bom. Do this, don't do that....[60]

The piano player was Billy Joel, who was about fifteen at the time. He played in a Long Island band called the Echoes, and was approached at a gig by Morton about playing

> piano on a recording. So I go down to this little studio in a guy's basement in Levittown, Dynamic Studios, and they've got this sheet music down there. There's two songs, one's called 'Leader of the Pack' and the other is called 'Remember (Walking in the Sand)' and this is pretty easy stuff to play and then Shadow comes in.[61]

These recollections are noteworthy, given Morton's apparent and oft-professed *lack* of familiarity with things like sheet music and notation. It also calls into question Morton's now legendary story of hastily penning "Remember" on the way to the studio, if there was sheet music already there. On the other hand, it is unlikely that Morton would have worked using sheet music; his description of telling Joel to 'play bom bom bom' and having it 'all in my head' is consistent with Jerry's Leiber's

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[59] 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow04.html (accessed 16 October, 2010; Betrock, p. 99; Tom Hibbert, 'Billy Joel: We All Make Mistakes...', *Q*, September, 1987, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article_with_login.html?ArticleID=9924 (accessed 9 June, 2008).
[60] Betrock, p. 99.
[61] Hibbert, 'Billy Joel: We All Make Mistakes…', http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=9924 (accessed 20 June, 2009).

recollections of working with Morton later, shortly *after* this session took place. The other possibility is that Morton had hired an arranger, which he would certainly have had access to later, after signing with Red Bird, as Ellie Greenwich explained:

> Very often arrangers are used for their ideas, to some degree, but very much to notate what's to be played. Sometimes a songwriter hears an entire record in his head, but doesn't want to take the time, and is probably not that well equipped, to write down all these parts. So they'll hire an arranger, pay him whatever, and have him arrange a session.[62]

Furthermore, the generally accepted version has “Leader of the Pack” being written *after* the success of “Remember,” although there is some conflicting evidence regarding this that will be discussed shortly. Joel continued,

> He's a pretty strange guy, Shadow. He's wearing this big cape and dark glasses and he played the producer role to the hilt. I think he had a thing about Phil Spector. He wanted to be the Phil Spector of the East Coast. And he talked in these wild, dramatic, theatrical terms – he wanted more 'thunder' and he wanted more 'purple' in the record. He's waving his arms in the air saying 'give me more PURPLE'. And I'm sitting there kinda nervous – this is my first time ever in a recording studio – and I'm hissing to the other musicians, What does that mean? How do I play "purple"? And the guitar player leans over and says, Oh, just play louder, kid.[63]

Theatrics aside, this anecdote is significant because it demonstrates that what was uppermost in Morton’s mind was not note-for-note technical perfection, but infusing this recording with intensity and drama, which he articulated as ‘thunder’ and ‘purple.’ He also, as far as Joel was concerned, very definitely envisaged himself as a wild, eccentric producer, a role he played ‘to the hilt,’ even at this point. Interestingly, this sense of dramatic tension is not as evident in Morton’s earlier records – there are certainly hints, but nothing as fully-realised as this. Perhaps the distinctive qualities of Mary Weiss’s voice and its inherent emotional intensity suggested to Morton at this early stage that angst-ridden teen drama

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[62] ‘Spectropop Presents Ellie Greenwich,’ http://www.spectropop.com/EllieGreenwich2/index.htm (accessed 5 June, 2010).
[63] Hibbert, ‘Billy Joel: We All Make Mistakes…’, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=9924 (accessed 20 June, 2009).

would be appropriate material for the group. In any case, it was clear to the first people that heard “Remember” that the collaboration between Morton and the Shangri-Las was noteworthy and compelling.

The original demo version of “Remember” on which Joel played apparently ran for about seven minutes, and Morton brought this recording to Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich at Red Bird. Greenwich related:

> ‘Well, he came back and played us this weird little record. It was like seven minutes long with this long narration by George in the beginning. I knew there was no way we could put out anything like that, but I thought, “Gee, that girl’s voice is so strange, and the song is so interesting.’ So we played it for Leiber and Stoller and they said, “Go cut it.” [64]

Greenwich was immediately taken with the combination of the voice(s) and the song, the performers *and* the material. However, it was Morton that was signed up first, like Greenwich and Barry, to Trio Music. Morton related,

> The door opens up and a guy with one blue eye and one brown eye sticks his head in--Jerry Leiber--and asks me, "Did you write this?" I said, "Yeah." "Did you produce this?" I said, "What does that mean?" "Did you tell everybody what to play and how to play it? Did you tell them how to sing?" I said, "Yeah." He must have opened the door and asked me if I wrote it and produced it about three times. I took it to mean that he didn't believe me. He opens the door again and says, "Well, how would you like to work here?" I said, "What do I have to do?" "Do exactly what you did here! Make songs! Make some records!" So I did...and the money was good.[65]

Morton’s supposed lack of understanding of what it meant to produce a recording is patently ludicrous; as we have seen, Morton was credited as producer on the record label of “Only Seventeen” by the Beattle-ettes, released earlier in 1964, and ‘played the producer role to the hilt,’ as Billy Joel put it.

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[64] Betrock, p. 100; MacKinney, interview with George ‘Shadow’ Morton, 24 April, 2007. Morton indicated to me that if a copy of this original still existed, it would be with ‘Joey’ Monaco in South Carolina, where, according to Morton, he now resides.
[65] ‘The “Shadow” Reappears...’, http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow04.html (accessed 16 October, 2010; see also John Grecco, *Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas1.htm (accessed 22 February, 2010).

According to Morton, Jerry Leiber had said ‘we’re going to have re-record a bunch of this’ because the recording quality was inadequate, as it was fundamentally a demo.[66] It would have been entirely standard to sign Morton for the *song* (and others that he would write), and select one of the singers or groups already on Red Bird’s roster to record the song. As will become apparent shortly, multiple artists on a label’s roster would, at the management’s discretion, record versions of songs owned by the label’s publishing company. In some cases, as Greenwich pointed out, the notion of an artist was dispensed with altogether:

> [We] would make demonstration records of the songs we wrote...A case like that was a group called the Raindrops, but there really wasn't a group, it was just myself and Jeff doing all the voices. We did this demo for a [doo-wop] group called the Sensations, who'd had a hit with 'Let Me In', (sings) "Let me in, wee-oo, oop wee-oo". We wrote a song called 'What A Guy' that we thought would be a great follow-up for them. We went in and made the demo. The publishers heard it and thought it could be a record. But there was no group. Back then, a lot of labels put out what they called dummy groups. We'd throw a few people together, go out and lip-synch the records, but there really wasn't a group called the Raindrops. [67]

This demonstrates the great extent to which singers were perceived primarily as vehicles to sell *the song*:

> The artist is real powerful nowadays. Back then they weren't. If a *songwriter* had three or four things in a row that made it, they had some power. The artist might have been on the bottom rung in the 60s, but not today.[68]

In the case of the Shangri-Las however, as Greenwich also noted (above), the combination of artist(s) and song was sufficiently persuasive and compelling to warrant the signing of both the songwriter and the performers. The Shangri-Las signed ‘an exclusive five year contract with

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[66] MacKinney, interview with George ‘Shadow’ Morton, 24 April, 2007.
[67] ‘Spectropop Presents Ellie Greenwich,’ http://www.spectropop.com/EllieGreenwich2/index.htm (accessed 8 June, 2010).
[68] ‘Spectropop Presents Ellie Greenwich,’ http://www.spectropop.com/EllieGreenwich2/index.htm (accessed 8 June, 2010)., emphasis mine.

Red Bird in April of 1964', and since they were all minors, their parents had to sign for them.[69] Ellie Greenwich continued,

> George signed on with Trio and we started getting together with the girls and working on arrangements and vocals and just when we were getting ready to go into the studio, all of a sudden everything came to a halt, because in walked Artie Ripp and the Kama-Sutra people, and *they had contracts with the girls* and there was nothing we could do about it.'[70]

There is some question about whether contracts had actually been signed with Kama Sutra; according to Morton,

> Tony Michaels had the deal with – well I didn't know he had a deal – I knew he was *talking* to people, but I didn't know he had a *deal* with Artie Ripp. Believe me that has caused *legal* complications over the years...when Ripp and his people heard 'Remember' and found out it was the Shangri-Las...Ripp had used the girls on four demos – *demos*! There was no contract. But that organisation, shall we say, a demo means we own you. And they came through the doors saying, '*We* own the Shangri-Las.'[71]

The 'demos' recorded by the Shangri-Las were "Wishing Well" and probably "Simon Says," as well. As Mary pointed out a few years ago, '"Wishing Well"' was actually our demo and they played around with it and released it.'[72] As Greenwich's earlier comments indicate, this was a reasonably common occurrence. However, Morton suggested darkly that Ripp's claim on the Shangri-Las had rather more sinister backing than a contract:

> You know how they say the pen is more powerful than the sword? Well, the bullet is more powerful than the pen. Artie Ripp said he owned it...and the people who worked on his company owned his company...they didn't have a contract either, they just owned the company. So. They ended up getting part of the publishing and part of the production, me and the girls got screwed big time on that one. But we didn't know, we were kids like everyone else. They said, 'This is for your own good, sign here,' we'd sign here.[73]

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[69] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas2.htm (accessed 24 July, 2009).
[70] Ellie Greenwich, quoted in Betrock, p. 100 (my italics).
[71] MacKinney, interview with George 'Shadow' Morton, 24 April, 2007.
[72] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/02.html (accessed 17 June, 2010).
[73] MacKinney, interview with George 'Shadow' Morton, 24 April, 2007.

Morton was alluding to the source of Kama Sutra's initial company funding, some of which came from mobster John 'Sonny' Franzese, who was apparently a frequent visitor to Kama-Sutra's offices.[74] Franzese was a capo in the Colombo family, one of the five New York City *La Cosa Nostra* families; his reputation for enforcement through brutality was formidable.[75] The involvement of mafia figures would become far more problematic later, and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. For the moment though, the point is that, contract or no contract, and with the power of Kama-Sutra's mafia backing a likely factor, Ripp's demands were met. An arrangement was then reached between Red Bird and Kama-Sutra whereby they would receive 'some credit, some publishing and some royalties', and the recording proceeded.'[76] However, as Greenwich explained:

> 'So all of a sudden George [Morton] and I are off the label as producers, and Jeff and Artie Ripp share production credits. And you know, Artie Ripp *wasn't even there*...'[77]

This is borne out by a full page advertisement in *Cash Box* in which 'Kama-Sutra Productions thanks the music business for these hits and salutes the music operators of America.' The records listed below include:

Red Bird Records
"REMEMBER"
(Walking in the Sand)
THE SHANGRI-LAS
Produced by
Artie Ripp and Jeff Barry

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[74] Michael Franzese, *Blood Covenant*, New Kensington PA: Whitaker House, 2003, pp. 22-4; Justine Picardie and Dorothy Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers of Rock and Roll,* Rev. edn.; London: Fourth Estate, 1993, pp. 112-114.

[75] The five New York City *La Cosa Nostra* families were Colombo, Gambino, Genovese, Bonanno and Lucchese; see Franzese, p. 27; see also Fredric Dannen, *Hit Men: Power Brokers and Fast Money Inside the Record Business*, New York: Crown, 1990, p. 164. Franzese was in the news again in 2010, and was described as a man 'who turned murder into an art form and whose name made foes shudder in fear.' See also John Marzulli, 'Colombo underboss John (Sonny) Franzese betrayed by son, who'll testify against legendary mobster,' *New York Daily News*, 9 June, 2010: see http://www.nydailynews.com/news/ny_crime/the_mob/2010/06/09/2010-06-09_famed_mob_enforcer_sonny_franzese_will_wish_his_own_boy_was_never_born_as__colom.html (accessed 12 June, 2010).

[76] Betrock, p. 100.

[77] Betrock, p. 100; see also Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas2.htm (accessed 17 July, 2009).

Tender Tunes Music Co.[78]

Workers

"Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" was released in July, 1964, and on 1 August it was listed in *Billboard's* 'Hot Pop Spotlights.' The reviewer said

> For those who like a different sound, try this haunting delivery. Sea gulls in the background will no doubt help this side fly away. Quite a switch. Flip: "It's Easier to Cry".[79]

"Remember" entered the Hot 100 at #78 on 22 August, and peaked at #5 on 26 September, 1964. In a 2006 interview, Miriam Linna asked Mary Weiss about the success of "Remember":

> ML: When *Remember* hit, you started playing right away...
>
> MW: Right away, yes. The Brooklyn Fox Theater. I was travelling all the time. When I wasn't doing that I was in the studio. When I wasn't doing that I was rehearsing.[80]

Although the group had been performing at dances and hops around Queens, a record in the *Billboard Hot 100* was fame on a totally different level. As with Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers almost ten years earlier, concert performances, television appearances and tours began immediately. Mary Weiss later commented to Suzi Quatro, 'when you put out your first record and it hits, you have to. So we were ill-prepared for it...so we kind of fudged our way through it!'[81]

The Marvelettes, another set of teen female singers, who were signed to Motown, were similarly unprepared when their first single "Please Mr. Postman." was a #1 hit in 1961. As Marvelettes member Katherine Anderson remembered, with some anger,

> 'When we went on stage, we were 16 and 17 years old and there wasn't a *damn* person at Motown who could give us any real advice on *how* we

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[78] *Cash Box*, 17 October, 1964, p. 23. 'Tender Tunes' was Ripp/Kama-Sutra's publishing company.
[79] 'Hot Pop Spotlights,' *Billboard*, 1 August, 1964, p. 18.
[80] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/02.html (accessed 26 July, 2009).
[81] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).

> should be doing it...We got a lot of our performing experience from doing record hops. You go and you do your one little record – and you pantomime that – and then you're supposed to be able to get out there and perform live on stage with a band? It's a totally different ballgame...when we had "Please Mr. Postman," no one was prepared for what was going to happen. And I beg to differ anyone who says they were prepared. That's a damn lie...Motown was *not* ready when it happened.'[82]

Nor was Red Bird, and it seems that, like the Marvelettes, the Shangri-Las were thrust into the turbulent world of showbusiness with little choice but to learn as they went, and fast. Their first television appearance, performing "Remember", was 'on the Clark Race Show in Pittsburgh.'[83] Race was a popular disk jockey on radio KDKA-AM, Pittsburgh, having relocated from Hudson NY in 1959. In 1963, KDKA-TV launched "Dance Party," a weekly Saturday show which featured local teen dancers and live performances by current artists with hits.[84] Mary Weiss described their performance:

> 'We didn't know anything about TV. We wore skirts and white shell blouses. We didn't have any makeup on. And we shone like a bunch of headlights. You know the kids in the audience can tell if you're professional or amateur. Boy did we come on amateur. They held their breaths for us. Then afterward, this 14-year old kid came up and said, "Don't worry kid, you'll make it."'[85]

Nevertheless, the Shangri-Las' performing ability and stage presence quickly began to attract attention. In an interview with *New Musical Express* (*NME*) from November 1964, Chris Curtis, of British group the Searchers, spoke of performing with the Shangri-Las in the USA a couple of months earlier. Both groups had been part of what was, as Curtis put it,

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[82] Marc Taylor, *The Original Marvelettes: Motown's Mystery Girl Group*, Aloiv, 2004, pp. 122-3. In fact, it was the Marvelettes' perceived lack of 'polish' that was partly responsible for the establishment of the Motown Artist Development Department, which 'involved lessons with vocal coach Maurice King, rehearsals with choreographer Cholly Atkins, and "finishing school" with Maxine Powell.' Motown groups that followed in the Marvelettes' footsteps, most notably the Supremes and Martha and the Vandellas, would benefit greatly from this. See Warwick, pp. 51-56.

[83] Richard Goldstein, 'The Soul Sound from Sheepshead Bay,' *Village Voice*, 23 June, 1966, p. 30; Betrock, p. 100. I have been unable to locate a date for this appearance, but it likely would have been September or October of 1964.

[84] Adrian McCoy, 'Clark Race: Obituary,' *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 28 July, 1999, http://postgazette.com/regionstate/19990728race9.asp (accessed 25, July, 2009).

[85] Goldstein, 'The Soul Sound from Sheepshead Bay,' p. 30.

‘a six-day run at Brooklyn Fox Theatre’ in one of Murray ‘the K’ Kaufman’s famous revues.[86] Murray the K was an extremely influential and popular radio host on New York City radio station WINS. He befriended the Beatles on their first visit to New York in February, 1964, largely as a consequence of the Beatles’ prior knowledge of him from American groups that had toured Britain. He marketed himself as ‘the fifth Beatle,’ and, not surprisingly, was hugely popular with teenage audiences. His shows at the Brooklyn Fox were famously multi-racial, both on stage and in the audience, and were aimed at teenagers whose summer vacations were just finishing.[87]

One of these shows, probably the first of the ‘six-day run’ that Curtis referred to, took place on Friday 4 September, 1964. On the same day, another big teen show opened for a ten-day run at the Paramount Theatre on Times Square in Manhattan, at which the Animals were the headlining act. Howard Thompson, writing in *The New York Times*, reported that ‘Teen-agers Howl for the Animals,’ and called them ‘5 Beatle-like Britons’ who ‘ambled on stage almost diffidently, to a symphony of squeals.’ Thompson mentioned that what he called ‘another stage jamboree also opened yesterday at the Brooklyn Fox.’[88]

Both the Fox and Paramount shows received detailed coverage in *Hit Parader*, a magazine aimed at a teen audience that attempted to cover pop music more meaningfully than most teen-oriented music publications. It is unusual to have such a lengthy and detailed description of one of these shows, and significantly, the perspective was not an imperious and condescending adult viewpoint, as was the *New York Times* coverage of the Animals show at the Paramount, which was a show organised according to a similar ‘revue’ format. This account constitutes a

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[86] Richard Green, ‘Searchers talk about the Shangri-Las,’ *New Musical Express*, 20 November, 1964, p. 13.
[87] Annie J. Randall, *Dusty!: Queen of the Postmods*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 51.
[88] Howard Thompson, ‘Teen-agers Howl for the Animals,’ *The New York Times*, 5 September, 1964, p. 11.

fascinatingly telling snapshot of a couple of hours at the Brooklyn Fox in mid-1964, and I am citing it at length in order to demonstrate how such shows operated, and the manner in which they were reflective of various musical and cultural trends that are completely at odds with later, but remarkably resilient, understandings of performance and authenticity.

Under the heading 'A Rock 'n' Roll Doubleheader', the author noted that

> The two theatres were only 20 minutes apart by subway. Many ambitious devotees sat through two shows in one theatre then hopped on a train and caught two more across the river.[89]

At the Brooklyn Fox Theatre on Flatbush Avenue, Chris Curtis recalled that, in addition to his own group and the Shangri-Las, others on the bill included Motown artists Martha and the Vandellas and Marvin Gaye.[90] *Hit Parader* noted that Jamaican singer Millie Small opened proceedings, performing her heavily ska-inflected hit "My Boy Lollipop."[91] Small was followed by The Dovells, a male doo-wop group from Philadelphia, who performed their 1961 hit "The Bristol Stomp," which was released on the Cameo-Parkway label.[92] That a doo wop group singing a hit from 1961 was included on a bill aimed specifically at teenagers in 1964 demonstrates that doo wop was deeply ingrained enough in the culture and musical climate of 1964 to still be very relevant.[93] After the Dovells came the Shangri-Las. They performed one song, their hit "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand", which was yet to reach its chart peak of #5. As the *Hit Parader* author reported:

> The mood becomes plaintive as four attractive young ladies step up to the mike and sing their lament for a lost summer love, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand).'[94]

Their performance made quite an impression on Chris Curtis, who said,

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[89] 'A Rock 'n' Roll Double Header,' *Hit Parader*, March, 1965, p. 34.
[90] Green, p. 13.
[91] A Rock 'n' Roll Double Header,' p. 37.
[92] The Dovells, "Bristol Stomp" b/w "Out in the Cold Again", CAMEO-PARKWAY 827, 1961.
[93] Irene Brodsky, who attended many Murray the K shows at the Brooklyn Fox when in her early teens, testified with wild enthusiasm about the Dovells and their popularity; Lisa MacKinney, phone conversation with Irene Brodsky, 27 August 2009.
[94] A Rock 'n' Roll Double Header,' p. 37.

> 'It's quite a weird presentation they've got...the lead singer stands right over on one side of the stage, and the three others stand in the middle, instead of the other way round. It's because when they sing 'remember' and she goes 'walkin' in the sand', she turns her head away and looks down all dispassionately, and they wave their arms about. They do a lot of weird actions, it's like choreography with arms, if you can have such a thing. One girl's hand goes down, then the next, then the next. I've never seen anything like it before.' [95]

Earlier in the article, Richard Green had noted that

> The way the chart-topping Supremes wave their arms about when singing captivated thousands of British fans on their recent visit here. But not many people know that another girl team climbing the charts adopt a similar technique on stage.'[96]

It is noteworthy that the Supremes were trained by professional choreographer Charles 'Cholly' Atkins. Atkins had had a distinguished career as a singer as well as jazz and tap dancer, performing with big band stars Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway and Count Basie. In the mid-to-late 1950s he began 'choreographing singers,' developing a 'language of sophisticated movements' through which singers

> '*perform* their music, not by retelling a song's storyline in predictable pantomime, but by punctuating it with rhythmical dance steps, turns and gestures drawn from the rich bedrock of American vernacular dance.'[97]

George Goldner and Richard Barrett had hired Atkins to work with Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers; Mary Wilson (the Supremes) met Atkins the Apollo Theatre in 1962, and he later accepted a full-time position as choreographer at Motown.[98] It seems that the Shangri-Las were strongly influenced by this style of performative choreography; certainly, Richard Green noted the similarities in his piece. But it is hard to imagine, if they were largely left to fend for themselves during their first television appearance, that the Shangri-Las would have had professional

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[95] Green, p. 13. There is a 'clip' online that has been somewhat clumsily pieced together from a small amount of footage of the group performing this song. The soundtrack (not live) is quite out of synchronisation with the footage, but this is the only footage at all that I have been able to locate of the group performing "Remember": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy8_38U3xLU (accessed 7 June, 2010).
[96] Green, p. 13.
[97] Quoted in Warwick, p. 53.
[98] Mary Wilson, *Dreamgirl: My Life as a Supreme*, London: Arrow, 1986, p. 184; Warwick, p. 53; Taylor, p. 65.

choreographers at their disposal to assist with their routines, or that their label would have seen fit, especially at this early stage, to invest in one.[99]

At the Brooklyn Fox, the Shangri-Las were followed by 'five dapper, swinging, very talented young men' whose 'footwork is brisk and dazzling, their harmony...smooth and groovy'; Motown group the Temptations.[100] They were followed by Motown's biggest group at that time, the Supremes, who proceeded to 'build a soulful, hand-clapping mood that fills the theatre.' Next up were Jay and the Americans, another group whose roots were firmly in Long Island doo-wop, and who were signed with Leiber and Stoller and also involved with Artie Ripp. They performed two songs, "Only in America" and "Come a Bit Closer." (Two years later, the Shangri-Las would record their 1962 hit, "She Cried"). Next on the bill were the Contours, a Motown male vocal group. The Ronettes, 'popular with their bump and grind choreography,' were next, followed by the Searchers

> direct from England, who perform their great hits, "Needles and Pins", "Don't Throw Your Love Away" and "Someday We're Gonna Love Again."[101]

They were followed by Martha and the Vandellas, who did their hits "Heatwave" and "Dancing in the Street". Doo-wop group Little Anthony and the Imperials, who recorded a large quantity of material on George Goldner's End label, followed next. The writer was of the opinion that they 'are returning to the heights of popularity they enjoyed in the 50s, and rightfully so.' They were followed by 'another British import, Dusty Springfield' to perform "Wishin' and Hopin'". The last two acts on the bill were

> The Miracles...demonstrating the superb showmanship that's made them a top group over the years. When they finish their act with "Mickey's Monkey", their ties and jackets cast aside in the spirited workout, the audience goes ape.

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[99] The Shangri-Las may have received professional assistance with their choreography, but I have not located any evidence for this.
[100] 'A Rock 'n' Roll Double Header,' p. 37.
[101] 'A Rock 'n' Roll Double Header,' p. 52.

> Wrapping up the show is Marvin Gaye, the epitome of cool soul. With his smooth, easy-going style, he shakes up the house singing his many hits, including "Try It Baby" and "Baby Don't You Do It."
> All the performers join Murray and Marvin onstage for the big finale, as the curtain closes.[102]

First, it is immediately apparent that there were an enormous number of performers on the bill – fifteen in total. Each performer was limited to a few songs – those higher up the bill had a correspondingly greater allocation. On this occasion, Marvin Gaye had top billing, and performed, as the author put it, 'his many hits.' Richard Green, the *NME* reporter who interviewed Chris Curtis about the Shangri-Las, noted

> Chris told me that the girls used to only sing the one number in their act. The Searchers were kept down to three.[103]

This is completely unlike what is now taken for granted and expected from a live concert – an approximately hour-long performance by a single singer or group, with maybe one or two support acts added to the bill. This is to a large extent because since the mid-to-late 1960s, the primary format for the musical artistic statement and consumption of same is an *album* of around forty minutes (two approximately twenty-minute sides of an LP). This expanded to an hour or more with the advent of the compact disc in the mid-1980s. In 1964, the dominant format for the consumption of popular music was the 45 rpm single, with one song on each side.[104] Teenagers would experience these by playing their own copies on a turntable, and, far more commonly, by hearing them played on the radio by a disk jockey like Murray the K, Bob 'Babalu' Lewis, or Cousin Brucie. The concert performance and experience reflected this, since Murray the K's revue was almost like a radio show performed live. Annie J. Randall, in her study of Dusty Springfield, who performed at the same Brooklyn Fox show(s), noted that

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[102] 'A Rock 'n' Roll Double Header,' p. 52.
[103] Green, p. 13.
[104] Generally speaking the 'A-side' was the song expected to chart; the 'B-side' was often throwaway material. This was a deliberate strategy; if the buyer could get two hit songs on one record instead of having to purchase each separately, sales were halved. See Jim Dawson and Steve Propes, *45 RPM: The History, Heroes & Villains of a Pop Music Revolution*, San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003, pp. 97-109.

> In a single show, the screaming and dancing-in-the-aisles teens could hear the current hit songs of their favourite performers.[105]

A 'house' band of professional musicians would play the backing music for all the groups. This ensured minimal changeover time was required between the different acts; it was simply a matter of one set of singers walking off stage and other coming on, and the musical component of the show would run for sixty to ninety minutes in total. A film was usually screened before the musical performances.[106]

So an important factor that made a concert like this possible to stage at all was the heavy presence, in fact almost entirely, of vocal groups, *singing groups*, not bands. The Searchers and Jay and the Americans were the exceptions on this bill. After all, these shows were enormously popular, and hundreds of teenagers would not flock to the Brooklyn Fox to see concerts in some kind of old fashioned, outdated format. Ronnie Spector of the Ronettes, who were particular favourites of Murray the K and regular performers at the Brooklyn Fox, remembered that

> Going to one of Murray the K's rock and roll revues at the Brooklyn Fox was the highlight of any New York kid's week in the early sixties. For two dollars and fifty cents you got to see at least a dozen acts, and these were the top names in rock and roll – from Little Stevie Wonder to Bobby Vee to the Temptations, everybody played these shows.[107]

Singers and singing groups had been, and remained, a dominant presence in popular music. Beatlemania had hit, but well-entrenched established forms did not change and disappear overnight. Vocal groups were heavily steeped in the harmonising traditions of doo-wop, which was the dominant form of teen music in New York City, but particularly in Brooklyn and Queens, from the mid 1950s til the early 60s. This was reflected in the choice of artists on this bill – the Dovells and Little Anthony and the Imperials were functioning doo-wop groups, and Jay and the

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[105] Randall, p. 52.
[106] MacKinney, telephone conversation with Irene Brodsky, 27 August 2009.
[107] Ronnie Spector, *Be My Baby: How I Survived Mascara, Miniskirts, and Madness, or My Life as a Fabulous Ronette*, New York: Harmony, 1990, pp. 32-3.

Americans had begun as a doo-wop group and still performed in a heavily doo-wop inflected style.

As we have seen, those who performed were limited to a very small number of songs, so it seems extraordinary that artists like the Searchers and Dusty Springfield would come all the way from England to do this. However, the Murray the K revues ran all day – the entire show was performed six or seven times over, and the artists were at the venue, the Brooklyn Fox, for twelve hours at a time. Ronnie Spector remembered that

> We all knew we'd be stuck back in the theatre for like twelve hours straight. So everyone tried to make the best of it. The dressing rooms were all next to each other on this long hall, so the acts couldn't help but mingle. Diana Ross would come in to borrow our lipstick.[108]

Mary Weiss described these shows as '*real* brutal':

> you would come downstairs, and everyone would do an opening. You'd go upstairs – the elevator never worked in this building – and the rooms were on like six, seven and eight...then you'd come down and do your set. Then you'd go back up. Then you'd come back down for the finale. And you'd do that seven times.[109]

There was little time for socialising. Chris Curtis lamented,

> 'We didn't have any time to meet them [the Shangri-Las] socially...we did a lot of shows and then in between, we tried to eat, rest, and do thousands of other things in five minutes.' [110]

For Weiss, these 'other things' included even more work:

> My manager, I'd go in the dressing room and he'd have somebody sitting in the corner, and I'm going, 'Who are you?' and he goes, 'I'm here to teach you "Remember" in French!' And I'm like looking...in between what I'm doing...you are out of your mind!'

The purpose of teaching Mary to sing "Remember" in French would have been to release a version in Europe with French vocals, expand their

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[108] Spector, p. 37.
[109] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/03.html (accessed 17 June, 2010); 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).
[110] Green, p. 13.

market, and sell more records. Weiss commented further, ruefully, 'that's the pace that everything was at, my entire life was like that.'[111]

Another notable feature of the *Hit Parader* review was the general equality with which the groups were treated. The reviewer did not trivialise the female groups; they were generally treated respectfully, and praised for their musicality.[112] Their appearance was commented on, but so was that of the male groups. In addition, at no point did the writer use the term 'girl group.' Furthermore, Annie Randall commented that

> Those who attended the concerts describe the atmosphere as barely controlled pandemonium among the mixed audience of black and white teens, although with little of the racial tension that was a common feature of daily life outside the theater. The pandemonium was not confined to the theatre but spilled out onto the sidewalk in front, where Murray the K and various fan clubs fuelled the flames of teen enthusiasm and increased ticket sales by staging events for the singers, complete with fans wielding "WELCOME!" banners.[113]

This ease of racial intermingling reflected developments in radio, where, as Susan Douglas has pointed out, DJs 'who embraced black music and slang' encouraged

> identification with the music and talk as a form of generational and racial rebellion against the status quo.[114]

Murray the K cultivated a close relationship with his teenage audience by addressing them directly, as 'baby,' in the way a teenage boy might address his girlfriend. He also used 'slangy rhymed couplets' that gave the impression of up-with-the-latest hipness.[115] This kind of personal connection was at least in part responsible for the adulation Murray the K received as the convenor of the Brooklyn Fox pandemonium:

> I threw a kiss and looked towards the balcony. In the front row my eye caught two girls, about fifteen years old, crying hysterically, and over on the

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[111] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).
[112] A notable exception was the Ronettes, of whom the reviewer noted that they were famous for "Be My Baby" and their "bump and grind choreography."
[113] Randall, p. 52.
[114] Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*, Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. 222.
[115] Douglas (2004), pp. 230-232.

> left side, three redheads – laughing and standing on their seats – screaming at me! I stood alone on the stage of the Fox Theater in Brooklyn, listening to this fantastic, unbelievable demonstration from the 4,500 groovy kids who were there that Saturday morning.[116]

And that enthusiasm was shared by the performers, as Ronnie Spector indicated, 'Thank god for the Brooklyn Fox! Hit or no hit, that audience made us feel like stars.'[117] This spectacle brings to mind the biggest source of American teenage pandemonium in 1964, the Beatles.

A couple of weeks later, on 20 September, 1964, the Shangri-Las performed at a charity benefit for United Cerebral Palsy of New York City, Inc. and Retarded Infants Services Inc., at the Paramount Theatre in New York City. The headlining act was the Beatles. Tickets ranged in price from five to one hundred dollars, and all artists, including the Beatles, donated their services. Besides the Shangri-Las, the other performers were Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme, Leslie Uggams, the Tokens, Bobby Goldsboro, the Brothers Four, Jackie De Shannon and Nancy Ames. Gay Talese, writing in the *The New York Times*, reported that

> Coolly elegant women in mink coats and pearls, together with men in black tie and in no need of a haircut, found themselves in the Paramount Theater last night sitting amid 3,600 hysterical teen-agers.

Talese commented further that it was it was 'an incongruous sight...that brought together the chic and the shriek sets.'[118] In what was by now typical at their shows,

> The Beatles, when they finally got on stage, shortly after 10 P.M., and for 25 minutes strumming out tunes that nobody could hear. They sang ten numbers, but as they did, teenagers rose to their feet and jumped and twisted in the aisles; others tossed jelly beans, slices of bread or toilet tissue toward the stage.[119]

The Shangri-Las went from being virtual unknowns to performing on the same bill as the Beatles in front of 3,600 people in the space of a few

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[116] Murray Kaufman, *Murray the K Tells it Like it is, Baby*, New York, Chicago and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, p. 25.
[117] Spector, pp. 36-7.
[118] Gay Talese, 'Beatles and Fans Meet Social Set', *The New York Times*, 21 September, 1964, p. 44.
[119] Talese, p. 44.

months. Mary Weiss remembered that, in terms of backstage arrangements before the show,

> They put the Beatles on one floor and everybody else on another floor...Margie...went up to a high floor and started sticking her fingers through the blinds to make the crowds go nuts in the streets, they did, it was bizarre.[120]

This show was a similar format to the Brooklyn Fox shows; with nine performers, each would have performed a handful of songs each; the Shangri-Las, as relative newcomers, may have been limited to their one hit song, "Remember."

To perform with the Beatles must have been an untold thrill for the Shangri-Las. One teenaged Beatles fan recalled that just being a *fan* of the Beatles was

> 'about wanting freedom. I didn't want to grow up and be a wife and it seemed to me the Beatles had the kind of freedom I wanted...I didn't want to sleep with Paul McCartney, I was too young. But I wanted to be like them, something larger than life.'[121]

For other teenagers, actually being *in* a pop group and making records was the ticket to 'something larger than life.' As Richard Goldstein observed in 1966, the Shangri-Las

> are in pop because Rock and Roll is to the middle class teenager what boxing is to the underprivileged: a key to wealth, power and status.[122]

However, as Grace Palladino pointed out,

> teenage stars were more likely to gain celebrity than riches from their early efforts, especially since they tended to confuse the two.[123]

This is borne out by Ronnie Spector's recollections of performing at the Brooklyn Fox:

> our pay was two hundred dollars apiece for a ten-day run, which we thought was a fortune. Of course, every time we needed a new outfit or a few cans

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[120] Jonathan Clarke, 'Mary Weiss interviewed by Jonathan Clarke on *Out of the Box*,' Q1043FM, New York City, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Chln5Ft1Ik (accessed 25 July, 2009).
[121] Quoted in Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs, 'Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun,' in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, London & New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 103.
[122] Goldstein, 'The Soul Sound From Sheepshead Bay,' p. 30.
[123] Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History*, New York: Basic Books, 1996, p. 143.

> of hairspray, we'd hit Murray up for a fifty dollar advance, and those added up. By the time we got our paychecks, we'd usually have about a hundred dollars each left. But money was never the big thing anyway. We would've done those shows for free, if only for the chance to be around all those stars.[124]

Although undeniably thrilling for these teenaged performers, this youthful enthusiasm, excitement and fame was capitalised on by those who exploited it for financial gain.

A frantic pace continued for the Shangri-Las. On October 12, 1964, they performed at the New York World's Fair, held at Flushing Meadows, Queens. The Fair was an enormous undertaking on a massive scale - the federal government spent $17 million on the United States Pavilion alone, and General Motors, General Electric, the Chrysler Corporation and many other corporations invested heavily in pavilions, displays and exhibitions to display their futuristic wares to the public. The artistic and cultural elements of the Fair were also significant. Many nations had their own pavilions in which Fair goers could experience aspects of the arts and culture of the countries represented, and in a quite extraordinary coup, the Vatican pavilion even managed to arrange for the loan of Michelangelo's *Pietà* for its display. The Fair attracted 51 million people while it was operating between 21 April, 1964 and 21 October, 1965, and made an indelible impression on those who attended.[125] It has attracted correspondingly widespread coverage in books, online, and also as the subject of major exhibitions at the Queens Museum of Art in 1989, 2002 and 2004.[126]

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[124] Spector, pp. 36-7; see also. Palladino, p. 143.

[125] See for example Bill Cotter and Bill Young, *The 1964-1965 New York Worlds Fair*, Charleston SC: Arcadia, 2004; Young also launched and continues to maintain a comprehensive World's Fair website: www.nywf64.com. See also *The 1964 World's Fair* [videorecording], Chatsworth CA: Image Entertainment, 2000, which contains many interviews with Fair workers and visitors.

[126] *Remembering the Future: The New York World's Fairs from 1939 to 1964*, 16 September – 31 December 31, 1989; *Highlights of Remembering the Future: The 1964 New York World's Fair*, 21 January – 30 June, 1990; *Designing the Future: The Queens Museum of Art and the New York City Building*, March 10 – July 7, 2002; *The Seeing Eye: Art and Industry at the 1964 World's Fair*, July 18 2004 - October 24, 2004. See also the exhibition catalogue by Rosemary Haag Bletter, *Remembering the Future: The New York World's Fair from 1939-1964*, New York: Rizzoli, 1989.

Music was an important component of the Fair. In the *New York Times*, Gay Talese reported on the 'Swirl of Sounds' at the Fair:

> There is Calypso rhythm, followed by jazz a few feet away, and further on there is pop, then Gregorian chants and Bach…The Royal Burundi dancers and Drummers, sent here with the compliments of King Mwami Mwambusta IV, made a successful debut at the Africa pavilion…the thumping of the drums could be heard a mile away.[127]

Many pop and rock groups performed at the Fair, including the Satellites and the Galaxies IV from New Jersey, New York surf band the Malibooz, as well as Candy Johnson and the Exciters.[128] Ska group Byron Lee and the Dragonaires received sponsorship from the Jamaican government to play at the Fair, which was their first performance outside Jamaica.[129] The daily World's Fair Calendar printed in *The New York Times* announced that at

> 5PM The Shangri-Las sing current hits at the A.M.F. Monorail.[130]

October 12 was named 'Shangri-Las Day' at the Fair, and the front car of the monorail was adorned with the group's name.[131]

Later in October, 1964, the Shangri-Las visited England briefly for a promotional tour.[132] *New Musical Express* reported that

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[127] Gay Talese, 'About the Fair: Blind Singers Sense the Excitement and Soak Up the Swirl of Sounds', *The New York Times*, 28 April, 1964, p. 31.
[128] See *It's All the Streets You Crossed Not So Long Ago,* http://streetsyoucrossed.blogspot.com/search/label/1964%20World%27s%20Fair (accessed 15 October, 2010). The author of this blog pointed out that: 'I wanted to write a full-blown entry on bands that played the WORLD'S FAIR, 'cause I've always fantasized that it must have been a hotbed of mid-60s rock & roll action--after all, '64/'65 were the prime post-British Invasion years when garage bands sprouted like fungi. Truth be told I haven't had much time to research this topic, and what little time I have had hasn't yielded much info.' My own efforts to locate more information about the Shangri-Las' performance, which involved combing through boxes of archival material at the *Queens Museum of Art* and the New York Public Library, were similarly fruitless.
[129] *Byron Lee and* the *Dragonaires: Official Website*: http://www.byronleemusic.com/ska_era/skaera.html (accessed 14 October, 2010).
[130] 'Fair Calendar', *The New York Times*, 12 October, 1964, p. 59.
[131] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas2.htm (accessed 27 July, 2009); Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 14 October, 2010). As I indicated in n. 124, despite extensive searching, I have been unable to locate any further information about this event.
[132] Photographs of the Shangri-Las in England: http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/52629021 ,

> The Shangri-Las, who make their debut in the NME chart this week with "Remember", pay a brief visit to London next weekend.
>
> The American quartet arrives on Thursday, travels direct to Manchester to appear on Granada-TV's "Scene at 6.30", and then back to London to be interviewed on BBC Light's "Top Gear" on the same night.
>
> The following day (Friday), the Shangri-Las guest on Rediffusion-TV's "Ready Steady Go!" On the Sunday they telerecord an appearance for the October 31 edition of ABC-TV's "Thank Your Lucky Stars", and fly back to America the nest day.[133]

Mary remembered partying with Dusty Springfield while in London, as they appeared on one of the television shows together, and had also performed together in New York at the Brooklyn Fox:

> Dusty was having a very large party in her flat. It all started out very civilized, nice French doors and antique desks, but she liked to start food fights. And she started one and I'm hiding under this lovely French desk with her manager and food and fish are flying by!...So Mary Ann goes to put her boots on and they were full of fish! But, Mary Ann got even with Dusty. She waited and waited and the next time we were there with Dusty at the Brooklyn Fox, Mary Ann put fish in Dusty's shoes.[134]

Only three members of the group made the trip to England, however. Chris Curtis, who had witnessed their performances as a four-piece, commented on this:

> We were with them...for a six-day run at Brooklyn Fox Theatre last time we were in America...I was very choked to find out the prettiest one didn't come over with them, though.[135]

It was around this time that the group started appearing and being photographed as a three-piece; Mary Weiss flanked by the Ganser twins. The reasons for this have always been obfuscated, explained away as Betty not liking travelling, or not explained at all. Alan Betrock commented that

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http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/52629017, http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/2669432, (accessed 22 September, 2010).

[133] 'Shangri-Las Visit London Next Week,' *New Musical Express*, 16 October, 1964, pp. 8-9.

[134] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 1 October, 2010).

[135] Green, p. 13.

> After their initial hit, Betty had left the group, and the Shangri-Las became a trio.[136]

Charlotte Greig remarked that 'Betty had left the group early on.'[137] Yet by the latter part of 1965, the group was appearing on teen music shows *Shindig!* and *Shivaree* with Betty, as a quartet again.[138] Richie Unterberger, writing on the *All Music* website, commented

> Their constant personnel changes baffle historians; sometimes they are pictured as a trio, and sometimes one of the members in the photos is clearly not one of the Weiss *or* Ganser sisters.[139]

Around the time "Remember" was in the charts, and the group were looking to record a follow-up single, it became apparent that Betty Weiss was pregnant. To be seventeen, unmarried, pregnant and in a pop group in 1964 was a completely untenable set of circumstances. From a practical point of view, the punishing concert and recording schedules that were just beginning would have been problematic, if not impossible. Of far greater concern to the Red Bird management, of course, was that sexual mores in mid-1960s America simply did not accommodate unwed teenage mothers.[140] Furthermore, it was simply unthinkable for Betty's pregnancy to become public knowledge when the group had such a predominantly teen (and younger) audience. So, for the 'good' of the group, the situation was hushed up, Betty quietly disappeared, and the Shangri-Las began performing and being photographed as a trio.[141]

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[136] Betrock, p. 108.
[137] Greig, p. 83.
[138] See, for example, the Shangri-Las, "Give Him a Great Big Kiss," *Shindig!,* 1965, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01YePzk29Mc (accessed 8 June, 2010), and "Right Now and Not Later," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cM9orBt3ZWY&feature=related (accessed 8 June, 2010). "Right Now and Not Later" was released late in 1965.
[139] Richie Unterberger, 'The Shangri-Las', http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:gpfyxqegld6e~T1 (accessed 27 July, 2009).
[140] For a detailed discussion of sex, teenage girls, pregnancy and available options in the early 1960s, see Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade*, New York: Routledge, 1992, esp. pp. 20-40; Douglas (1994), pp. 61-81; see also Ehrenreich et al., pp. 84-106.
[141] Private correspondence. Betty's pregnancy is a topic that was and remains absolutely off-limits in interviews with Mary Weiss, and preventing this from becoming publicly known is certainly one of the factors in Weiss's refusal to participate in a study of the group. My acute awareness of the sensitivity of this topic has made me unwilling (especially in the absence of any available evidence) to speculate further about the effects of this traumatic event on Betty, although her insistence on remaining largely out of the public eye in the years following the demise of the group seems telling. Betty's

For the remaining members, life as the Shangri-Las continued at a frantic pace. The success of “Remember” demanded a quick follow-up single to capitalise on the group’s popularity. “Leader of the Pack” was probably recorded in September of 1964. It had already been released in the US while the group were in England on their promotional tour.[142] According to Morton, the song was planned for another group, initially:

> It was written for another Long Island group called the Goodies. They never had a lot of success--I have no answer as to why?--Four girls...good singers. I found this group during the time "Remember..." was out. It just seemed natural to me. I liked them. They liked me. They sang good. I simply wanted to make a record with them. And when the company came to me and said, "No dice! You give everything you've got to one group." Of course, nowadays that's all changed. But not then--I got shot down. That was it for me...I was ready to quit.[143]

In all likelihood, the management at Red Bird did not want anything interfering with the Morton/Shangri-Las formula, and certainly the relationship between Morton and the Shangri-Las would solidify increasingly from this point on. But the process through which the Shangri-Las came to record “Leader of the Pack” indicates just how disposable young teenaged artists were perceived to be by record companies.

The Goodies, like the Shangri-Las, all went to the same high school. They heard each other sing at their school variety show, and formed a group to sing together.[144] Ron Schubert, manager of Long Island doo-wop group Nick and the Nacks, decided to represent the Goodies, and at some point

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daughter Tracy was born early in the early months of 1965, and Betty continued to record with the group, appear in television performances, and participate in at least some touring from approximately mid-1965 onwards. See Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 7 September, 2010) for a photograph of Betty and Tracy at the final Shangri-Las reunion in 1989; Tracy’s Myspace page: http://www.myspace.com/95602704 (accessed 8 September, 2010).

[142] This song is discussed extensively in Chapter Five.

[143] ‘The "Shadow" Reappears, http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow06.html (accessed 14 October, 2010).

[144] Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on ‘Relics and Rarities’, WQMA Oldies Radio 1520AM, date unavailable. Copy supplied by P. Milstein..

introduced them to George Morton.[145] They performed for Morton at Ultrasonic, a studio he used sometimes in Hempstead, Long Island. Morton took the group in to the Red Bird offices, and they 'were immediately asked to sign', which they did, to the Red Bird affiliated Blue Cat label. Mary Ann from the Goodies remembered that

> there was some scepticism...but we convinced our parents that this was the way that we thought we should go, and they actually supported us in the end, and we were under age so they signed contracts for us.[146]

Dianne continued,

> So we started going to the Brill Building a lot and rehearsing different songs...we would meet with George and songwriters and rehearse various songs, and one of the first songs that we rehearsed was "Leader of the Pack"...we made a demo of it, and we had actually expected that it would be our first record – that was our understanding.[147]

However, unbeknown to the Goodies, the 'company' as Morton put it, decided that the song would be recorded by the Shangri-Las, since they needed a follow-up for "Remember," and it would almost certainly have been the Goodies demo that Mary was referring to when she said, of "Leader of the Pack":

> I really had to sit down with this one. *I took it home and listened to it* for a very long time before I agreed to do it…even at the time, it was pretty much out there.[148] (italics mine)

The Goodies 'had no idea' about this change of plan, and found out about the Shangri-Las version of the song when they heard it on the radio. Incredulous, they phoned Morton and the label management, who 'explained' that the Shangri-Las' needed a follow up song, quickly, and assured the members of the Goodies that 'we've got another great song, it's going to be a hit, you'll record this next song...'[149].

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[145] *Doo-Wop: Biography, Groups and Discography*, http://www.blogg.org/blog-65325-themes-_nacks__nick___the_-171781.html (accessed 11 June, 2010).
[146] Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on 'Relics and Rarities.'
[147] Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on 'Relics and Rarities.'
[148] Terry Gross, 'Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game*', interview for Fresh Air on NPR (National Public Radio) by Terry Gross, 6 March, 2007, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[149] Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on 'Relics and Rarities.'

Disappointed but undaunted, the Goodies started working on the next song they were given, and made another demo. The song was "Give Him a Great Big Kiss." *Again* it was given to the Shangri-Las; it became their third single. Dianne from the Goodies related,

> A friend of my called on the phone and said, I just heard you on the radio! I just heard your song! I said, well it couldn't be us, because we hadn't cut the master, we just had done the demo. She said, No, no, they just played your song! "Give Him a Great Big Kiss"! I said, Oh no! Not AGAIN![150]

The degree of active deceit engaged in by Red Bird's management is striking, and involved the exploitation of the kind of enthusiasm and excitement that made Ronnie Spector declare that the Ronettes would have played the Brooklyn Fox shows for nothing. The members of the Goodies hold no grudge toward the Shangri-Las, and feel strongly that, at the time, the Shangri-Las were not aware that all this was going on, and would not have had any control over it if they had been. Eventually the Goodies did record their own single, "Dum Dum Ditty" b/w "Sophisticated Boom Boom."[151] The single sold moderately well (according to the Goodies, it peaked at #38). However, as they remembered,

> Because we were so young, we didn't really have great representation, so we didn't have somebody who was in our corner, and we didn't understand the business, so we didn't really know, there was no way for us to know whether our record was being promoted or not promoted.[152]

However, as a final irony, both songs were later recorded by the Shangri-Las, and it is fair to say that the Goodies' versions of the songs, although earlier, were eclipsed by their more famous counterparts.[153] In retrospect, it seems likely that the Goodies, despite what they were being told by Red Bird management, were being used to 'demo' the material, and not necessarily with a view to cutting the songs as single releases themselves. The Goodies had a similar sound to the Shangri-Las, and from a practical perspective, it made sense to work on arrangements and

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[150] Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on 'Relics and Rarities.'
[151] The Goodies, "Dum Dum Ditty," (Boyce/Venet/Hart/Martire) b/w "Sophisticated Boom Boom" (Morton) BLUE CAT 117, June, 1965.
[152] Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on 'Relics and Rarities.'
[153] Alan Betrock actually stated, 'Shadow Morton produced The Goodies for Blue Cat, where he used two Shangri-Las songs, copied their vocal sound, and used some of their backing tracks.' Betrock, p. 109.

iron out all the kinks in the early stages, which is something that could be done with another group. This would save studio time and money later, when cutting the master. The other great advantage was that the Shangri-Las could be out performing shows and promoting their records, while the other group rehearsed and solidified the arrangements for the next song.[154]

This, it seemed, is what happened, as the Shangri-Las began a punishing tour schedule. In October they appeared on some dates with the Rolling Stones on their second tour of North America, with other acts including Joey Paige, The Beach Boys, Marvin Gaye, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Chuck Berry, James Brown and The Supremes.[155] The Shangri-Las also did at least three shows in November 1964 with the Beach Boys, on 27 November at the Cleveland Arena (Cleveland OH), 28 November: Olympia, Detroit MI, and 29 November: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati OH. Jay and the Americans were also on the bill for all the Beach Boys shows.[156] On 16 November, 1964, the Shangri-Las appeared on TV quiz show 'I've Got a Secret' doing "Leader of the Pack," to the delight of the teens in the audience, and the bemused bewilderment of the adult contestants. That week, "Leader of the Pack" went to Number One, but it is likely that they were on the road with the Beach Boys when this happened, and had little time to savour this moment.[157] 1964 closed with the simultaneous release of another two singles, the aforementioned "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" b/w "Twist and Shout," and "Maybe" b/w

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[154] See Taylor, pp. 57-8 for a similar situation with the Marvelettes and the Andantes.
[155] 'The Concerts and Tours,' *The Telegraph*, 1 January, 2001, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1400294/The-concerts-and-tours.html (accessed 27 July, 2009).
[156] Beach Boys Tour Dates: http://www.btinternet.com/~bellagio/gigs64.html (accessed 27 July, 2009).
[157] The Shangri-Las and Robert Goulet on *I've Got a Secret*, including a performance of "Leader of the Pack," 16 November, 1964, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WA5I2t26w (accessed 18 June, 2010). This performance is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

"Shout".[158] The Shangri-Las were named "#1 New Vocal Group" for 1964 in *Cash Box* on 26 December, 1964.[159]

This concluded an extraordinary year for the Shangri-Las – two hit singles, a promotional tour to England, a performance with the Beatles, concert performances, television appearances, and transnational fame – all in the space of about six months. Their working partnership with George 'Shadow' Morton was central to the success of both Morton and the group, and although Morton has repeatedly presented himself as someone who 'accidently' found himself in the business of making records, it is clear from his experience prior to working with the Shangri-Las that he had very definite ideas about becoming a producer and was consciously working toward a realisation of this. The immediate sensation caused by his first collaboration with the Shangri-Las, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)," thrust the group into a non-stop schedule of concert performances, television appearances, and recording dates for which they had little in the way of practical preparation. Their earliest engagements at the Brooklyn Fox Theatre as part of Murray the K's rock revues were 'brutal' affairs that required the participants to be present for twelve hours at a time, and the format of the shows reflected the primary mode for popular music consumption in 1964, the 45 rpm record; single songs, played in succession on radio. In retrospect, it can be seen that notions of self-penned album-oriented rock authenticity that would later be accepted as standard were not yet dominant in 1964. Groups were regarded primarily as a vehicle for the performance and dissemination of material written by professional songwriters, as the 'career' of the Goodies attests. However, within this context of structural disempowerment, the Shangri-Las possessed tremendous cultural and aesthetic power, as reflected in their popularity, the sales of their records, and their artistic achievement, which is explored more fully in the final three chapters of

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[158] "Maybe", originally recorded by the Chantels, was released on George Goldner's End label in 1958.
[159] Note: not "Girl Group"; *Cash Box*, 26 December, 1964, p. 31. This was in the R&B category.

this study. The manner in which all this was destroyed by factors outside of the group's control is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Demise of the Red Bird Label, the Mob, and Mercury Records

‘Artists are pains in the asses.
Artists, a lot of them are just imbeciles and they are ignorant.’
Morris Levy

‘I’ve got a hundred hookers. Charge them to the artist.’
Artie Ripp

For most of 1965 and much of 1966, the Shangri-Las continued working with George ‘Shadow’ Morton, releasing material of a high standard that focussed on teenage concerns in an intensely emotional manner, much of which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. Their first album was released early in 1965, which helped to consolidate a new “bad-girls” image of the group in response to the enormous success of “Leader of the Pack.” A significant component of this was the Shangri-Las’ whiteness, which allowed for an experimentation with identity not generally available to African American singing groups, due to stereotypical notions of race, class and gender. The consolidation of the Shangri-Las aesthetic power continued with their promotion, with the Dave Clarke Five, of the national Revlon Natural Wonder ‘Swingstakes’ competition. However, this soon descended into a treadmill of work, which saw the Shangri-Las touring constantly. Their schooling and education was compromised, as was their health, safety and well-being. Many found that using alcohol and various drugs made the drudgery far more enjoyable. The ages of the performers rendered them extremely vulnerable to exploitation, and their engagement in the ‘pleasurable’ activities of singing and dancing made the perception of these as ‘work’ problematic. Record industry contracts were highly exploitative and designed to ensure that royalties were directed away from performers; this was exacerbated by systemic rorting in the name of ‘promotion’ and the

common practice attributing songwriting credits for various services rendered that had nothing whatsoever to do with musical composition.

No amount of talent, ability and work ethic could overcome these industry structures, especially in conjunction with vices that required a large and constant cash flow. While the Shangri-Las were out on the road and dealing with all its attendant issues, George Goldner was engaging in behaviour that would result yet again result in the demise of a brilliant, pioneering label. Just as ten years earlier, the sale of the Gee label to Morris Levy had devastating results for Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, so would the demise of Red Bird for almost identical reasons undo all the artistic mechanisms that had enabled the Shangri-Las to excel. The collapse of the Red Bird label effectively destroyed the group, since it forced them to sign with Mercury which was, for the performers, a disaster. The involvement of mafia figures added a layer of terrorising and violence that is a likely factor in the obfuscation of the details of the Shangri-Las' demise that remains to this day. An understanding of the role of these larger structural forces in the demise of the Shangri-Las is imperative to a reappraisal of their artistic legacy, for it demonstrates conclusively that the inability of the Shangri-Las to continue as a functioning entity had nothing whatsoever to do with talent, ability and musicality, and everything to do with a brutally exploitative system that was designed to ensure that they remained powerless within it.

Leader of the Pack

The Shangri-Las self-titled first album, also known as *Leader of the Pack*, was released in February, 1965.[1] Hastily assembled to capitalise on the group's popularity, it contained both sides of all four of their Red Bird

[1] The Shangri-Las, *The Shangri-Las*, RED BIRD 20-101, 1965. This is also known as *Leader of the Pack*: see John Grecco's comments, Grecco, J., *Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slasdisco.htm (accessed 20 June, 2010).

singles, in addition to a Leiber and Stoller composition called “Bull Dog” that would surface later in 1965 as the B-side of another single. *Billboard* called it ‘a socko album debut for the younger set by one of the most popular of the new rock vocal teams.’[2] Another reviewer enthused,

> Having turned in three smashes in the singles area, the Shangri-Las can’t miss with their first LP effort, which includes “Remember,” “Leader of the Pack” and their latest deck, “Give Him a Great Big Kiss.” The second side features six tunes taped live, most of which need no introduction to the teens who will turn out in droves for this set. If these gals could displace the Britishers on the best-seller charts, this group has a tremendous selling power, and tunes like “Maybe” and “Twist and Shout” provide still more appeal.[3]

Barely six months into the Shangri-Las tenure as teen sensations, their ‘tremendous selling power’ and ‘ability to displace the Britishers’ was being commented upon. As noted in the review, Side B consists entirely of a ‘taped...live performance at one of the Shangri-Las recent shows in the New York City area.’[4] From a practical standpoint, this was a quick way of assembling enough material for an album, with the added advantage of saving on studio costs. It seems likely that this live material was recorded late in 1964; of the two singles that were released simultaneously in December of that year, three of the four sides were included in the live material and are unlikely to be different from the versions on the album.[5] The live set included “Twist and Shout” and “Shout”, both of which were big hits and teen dance favourites, so their inclusion is not surprising (they were the B-sides of “Give Him a Great Big Kiss” and “Maybe” respectively).

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[2] ‘Album Reviews’, *Billboard*, 20 February, 1965, p. 64. It should be noted that the biggest music trade journal of the day used the terminology ‘new rock vocal team’ to describe the Shangri-Las in 1965.

[3] Reproduced by Alan Betrock, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*, London: Omnibus, 1982, p. 102; I have not been able to locate the original source.

[4] *The Shangri-Las*, liner notes by Faith Whitehill, RED BIRD 20-101. My copy is an English reissue: London: CHARLY RECORDS CRM 2028, 1986.

[5] The Shangri-Las, “Give Him a Great Big Kiss” (Morton) b/w “Twist and Shout” (Russell/Medley), RED BIRD 018, December, 1964; The Shangri-Las, “Maybe” (Barrett) b/w “Shout” (Isley/Isley/Isley) RED BIRD 019, December, 1964. I sincerely thank Dom Mariani and Ruby Mariani for their assistance in confirming that “Twist and Shout” is identical to the album version.

"Maybe" was originally recorded by the Chantels on George Goldner's End label in 1958; the Shangri-Las version was also taken from the live set recorded at the end of 1964. Three other songs were included in the live material, which, taken inclusively, forms a fascinating snapshot of a very early Shangri-Las performance. "So Much in Love" by doo-wop group the Tymes was a hit in 1963,[6] as was "You Can't Sit Down" by the Dovells, with whom the Shangri-Las performed at the Brooklyn Fox.[7] Both groups recorded for the Philadelphia-based Cameo-Parkway label, which included many doo-wop vocal groups on its roster.[8] "Good Night, My Love, Pleasant Dreams," was originally recorded by Jesse Belvin in 1956. Although covered by many artists subsequently, it had also been a hit in 1963 for vocal trio the Fleetwoods. The Shangri-Las' live material falls broadly into two categories – up-tempo rock numbers, and doo-wop style vocal harmony material - but no real division existed between them. So much so, in fact, that the Shangri-Las arrangement of "Shout" segued into "Goodnight, My Love," and then back into "Shout." The live material on the Shangri-Las' first album emphasised that, for the group and their teen audience, these distinctions did not exist.

Another point to note is that, with its emphasis on vocal harmonising and rock beats, all this material was able to be performed live relatively straightforwardly. This is in contrast to the Shangri-Las' first two hit singles, which were complex studio productions with elements and a 'feel' that would have been impossible to reproduce exactly live – sound effects, for instance.[9] Of course, they did perform their hit singles live, but a version of "Leader of the Pack" recorded at the Brooklyn Fox theatre

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[6] The Tymes, "So Much in Love", audio only, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwXxdjAx0Do&feature=related (accessed 18 June, 2010).
[7] The Dovells, "You Can't Sit Down," audio only, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2QrmzLvUCo (accessed 18 June, 2010).
[8] Rod McBrien, the engineer with whom George 'Shadow' Morton recorded the demo version of "Leader of the Pack," sang in doo wop group the Valrays, who recorded several singles for Cameo-Parkway: see http://www.blogg.org/blog-65325-themes-valrays-162540.html (accessed 19 September, 2010).
[9] See also Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music And Identity In The 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 94-7.

demonstrates the manner in which the dramatics of the studio version were subsumed by the limitations of playing with a workman-like backing band which also had to back a dozen other artists (as discussed in the previous chapter), not to mention compete with a theatre full of screaming teenagers.[10] The unreliability of the pick-up bands with which the Shangri-Las were obliged to perform would eventually force them to assemble their own group to back them on the road. As Mary Weiss recalled,

> 'you never knew what you were getting as far as backing...some of the backup used to sound like Bill Murray lounge lizard music which used to drive us up the wall. It was unacceptable. Toward the end we got our own band and we were traveling by ourselves.'[11]

According to Faith Whitehill, who wrote the liner notes for the group's first album, the live material was included

> to prove again that the group's appeal is not entirely dependent on tricky studio work and recording gimmicks. The girls are not just record artists, they are fully-fledged entertainers, with talent, poise, stage presence, warmth, individuality – in short, all the qualifications to keep a live audience cheering and begging for more.[12]

The perception of the Shangri-Las as 'gimmicky' is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. But underlying this notion of 'tricky studio work' is the idea, a hangover from the earliest days of recording, that a recording

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[10] The Shangri-Las, "Leader of the Pack," recorded live (audio only) at the Brooklyn Fox Theatre, (listed as) 1964 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8N_iTNdIcfs (accessed 21 June, 2010). About half way through the song, a member of the audience can be heard yelling, 'Hi Mary!!!' It does seem that on some occasions at the Brooklyn Fox, a real motorbike was used during "Leader of the Pack"; certainly, this version contains motor bike sounds. For some extremely rare photos (taken by an audience member) of the Shangri-Las performing at a Murray the K show, in which a motor bike can be seen on stage, see http://thehoundblog.blogspot.com/2009/06/gillians-found-photos-16.html (accessed 20 September, 2010). As noted by others, these photographs are incorrectly dated February 3, 1964, which was well before the Shangri-Las were even signed to Red Bird, and "Leader of the Pack" recorded.

[11] Dugan Trodglen, 'Who Says You Can Never Go Home Anymore? The Shangri-Las Once Did. But Mary Weiss is Proving That Wrong With a Swell Return to Rock,' *Stomp and Stammer*, November, 2008, http://stompandstammer.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=1575&Itemid=51&task=view&limit=1&limitstart=2 (accessed 3 July, 2010).

[12] *The Shangri-Las*, liner notes by Faith Whitehill.

should essentially be an 'authentic' document of a performance.[13] As producer Virgil Moorefield has explained,

> Originally, the aim of recordings was to create the illusion of a concert hall setting...to bring to the living room the sensation of being at a live performance, a metaphor of presence.[14]

As discussed in the previous chapter, this was largely due to the limitations of recording apparatus in the first half of the twentieth century.[15] However, along with many other aspects of the recording industry, this was in the process of being upended in the early/mid 1960s:

> There came into being a new conception of making records, developed separately and in stages, most notably by Phil Spector and George Martin. While different in many ways, both of their approaches to production involved replacing the quest for the ability to present the illusion of physical reality with a new aesthetic. The new sonic world they sought to create was the appearance of a reality that could not exist – a pseudo-reality, created in synthetic space.[16]

This was, of course, what Morton was creating too, and it is an indication of how recent this conception of record making was that it was regarded with some suspicion as gimmicky trickery, as somehow inauthentic. George Martin was also accused of this:

> 'This leads to the whole question of what you are aiming to produce when you make a record...one argument that is frequently levelled at me is: "You're not being very honest." I say, to hell with that. We have a different form of art here.'[17]

Faith Whitehill was anxious to assure the Shangri-Las' audience that the group indeed possessed 'all the qualifications to keep a *live audience* cheering and begging for more.' In other words, they were *authentic* because they could *perform live* – and implicit in this is a pre-emptive rebuttal of the notion of the Shangri-Las as merely putty in the hands of a

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[13] For a discussion of the recording versus performance dichotomy, see Thedore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock,* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 37-67, esp. pp. 38-42.
[14] Virgil Moorefield, *The Producer as Composer: Shaping the Sounds of Popular Music*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, p. xiv.
[15] See also Walter L. Welch, Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt, and Oliver Read, *From Tinfoil to Stereo: The Acoustic Years of the Recording Industry, 1877-1929*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994.
[16] Moorefield, p. xv.
[17] George Martin, quoted in Gracyk, p. 53.

genius producer. Furthermore, the separation of the songwriter from the *performer*, which was (just) still the norm at this point, meant that this was the standard an artist was judged by, their performance, not whether they wrote their own material, and there is correspondingly no mention of this in Whitehill's notes. Ironically, however, the only mention of the group members by name is in the body of the notes:

> Mary, who is sixteen and blonde and the lead singer, and Maryann (sic) and Margie, who are seventeen and brunette and identical twins...[18]

The group members received no official credit anywhere on the album, and their ages and hair colour were more important to note than their surnames. This is part of what Jacqueline Warwick has identified as a sublimation of individual identities in a group, the members of which 'were considered by many record producers to be replaceable as long as the look of the group was maintained more or less intact.'[19] The group was a vehicle for the songs; the components of the group were perceived to be less important than the group itself.[20] In keeping with this hierarchy, the largest credit on the cover is 'Produced by Shadow Morton' directly under the name of the group; in smaller print, engineers Brooks Arthur and Rod McBrien were credited. So too were the photographer and cover designer, and it is noteworthy that these occupations received an official credit, whereas the instrumentalists who played on both the live and the studio material did not. This would be absolutely unthinkable today, but in 1964, it was standard. Session musicians were hired hands, they did their jobs, got paid; a credit on a teen pop record was not particularly consequential.

Representations of Rebellion

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[18] *The Shangri-Las*, liner notes by Faith Whitehill.
[19] Warwick, p. 78.
[20] See Ken Emerson, *Always Magic In the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era*, New York: Viking Penguin, 2005, pp. 233-4. Similarly, the last recording released under the name Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, "Creation of Love," did not actually feature the Teenagers, since it was recorded after their split with Lymon; the Ray Charles Singers performed on it instead. This interchanging of performers was not something that only occurred with young *female* singers, it was standard industry practice; see Charlie Horner, Pamela Horner, and Val Shively, *The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett Part Two: Richard Barrett and the Teenagers*, http://www.classicurbanharmony.net/Barrett%20Legacy%202%20copy%201.pdf (accessed 29 August, 2010), p. 8.

Following the great success of "Leader of the Pack", and before the release of their first album, the Shangri-Las' 'image', for want of a better term, underwent a quite radical transformation.[21] In mid-November, 1964, the group performed "Leader of the Pack" on television quiz show *I've Got a Secret* wearing matching ultra-modest knee-length pleated skirts and blouses.[22] A month later, an advertisement for their two new singles, "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" and "Maybe" featured the trio in matching two-toned pants with sleeveless sweaters and black knee-high boots.[23] The cover of the group's first album (February, 1965) further reflected the success of "Leader of the Pack," with Mary Weiss and the Ganser sisters dressed in black pants, waistcoats and boots, and flanking a leather-jacketed motorcyclist on a bike.[24] Cynthia Cyrus has asserted that

> The Shangri-Las, a white group, evoked their bad-girl image with consistently slinky outfits, usually paired with go-go boots. They spin out variants of tight dark pants in leather, knit and woven fabrics. The shirts can be ruffled or button-down, worn with vests or abandoned altogether for soft but sleeveless sweater tops. They flaunt the sophistication of the in-crowd. It comes as little surprise when they appear on an album cover alongside a motorcycle-riding leather jacketed hunk: he is, as the title above his head confirms, the 'Leader of the Pack.'[25]

On the contrary, as late as 26 December, 1964, the Shangri-Las appeared in *Cash Box* named as '#1 New Vocal Group 1964' in knee-length skirts and dressy heels, smiling cheerfully and affecting carefully staged mid-dance move poses.[26] There is nothing remotely 'slinky' about their attire, nor is there anything even slightly subversive, as Cyrus

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[21] See also Warwick, pp.189-91.
[22] The Shangri-Las and Robert Goulet on *I've Got a Secret*, including a performance of "Leader of the Pack," 16 November, 1964, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WA5I2t26w (accessed 18 June, 2010); see also Warwick, pp. 189-191. This performance is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.
[23] *Billboard*, 19 December, 1964, p. 27; see Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas3.htm (accessed 20 September, 2010), top left for a reproduction of this page.
[24] See *The Shangri-Las*, album cover: http://i155.photobucket.com/albums/s284/ericpri26/I%20Tunes%20albums/Shangri_Las.jpg (accessed 29 June, 2010).
[25] Cynthia J. Cyrus, 'Selling an Image: Girl Groups of the 1960s,' *Popular Music* 22:2 (2003), p. 180.
[26] *Cash Box*, 26 December, 1964, p. 31, reproduced in Betrock, p. 104.

seemed to be suggesting, about their sleeveless tops. In the latter part of 1966, and early 1967, while signed to the Mercury label, the group was photographed in a consciously glamorous manner, in sophisticated white pant-suits, with big smiles and bouncy hair.[27] The cover of the first Shangri-Las album, upon which Cyrus based her generalisations, was another matter entirely, but to state that the group was 'consistently' photographed in this manner does not accurately reflect available evidence.[28]

The 'look' and image of the Shangri-Las is, however, an important subject for discussion, since it is almost always commented upon, usually in terms of how different it was from other 'girl groups.' So codified is the genre, however, and so rigid the Shangri-Las placement within it, that few consider other lenses through which to view them than that of 'girl groups.' The opening sentence of Richie Unterberger's *All Music* entry is typical:

> Along with the Shirelles and the Ronettes, the Shangri-Las were among the greatest girl groups; if judged solely on the basis of attitude, they were the greatest of them all.[29]

As noted above, the cover of the Shangri-Las first album, released in February, 1965, marked approximately the point at which the Shangri-Las began to be marketed as somewhat rebellious, tough, bad-girls. Certainly, the album cover is a stark and powerful image. Mary Weiss stands just off-centre, feet apart, hands behind her back, staring with sullen defiance at the viewer. Behind her, a motor cyclist, her "Leader of the Pack", looks off camera to his right, warily, as if watching for potential assault. Mary stands between him and the viewer, protectively, defending him and her choice, daring anyone to open their mouth in opposition. To Mary's left, Marge and Mary Ann reinforce and restate her position, literally and

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[27] See, for example, the photo captioned 'White boots go hi-style,' Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, 2006, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 21 September, 2010).
[28] Cyrus, pp. 180-181.
[29] Richie Unterberger, 'The Shangri-Las', http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:gpfyxqegld6e~T1 (accessed 30 June, 2010).

emotionally, similarly defiant, and their physical likeness as identical twins adds another dimension to their support.

Much has been made of this, and many have conflated the personalities of the group members with what has become the enduring image of the Shangri-Las. At the time, it was seen by some as something of a novelty; one piece of press stated that

> They match the gimmicks on their records with their stage gear of [black?] tights, boots and suede waistcoats.[30]

A convincingly marketable image was (and remains) an important component of the business of selling records. As Keith Richards observed,

> 'In the early 60s nobody took the music as serious. It was the image that counted.'

The Rolling Stones, he noted, were

> 'very hip to image and how to manipulate the press...a lot of PR went into it, consciously.'[31]

Their first manager, Andrew Loog Oldham, was responsible for the famous "Would You Let Your Daughter Go with a Stone?" campaign in the English music paper *Melody Maker*. Oldham constructed the Rolling Stones as 'bad boys', setting them up in threatening delinquent opposition to the Beatles. This worked at least in part because the Rolling Stones looked (and later acted) the part – handsome, sullen, brooding, and safely but tantalisingly dangerous.[32]

Something similar was at work with the Shangri-Las.[33] Mary Weiss has played down their 'tough girls' image, noting that she had 'a huge fight' about "Leader of the Pack" because

> I wasn't so sure I wanted to record it. I had my doubts, not that it would be a hit, I had more doubts that it would put me in a direction I didn't want to

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[30] See press clipping reproduced at http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/03.html (accessed 2 July, 2010). I have been unable to trace the original source; the word before 'tights' is obscured.
[31] Quoted in Gracyk, p. 178.
[32] By 'safely' I am referring purely to the relationship between spectator and image.
[33] See also Warwick, p. 147.

> go...everything I've read about myself from there on said how tough I was! If you look at those old clips, you tell me where you see tough![34]

On the other hand, Ellie Greenwich, who worked closely with the Shangri-Las, as a songwriter, and rehearsing material, described them as 'very nice street urchins...street classy...and...tough yet very vulnerable' which was, she thought, 'part of the appeal.' Greenwich remembered that

> 'At the beginning we did not get along – they were kind of crude, and having to deal with them on a daily basis used to get me very uptight - with their gestures, and language, and chewing the gum, and the stockings ripped up their leg. We would say, 'Not nice, you must be ladies,' and they would say, 'We don't want to be ladies,' and we had a couple of rough times there until...we had a really big blowout in the ladies room of the Brill Building one night. We were screaming and yelling and ranting and raving. I cried and it was just horrible. After that, it was wonderful. We got along. They were on time. They wouldn't chew the gum so much. They controlled their language to a reasonable level. But they were tough girls – they really, really were.'[35]

This actually suggests that the Shangri-Las' *earlier* image, that of neat knee-length pleated skirts, blouses and cheery teen smiles, was in fact the more contrived one. Mary Weiss has on more than one occasion recounted that

> I used to get my slacks on Eighth Street in the Village in a Men's Store. People would look at me like I was gay because I like low rise pants. I don't get it, quite frankly.[36]

She added,

> I like those outfits on the LEADER album. That was my thing...that was us. It's funny, because it created such a hoopla, like we were tough, whatever, and all it is, is a white shirt, a vest and a pair of black pants.[37]

Little wonder that it was not completely obvious at what point image stopped and reality began. As Greenwich observed, on another occasion,

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[34] Suzi Quatro, 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).
[35] Ellie Greenwich, quoted in Betrock, pp. 102-3.
[36] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 2 July, 2010).
[37] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 2 July, 2010).

> Mary Weiss [had] the sweetest long straight hair, an angelic face, and then this nasal voice comes out, and this little attitude - the best of both worlds. They also knew they had a look, and they played into it.[38]

Clearly, this struck a chord with their audience. 'A prom dress just wasn't me,' said Mary. 'I liked slacks and vests and boots. A lot of kids related to that.'[39] It is tempting to speculate that at least some of the Shangri-Las' teenage audience were attracted to group's music and image because they related to them as fellow outsiders; certainly, the following the group has enjoyed in subsequent years would bear this out. However, the Shangri-Las occupied an interesting position in relation to conformity, and expected social and career trajectories for young white women in mid-1960s America. Laurie Stras articulated a broad understanding of these:

> marriage and domestic competence (if not aptitude) were expected, women's first responsibility was to home and family, and if as wives they had to work, they should strive to do so in strictly segregated jobs that did not compromise their respectability.[40]

Performing, touring, and recording with a pop group did not fulfil any aspirational requirements in this direction, and the Weiss and Ganser sisters clearly had their own issues with expectations of 'ladylike' and 'respectable' behaviour, as their clashes with Ellie Greenwich indicate. But in 1966, Mary Weiss observed, of the Shangri-Las' audience:

> 'They may buy the Supremes, but they listen to us. Because the Supremes come on very feminine and chic, but we come on like the average American girl, who just isn't slinky and sexy. We couldn't do all those oozy 'baby babys', but the Supremes couldn't get away with "Leader of the Pack."'[41]

Did the 'average American girl' wear black pants and boots, crave the company of delinquent biker-types, fight with her parents and reject their values? Almost certainly not, but on some level, the Shangri-Las perceived themselves as 'average American girl[s]', and, it seems, had

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[38] '*Spectropop* Presents Ellie Greenwich, interviewed by Charlotte Greig' http://www.spectropop.com/EllieGreenwich2/index.htm (accessed 5 June, 2010).
[39] Jim Farber, 'Leader of the Pack is Back: Girl-group Legend Comes Home,' http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/michigan/.artsmain/article/4/1083/1050095/Pop/Leader.of.the.Pack.Is.Back.Girl-group.Legend.Comes.Home/ (accessed 3 July, 2010).
[40] Laurie Stras, 'Introduction,' *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*, ed. Laurie Stras, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010, p. 13.
[41] Richard Goldstein, 'The Soul Sound from Sheepshead Bay,' *Village Voice*, 23 June, 1966, p. 8.

this reflected back to them by their audience. As Stras again observed, their

> songs could well have helped make teen angst seem normal – not just allowed but *de rigueur* if you were to be a real teenager.[42]

There is another implied dichotomy in Weiss's statements: the Shangri-Las were normal, 'average,' an important and assumed component of which was being white. The Supremes, on the other hand, were 'feminine and chic,' glamorous, an unattainable fantasy of young womanhood that the Shangri-Las saw as inappropriate for themselves and implicitly, non-average, non-normal, and non-white. This comparison with the Supremes is an apt one to take up at this point, because part of the reason that the Shangri-Las could play at being 'bad girls,' in a way that the Supremes certainly could not, was because they were white.

Rebellion and Whiteness

A significant body of literature now exists which aims to undermine notions of whiteness as normal, assumed, unquestioned and invisible.[43] As Richard Dyer put it,

> As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people.[44]

An integral component of the invisibility of whiteness is that 'white people don't see their white privilege,' a complex and interconnected set of advantages and entitlements that allows the enjoyment of '"conferred dominance."'[45] Of particular relevance for this discussion are Gayle Wald's comments on the equation of 'white subjectivity with a social

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[42] Stras, p. 18.
[43] For the United States in the nineteenth century, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London & New York: Verso, 1991. See also Jean Halley, Ashley Eshleman, and Ramya Mahadevan Vijaya, *Seeing White: An Introduction to White Privilege and Race*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011; for the early twenty-first century, see Melanie E.L. Bush, *Everyday Forms of Whiteness: Understanding Race in a 'Post-Racial' World*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.
[44] Richard Dyer, *White*, London & New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 1.
[45] Dyer, p. 9.

entitlement to experiment with identity.'[46] In Mary Weiss's first long interview in many decades to promote her 2007 *Dangerous Game* album, Billy Miller remarked that, in contrast to the Shangri-Las' pants and boots,

> when you'd see the Supremes on *Ed Sullivan*, they'd have evening gowns on, old people's clothes.[47]

The Supremes, unlike the Shangri-Las, did not have the option of not appearing respectable, which adds another dimension to Mary Weiss's understanding of the Supremes as 'slinky and sexy' and unlike the 'average American girl.' This was to a large extent due to prevailing notions associating delinquent behaviours with non-white teenagers, and deeply-held assumptions about the sexuality of African-American women.[48] As Gayle Wald put it,

> In a patriarchal context in which women's social value is conflated with their sexuality and sexual conformity, middle class white women are deemed 'naturally' virtuous, whereas black women, especially poor black women, are deemed 'naturally' degraded or corrupt or are removed from the realm of adult sexuality altogether.[49]

Motown's famous 'charm school', overseen by Maxine Powell, ensured that the artists on its roster presented themselves to the world in a such a way that would not leave them open to the ridicule and belittling that characterised relations between African-Americans and middle class whites.[50] In order for Motown artists, male and female, to be taken seriously musically and appeal to a multi-race and class audience, it was imperative that they project an air of glamorous, confident, well-groomed, middle-class respectability and modesty.[51] Mary Wilson, of the Supremes,

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[46] Gayle Wald, 'One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies,' in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill, New York: New York University Press, 1997, pp. 151-167, esp. pp. 153-5; see also Warwick, pp. 189-194; Cyrus, p. 180.
[47] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 4 July, 2010).
[48] Warwick, pp. 191-2; Ruth Frankenberg, 'Introduction: Local Whitenesses, Localizing Whiteness,' in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, pp. 1-33, esp. pp.11-12.
[49] Wald, p. 155.
[50] Mary Wilson, *Dreamgirl: My Life as a Supreme*, London: Arrow, 1986, pp. 181-5; Warwick, pp. 141-162; Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, esp. pp. 1-53.
[51] Smith, pp. 47-8; Mina Carson, Tisa Lewis, and Susan M. Shaw, *Girls Rock!: Fifty Years of Women Making Music*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004, pp. 30-31; Warwick, pp. 158-162.

remembered that as the fame of the group increased, they were criticised by some for being 'too "glamorous"':

> Knowing we were black girls from the inner city, many of our colleagues, especially those from England who liked to romanticize the plight of the disadvantaged, were surprised to discover that we dressed well off stage and comported ourselves like ladies. I shuddered to think what they were expecting.

Wilson was referring particularly to the Beatles, who she described as stoned and mumbling incoherently about Motown when they met the Supremes. The Beatles were apparently completely disarmed by the sophisticated, immaculately groomed Supremes, who they later described as 'square.'[52]

George Lipsitz has analysed this phenomenon with particular reference to Robert Johnson, the African American blues musician who allegedly sold his soul at the crossroads in order to become an extraordinarily technically proficient guitarist. Johnson, whose entire body of recorded work dates from 1936-7, was and remains idolised by successive generations of white musicians (particularly guitarists) including Eric Clapton, Keith Richards and John Mayall. Lipsitz noted that

> The romanticism that guides the circulation and reception of the story of Robert Johnson at the crossroads hides the hard facts of life and labor in the segregated South in Johnson's day. It obscures the ways in which unquestioned assumptions about artistic expression keep us wedded to the very practices our art ostensibly deplores. This romanticism contributes to the possessive investment in whiteness by maintaining the illusion that individual whites can appropriate aspects of African American experience for their own benefit without having to acknowledge the factors that give African Americans and European Americans widely divergent opportunities and life chances.[53]

As Jacqueline Warwick has observed, 'the gritty authenticity of soul music and black urban culture' was just what the Supremes and other Motown groups with upwardly mobile aspirations sought to distance themselves

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[52] Wilson, pp. 213-4, 259; Warwick, pp. 146-7.
[53] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006, p. 120; see also pp. 118-139.

from.[54] This was in turn reflective of Berry Gordy's broader civil rights agenda for Motown, which, as Mark Anthony Neal put it,

> surmised that that the mass consumption of 'soul,' via an efficient mass-production process, was a natural corollary to broader efforts by blacks to integrate American society in general and corporate boardrooms in particular.[55]

Of course, attracting this market would also mean mainstream success and correspondingly greater record sales, but there is no doubt that Gordy was acutely aware of the statement that Motown artists were making in a civil rights context.[56] Gordy also released a recording of the Reverend Martin Luther King's *Great March to Freedom* on Motown subsidiary Gordy records, in October, 1963.[57] Mary Wilson remembered performing with the Supremes one night in Miami, after which

> a middle-aged Jewish woman came up to us and said, "You know, I usually don't let my children watch negroes on television, but the Supremes are different."[58]

The sophisticated presentation and elegant comportment that were integral components of the Motown package could provide access to social worlds that were closed to African Americans in the early 1960s, and can be viewed in the context of forms of non-violent protest policies of the civil rights movement.[59]

The advantages conferred by their whiteness worked in a very literal manner when the Shangri-Las were chosen to publicise Revlon's 'Swingstakes' competition, a promotion for the Natural Wonder line of cosmetics, in May of 1965. Natural Wonder was aimed at teenagers and younger women, and its medicated make-up claimed to cover 'every little flaw' while working 'to help clear your skin.'[60] The Natural Wonder range

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[54] Warwick, p. 146.
[55] Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 44.
[56] Neal, pp. 42-5; Smith, pp. 21-53, esp. pp. 21-25 for Gordy's release of spoken-word recordings of Martin Luther King speeches on Motown subsidiary label.
[57] Rev. Martin Luther King, *Great March to Freedom*, GORDY 906, 1963. For review, see 'Album Reviews,' *Billboard*, 5 October, 1963, p. 30.
[58] Wilson, p. 259.
[59] Warwick, p. 80; Neal, pp. 42-5.
[60] Natural Wonder advertisement, *Life*, 15 March, 1963, p. 17.

did not include make-up for young African American women, however, and Revlon would not develop a line that catered to the 'ethnic market' until the early 1990s.[61] As a direct response to 'the refusal of white cosmetics mavens' to cater for African American women, the Flori Roberts range was launched in 1965, and Fashion Fair, the first black-owned range to be stocked in department stores, was introduced in 1973.[62] Prior to this, cosmetics designed for African American skin tones and colouring were predominantly sold through black-owned and operated beauty salons and sales-people, rather than being widely commercially available.[63] The chance to endorse Natural Wonder make-up (the very name of which perpetuates the notion that white skin is 'natural' and normal) and enjoy all the promotional benefits of this association was not an opportunity available to any groups of young African American singers of comparable popularity or hit-making ability.

With their youthful teen following, clear skin and photogenic good looks, the Shangri-Las made perfect sense as a choice to promote Natural Wonder to acne-prone teenage girls. This also demonstrates that their 'bad girl' image was certainly not 'bad' enough to prevent a cosmetic corporation, which is all about the selling of image, from utilising the considerable aesthetic power that the Shangri-Las possessed. They recorded a Natural Wonder jingle in a Shangri-Las-style, as well as endorsements extolling the virtues of Natural Wonder's different make-up formats.[64] The promotional-only release record containing these recordings, which was pressed for radio stations that participated in this national competition, proclaimed proudly on the cover, "Words and Music

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[61] Caroline V. Clarke, 'Redefining Beautiful: Black Cosmetic Companies and Industry Giants Vie for the Loyalty of Black Women,' *Black Enterprise*, June 1993, p. 248.
[62] Clarke, pp. 246-8; Jessie Carney Smith, 'Cosmetics,' *Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture* ed. Jessie Carney Smith, 4 vols., Santa Barbara CA: Greenwood, 2011, pp. 373-6;
[63] Skylar Harris, 'Cosmetics,' *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia* ed. Nikki L. M. Brown, Barry M. Stentiford, Westport CT: Greenwood, 2008, pp. 191-195.
[64] See Warwick, pp. 190-91.

to Sell Teens By."[65] First prize in the competition was a trip to London to spend a weekend with the Dave Clark Five, who were enormously popular in the US at this time, probably second only to the Beatles. That the Shangri-Las' considerable selling power was used to promote a competition with this prize suggests an interesting kind of equality with the Dave Clark Five. While their roles were quite different - Shangri-Las did the promoting, and the DC5 were 'the prize' - ultimately, the cachet of both groups was being utilised to sell make-up for the same promotion. Given that entrants were required to 'tear off the words 'Natural Wonder' from any 'Natural Wonder' package, this likely guaranteed significant sales of 'Natural Wonder' make-up.[66]

Work

On Monday 17 May, 1965, the Shangri-Las were advertised to perform as part of the Dick Clark Caravan of Stars, at the Melodyland Theatre, Anaheim CA. They shared the bill with '15 of the nation's top recording acts,' including Del Shannon, the Zombies (who were English), Jewel Aken, the Larks, Tommy Roe, Dee Dee Sharp, Mel Carter, the Ad Libs, the Velvettes, Jimmy Sole, Mike Clifford, the Ikettes, the Executives, and Don Wayne.[67] There were two performances, at 5pm and 9pm. Stories abound of the cramped and chaotic conditions on the Dick Clark tours; indeed, of touring generally in the mid-1960s.[68] The Supremes' first Dick Clark tour was in the summer of 1964, and Mary Wilson spoke of the 'cramped, dirty bus' on which 'sleeping was usually impossible, and so the three of us would stay up and practice our tunes.'[69] Florence Ballard, also

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[65] Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slasdisco.htm (accessed 21 June, 2010).
[66] 'Official Entry Blank for Revlon's Big 'Natural Wonder' 'SWINGSTAKES,' *KRLA Beat*, 12 May, 1965, p. 4, http://krlabeat.sakionline.net/issue/12may65.pdf (accessed 21 June, 2010).
[67] 'Dick Clark Caravan of Stars,' advertisement in *KRLA Beat*, 12 May, 1965, p. 2, http://krlabeat.sakionline.net/issue/12may65.pdf (accessed 27 July, 2009).
[68] Tommy James with Martin Fitzpatrick, *Me, the Mob and the Music: One Helluva Ride with Tommy James and the Shondells*, New York: Scribner, 2010, pp. 76-78; Warwick, pp. 203-211.
[69] Wilson, p. 172-4.

of the Supremes, remembered that the members of the band also travelled on the bus, and that they

> would get happy blowing their horns in your ear, but after a while you'd get so tired and you'd get on the bus and – I don't care how much noise they were making – you'd go to sleep, you'd just go to sleep.[70]

Colin Blunstone, of English group the Zombies, who were on 1965 Dick Clark Caravan tour with the Shangri-Las, remembered that

> we only stayed in a hotel every second night. On alternate nights, we drove through the night...and all the acts would sing...all the way through the night, and play music. Then the next night you'd get a hotel, but you want to go out to a party or something. So we didn't really get much sleep.[71]

By the end of the six-week tour, they were exhausted. Their guitarist, Paul Atkinson, was apparently almost delirious when collected from the airport by his parents, having lost a substantial amount of weight while touring.[72] Mary Weiss's experience echoed those of the other performers:

> I didn't get to pal around with anybody. We were so busy. It was very different then. Now these singers say how rough they have it. They don't have a clue. Not a clue. Ride in a bus every night. Sleep every other night. See how *that* feels. People don't realize how hard it was back then. There were no monitors at the time. Sometimes you were screaming just to hear yourself singing. The Dick Clark Caravans, they were gruelling shows. Every other night you'd sleep in a hotel. Sleep on the bus, then you'd have to get up and look perky. It's exhausting.[73]

Brenda Holloway, another Motown artist who toured extensively on package tours at this time, concurred:

> 'Being on the road was tedious. We were younger, but it was very tedious because it took all of our day. We didn't have any social life when we were performing. It took the better part of the day and the evening. All we were ready for was bed whenever we got finished...It seemed to be harder for us than for the men. We had so many wigs and so many costumes...we were

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[70] Peter Benjaminson, *The Lost Supreme: The Life of Dreamgirl Florence Ballard*, Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 2008, p. 48.
[71] Quoted in Claes Johansen, *The Zombies: Hung Up on a Dream, A Biography 1962-1967*, London: S.A.F. Publishing, 2001, p. 129.
[72] Johansen, pp. 129-130.
[73] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/03.html (accessed 27 July, 2009).

> basically together all day long; learning make-up tricks from each other, just being with each other. We were with each other *a lot*.'[74]

Far from being some kind of trivial conceit, wigs were a practical way of dealing with the fact that a busload of people might be sharing one bathroom, and washing and styling one's hair might not always be possible. Wigs made it possible to spend all night on a bus with no sleep and still look glamorous while performing.[75]

Added to this already considerable pressure was the strain of attempting to maintain schooling. Mary Weiss, who was the youngest member of the Shangri-Las, said

> I missed out on doing any real high school stuff. I went to professional school where you could leave if you had to tour. It was necessary.

Weiss attended Quintano's School for Young Performers, which was then located in West 56th Street opposite the back entrance of Carnegie Hall, within easy access of Manhattan's theatre district and about six blocks (a very short walk) from the Brill Building. Quintano's was established in 1951 by Leonard S. Quintano, known as 'Dr. Q.', as a high school for teens with showbusiness aspirations, or who were already performers and for whom attendance at a standard high school was difficult.[76] Students at the school in the mid-1960s, along with Mary Weiss, included Mitch Margo and Jay Siegel of doo-wop group the Tokens, actors Bernadette Peters and Patty Duke; Tuesday Weld and Frankie Lymon were earlier attendees.[77] At the outset, Quintano's School seems to have been reasonably reputable, but by the mid-1960s, its educational standards were being called into called into question.[78] In June, 1965, a letter from New York's Division for School Regulation and Supervision observed pointedly that '"there is no science laboratory, no library, and no gymnasium,"' and noted further that '"Mr. Quintano...is not really

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[74] Taylor, p. 80.
[75] Benjaminson, p. 49.
[76] Tom Sinclair, 'School's Out!', *Spin*, September 2005, pp. 90-96
[77] John Grecco and Phil Milstein, '*Spectropop Presents* Lavender Girl: the Patty Michaels Story,' http://www.spectropop.com/PattyMichaels/index.htm (accessed 23 June, 2010); Patty Duke and Kenneth Turan, *Call Me Anna: The Autobiography of Patty Duke*, New York: Bantam, 1987, p. 126.
[78] Sinclair, pp. 96, 93.

interested in expanding his facilities or making extensive changes to meet state requirements."'[79] Furthermore, it seems that from approximately the mid-1960s on, the school became something of a haven for teenagers who had been expelled from their high schools for non-attendance or anti-social behaviour. As one former student put it,

> 'You had the students who were there because they had real careers, and you had the fuck-ups.'[80]

As long as the 'incredibly expensive' tuition fees were paid, teaching staff turned a blind eye to various questionable activities, and toward the later part of the 1960s drug use and dealing were rife.[81] It is difficult to see how these circumstances were conducive to the students receiving anything equating a formal high school diploma.

The pressures of touring and being recording artists caused others to drop out of school altogether. Mary Ann and Marge Ganser's mother, Rita, had grave concerns about her daughters and their schooling.

> I wanted them to finish high school. They wouldn't finish high school. They had another year to go, and they cried and they cried, because this talent scout came after them, he heard them, and he wanted to right away sign them up, and of course I had a fit, I didn't want them to do it. But they carried on, so they got their way...[82]

This was, unfortunately, not uncommon. The music teacher at Inkster High School, Dr. Phillips, maintains that the Marvelettes were encouraged, if not pressured, to leave high school so that they could tour and promote their record(s).[83] Katherine Anderson, Georgeanna Tillman and Wyanetta Cowart of the Marvelettes were all in their final year of high school when "Please Mr. Postman" became a huge hit. As Katherine saw it,

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[79] Sinclair, p. 93.
[80] Sinclair, p. 93.
[81] Sinclair, pp. 93-4.
[82] Phil Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser, 14 October, 2001.
[83] Taylor, pp. 35-8.

> We had the choice of going out there or staying in school, and all of us ended up making the choice that we made the record, we made it popular, and we were going out there representing ourselves.[84]

Unfortunately, this

> meant we had to leave school, get schoolwork, and almost do independent study. Contrary to what has been said through the years, we did have chaperones; however, we did not have tutors...we were assigned a certain amount of homework or work that we would do on the road, but time did not always allow for us to get that work done. When we came home we turned in as much of it as we possibly could. You knew that there were any number of things that you could have done but you didn't have the time to do it.[85]

Not surprisingly, from what we have seen of the chaotic and gruelling nature of touring, the difficulty of balancing competing commitments became too much. Dr. Phillips remembered that

> 'After "Postman" hit, they began to miss classes; or if they did show up on Monday, they were just *dog* tired. Then sometimes they wouldn't make it at all til Wednesday. Of course, I had problems. I couldn't give credit for two students who weren't there. Then eventually, they just dropped out...That bothered me. That bothers me to this day.[86]

The major interruption to, or in some cases complete cessation of schooling and the concomitant instability of constant touring had major ramifications for many young performers. Katherine Anderson of the Marvelettes was only able to return to study relatively recently in order to gain her high school diploma. She commented that

> I was able to go back, but, unfortunately, I didn't go back early enough in my life that I could've made something of my life after showbusiness.[87]

It is not necessary to read between the lines to see that, like the Murray the K Brooklyn Fox shows, these tours were the music industry equivalent of sweatshops - long hours, punishing conditions, and the expectation that teenagers would unquestioningly subsume all other aspects of their lives to the treadmill. These included, as we have seen, schooling, eating regularly and well, and sleeping, in an environment that prevented the

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[84] Taylor, p. 36.
[85] Quoted in Taylor, p. 34.
[86] Quoted in Taylor, pp. 36-7.
[87] Taylor, p. 38.

maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Aside from all this, there were other dangers. As noted earlier, the Shangri-Las were eventually obliged to put together a permanent band to back them on the road. Alan Betrock's chapter on the Shangri-Las in his *Girl Groups* book contains a long interview with Joseph (Joey) Alexander, who was seventeen when he left high school to play drums in the Shangri-Las' backing band:

> 'We did Dick Clark tours and a lot of Murray the K shows. On the Clark tours we would be on the road for three, maybe four months at a time – all one-nighters. At least the tours were routed out properly so we didn't have to travel too far between shows. Sometimes we'd do two a day, something like a state fair in the afternoon, and then drive a bit and do a show at night. Four days on, one day off, for week after week. We did bowling alleys, halls, dances, anything from four hundred to four thousand people. The equipment would be there when we arrived – we just carried baggage. We'd do a twenty-minute set, just four or five songs. The night time shows would start at around 6.30 and run for two hours or so. There was always wildness when the girls came on stage, with kids rushing and pushing up against the stage. They would grab Mary, and try to pull her hair.[88]

Security at venues where the groups performed was often inadequate or non-existent. Mary Weiss recalled that

> A lot of times it was very frightening. One time at an aquarium there was no security and I just about had my clothes ripped off. And the fans with pens almost poking your eye out. There was no security then. We were just winging it. When there's a lot of them and one of you, it gets scary.[89]

This was compounded by an almost total lack of supervision and guidance while travelling between shows. Mary Weiss has recounted harrowing stories of being out on the road in an era in which there were 'no cell phones,' 'hotels didn't have camera systems the way they do today,' and 'there were no police around.' As she put it, 'you were *out there*.'[90] Nominally, the group had a chaperone, but as she pointed out, this was quite ludicrous:

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[88] Quoted in Betrock, p. 106.
[89] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/index2.html (accessed 9 July, 2010).
[90] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).

> If you can call an eighteen year old a proper chaperone. Maybe nineteen, but that's as grown up as it got. We had a road manager, Fat Frankie, for a while...that wasn't much supervision. One of our other road managers was a black belt in karate. Once, there was a car full of drunken guys weaving all over a bridge, waving beer bottles and stuff and it was getting very dangerous. They kept swerving into our car and it was very scary. I was so petrified, my heart was in my throat. It was as if they thought they had the right to do this. They could have killed us all. Louie stopped the car and took them all on. They were flying everywhere, all over the bridge. You had no choice in the matter. It was a dark road with nowhere to go, there were no cell phones then. I'm glad he was there. I could see the headlines now, JIMMY KILLS MARY ON BRIDGE. It was much different than now. It's very hard to explain. Nothing was organized. It was, "Here's a list of shows, get on the road." I was only fifteen.[91]

This barely contained chaos is indeed difficult to comprehend. After one particularly harrowing incident, Weiss took matters into her own hands:

> I bought a gun after someone tried to break into my hotel room. There were glass panels on the side of the door and all of a sudden I see this arm coming through. Not only was I scared to death, there were large amounts of money in the room. You're on the road with no protection. But, I was a little kid. I didn't know. Back then you could walk in anywhere and buy a gun. But the FBI came to my mother's house and said, "Will you please tell your daughter she'll be arrested if she gets off the plane with her gun?"[92]

That a teenage girl was obliged to buy a gun to protect herself while at her job speaks volumes about the degree to which the Shangri-Las 'employers' failed on multiple levels to provide a safe working environment for them. Aside from the physical, bodily dangers that the young performers faced, there was also the considerable psychological strain coping with extreme degrees of stress on an ongoing basis.

Under these unnatural circumstances, it was absolutely impossible to relax, keep up, sleep, function normally. Mary related that

> I toured so much I would put my head on the pillow and wake up and not know what state I was in. That's no way to live. And it's not a life. You're

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[91] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 14 October, 2010).
[92] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*,http://www.nortonrecords.com/index2.html (accessed 9 July, 2010).

> either at a radio station, a TV station, out to dinner for some PR, a show, more rehearsals, and then when you're not doing that and you're in New York and you're doing rehearsals, and studio and...I had no life.[93]

According to Joseph Alexander

> There was always a lot of booze...and pot. Five dollars worth of pot would last for a whole week back then – we'd smoke it in these little cornpipes. A bunch of people would take pills too, either to wake you up or put you to sleep, or both, sometimes both. There'd be a lot of card playing and informal parties – not wild orgy-like parties – just good times where we could unwind and keep our spirits up. It was like being drafted. We were altogether in the same boat, so we made the best of it.[94]

At this time, there was little knowledge and no education about the dangers of using pills for waking and sleeping, but it was unfortunately common in various areas of showbusiness. Another child star, Patty Duke, who attended Quintano's at the same time as Mary Weiss, remembered being given routinely, as a teenager, 'antipsychotic medications, as well as phenobarbital and Percodan' by her carer-managers:

> Though I was never given enough to become addicted, it certainly wasn't a healthy practice...No one was educated then about how dangerous that stuff could be, so they probably weren't acting from malice, just a combination of ignorance, greed and bad judgement.[95]

Others young performers, including Frankie Lymon, Wanda Young (the Marvelettes), Florence Ballard (the Supremes) and Mary Ann Ganser developed drug and alcohol problems as a direct result of their experiences in showbusiness and on the road. Mary Ann and Marge Ganser's mother, Rita, was brutally frank about the consequences of her daughters being on the road without appropriate supervision. Initially, she had travelled with the group:

> A couple of times I went with them, they did a show, Dick Clark [Caravan of Stars] ...and I met George Morton there and a couple of times we travelled together, and he was very nice, and I came home and told my husband,

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[93] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).
[94] Quoted in Betrock, p. 108.
[95] Duke and Turan, p. 88.

> well, I think the girls have good people to travel with, I don't think I need to travel any more.

She later regretted this decision, calling it her

> big mistake. I never should have done that. Because they started drinking, probably got into drugs...I hate to see anybody get on the road with their music today, because...they always wind up taking drugs. You know *why* they take drugs? My daughter Marge told me that they *can't cope* with all what goes on in front of them, like when they're up on stage, and the kids are carrying on, she said they go *wild*! And I guess it plays on their nerves...so that's what they do...try something to calm their nerves.[96]

Coping with the extremes of wild adulation and the adrenalin rush that accompanies performing, every day, and sometimes twice a day, in conjunction with the drudgery of gruelling travelling conditions, became a recipe for physical and psychological disaster.

On several occasions while relating anecdotes about the conditions of touring in the mid 1960s, Mary Weiss referred to herself as a 'little kid' or a child, or otherwise emphasised her age. In a recent interview, she said, 'obviously, if I had been older at the time I would not have agreed to do so much.'[97] The age of the performers was what simultaneously allowed this tremendous exploitation to take place, but also allowed the majority of them to 'cope' with it as well. They were young and famous, so it was very exciting. As Katherine Anderson of the Marvelettes put it,

> 'When you start out as a kid, you look at how much fun it is. The fun still exists, but then as you get older, you realise even more so that this is your job. Once you begin to look at things as being a job, it ends up being a lot more challenging to deal with and you lose some of the fun of it because the demands on you are so high.'[98]

Anderson's gradual awakening to the reality of labour is telling, and was likely accompanied by the realisation that this job's hourly rate and conditions were far from persuasive. Jacqueline Warwick has astutely observed that

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[96] Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser.
[97] Iain Aitch, 'The Leader's Back,' *The Telegraph*, 14 April, 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3664489/The-Leaders-back.html (accessed 1 July, 2010).
[98] Quoted in Taylor, p. 182.

> hegemonic understandings of singing and dancing as pleasurable activities that come "naturally" to women make it difficult to identify singers as artists, much less workers.[99]

In conceptual terms, Warwick likened this to the 'houswifization' of domestic labours, including the care of children, that are perceived to be biologically 'natural pastimes' for women, and therefore not classified as work.[100] This is further complicated by the contradictory messages women, and particularly mothers, received about working, which was actively encouraged during WWII to address an acute labour shortage, but actively discouraged later.[101]

The idea of 'singing and dancing as pleasurable activities' and therefore not work has broader applications, and can be extended to include teenaged performers in the music industry in the mid-1960s. Paul Atkinson, the Zombies guitarist (mentioned earlier) who arrived home from the Dick Clark tour underweight and suffering from acute exhaustion, had a brother that worked as an accountant in London. He had just arrived back from the airport after a gruelling tour:

> Paul's mother would say, "Oh, can you go outside and get the coal, Paul? Keith's had a hard day in the city today. He's working, you know." They never considered what we were doing to be work. And so therefore in the end you get fed up with fighting it...[102]

The idea that young performers were just having fun and not taking their musical activities particularly seriously has been repeatedly invoked as strategy for evading accusations of exploitation. Ellie Greenwich commented

> The girls gave, and the girls took. They'd get fancy clothes, expensive dinners, all of that. Most of them didn't think in terms of a 'career.' It was just fun, and better than their alternatives, and they took what they could get. Most of them only wanted their couple of years, and then they wanted to get

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[99] Warwick, p. 129.
[100] See Warwick, pp. 129-130; Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, London: Zed, 1986.
[101] Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*, London: Penguin, 1994, pp. 43-60, p. 57.

[102] Johansen, p. 132.

> married and raise a family. They knew there were trade-offs, but it wasn't a one-sided exploitation, that's for sure.[103]

What Greenwich failed to acknowledge was that the vast majority of these 'benefits' that the young performers supposedly 'took' were claimed back as expenses out of their already miniscule royalties – which was absolutely standard in the contracts they had signed, or that their parents had signed on their behalves.[104] To claim that this somehow made the labour transaction less one-sided is, at the very least, wishful thinking.

Mary Wilson of the Supremes recalled her sense of enormous pride in her group's achievements – they'd had a number one record, and been on the road for months playing Dick Clark Caravan shows that were mostly sellouts. She 'couldn't wait to get back to Hitsville and find out how rich we were.' When she did, however, she was told by Motown's accountant Esther Edwards (who, incidentally, was Berry Gordy's sister) that there was no money:

> "You were paid only six hundred dollars a week. Deduct from that the price of room and board and food for yourselves and Mrs. Ross and that leaves nothing." Then, as if to add insult to injury, she added, "It probably cost the company, but you needed the exposure." I tried to figure it out; where could the money have gone, especially when we so rarely stayed in a room anywhere? I left the meeting crushed.[105]

The costs of producing and promoting records were also deducted from the artist's royalties. In the majority of cases, the royalties were for performing only, not songwriting, which meant even less monies for the artist.[106] Even so, the artist footed the bill for the majority of 'expenses,' and since the calculation of 'costs' was largely at the discretion of the label owners, rorting was easy, common and rife. Mary Wilson never saw her tax return during her entire tenure at Motown.[107] She also commented,

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[103] Ellie Greenwich, quoted in Emerson, p. 234.
[104] See Hank Bordowitz, *Dirty Little Secrets of the Record Business: Why So Much Music You Hear Sucks*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006, pp. 259-70; Taylor, pp. 23-25; Wilson, pp. 102-104.
[105] Wilson, p. 178.
[106] Wilson, pp. 102-4.
[107] Wilson, p. 202.

with reference to some particularly lucrative later engagements at the Copa,

> Because we never saw the accounts, we had no idea how much of the Supremes' fee was spent on drinks, complimentary tickets, and other promotional items.[108]

The recouping of 'promotional costs' was a particularly notorious area for rorting, as Artie Ripp explained:

> Who is to say I spent thirty minutes promoting this record and five minutes on this one? It's just simpler: Charge everyone $1000. So in fact if you were paying for the promotion trips, you were paying for the advertising, you were paying for this, that and the other thing, you were paying for the recording costs, traditionally the artists were getting fucked...And the black artist and the young white kid artist, what would they know? They would just be happy making records.[109]

Until, like Mary Wilson, they began to realise that the wealth generated by *their* labour was, to put it mildly, being redirected. Attempts to redress the situation at the time were often futile, as Mary Wilson found: in a clear conflict of interest, the brother of Motown's accountant owned the company. Herman Santiago and Jimmy Merchant's efforts resulted in threats on their lives, and taking their grievances to court was ultimately to no avail.

For groups like the Shangri-Las, who had the misfortune to be involved with industry figures like Artie Ripp, recoupable promotional costs that came under the umbrella of 'this, that and the other thing' included parties and prostitutes for influential radio and industry figures:

> Every party was charged to the artist. "I've got a hundred hookers. Charge them to the artist."[110]

In the days when he worked for George Goldner, Ripp related, he would

> go on the road with George, which meant I had to get the broads to the hotel and then make sure the disk jockey who had just finished with the redhead knew that the blonde was down the hall. Back in those days, I saw

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[108] Wilson, p. 210.
[109] Artie Ripp, quoted in Emerson, p. 234.
[110] 'Artie Ripp,' in Joe Smith and Mitchell Fink, *Off the Record: An Oral History of Popular Music*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989, p. 134.

> bags of money going out and bags of money coming in. You could sell 100 records over the table and 1000 records under the table.[111]

This, it seems, was a practice that continued at Red Bird. Factor in Goldner's chronic gambling problem, and it becomes painfully clear just what a sordid combination of vices teenaged performers like the Shangri-Las were being exploited into funding with their endless touring, in the name of 'promotion.'

Red Bird and the Mob

On 16 April, 1966, an article appeared in *Billboard* entitled 'Goldner Buys Out 2 Labels.' Although it was not obvious at the time, this would have dramatic and far-reaching ramifications for the Shangri-Las' ability to continue as a functioning group. The article reported that:

> George Goldner has bought out the interest of Jerry Lieber (sic)[112] and Mike Stoller in Red Bird and Blue Cat Records, two pop independent labels. Goldner is now the sole owner of the labels. The move was made to allow Lieber and Stoller to devote more time to writing and publishing and to work on film and Broadway show properties. Under the previous arrangement Lieber and Stoller, as an independent record production firm, earmarked its entire output to Red Bird and Blue Cat. Under the new set-up, Lieber and Stoller will still turn out masters for the two labels; they will also do work for other labels. According to Lieber, the Red Bird-Blue Cat arrangement resulted in the production company being swamped with work for the two labels and could not take on any outside work. Goldner said that he will depend exclusively on the output of independent production firms for his product and devote his time primarily to sales and promotion. The office set-up will be unchanged, with the Lieber and Stoller headquarters next to the Red Bird-Blue Cat offices.[113]

This all sounds plausible enough on the surface, but the reality was rather more complicated. The 'buy out' effectively spelled the end of Red Bird and Blue Cat (a subsidiary label created for the release of more R&B-styled material), as operating entities. It had devastating consequences

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[111] Smith and Fink, p. 135.
[112] Leiber is incorrectly spelled 'Lieber' throughout the article.
[113] 'Goldner Buys Out 2 Labels,' *Billboard*, 16 April, 1966, p. 3.

for the artists on their roster, particularly for the most successful of its groups, the Shangri-Las.

The roots of the split between Goldner and his Red Bird partners go back at least to a lunch meeting in the Oak Room at the Plaza Hotel, Manhattan, in 1965 – attended by Leiber, Stoller, their attorney Lee Eastman, Goldner, Jerry Wexler, and Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun of Atlantic Records. The meeting was ostensibly to discuss a possible merger between Red Bird and Atlantic Records, which at the time was not enjoying the same chart success as Red Bird.[114] Before the creation of Red Bird, Leiber and Stoller had had a long association with Atlantic, working as songwriters and producers – they co-wrote and produced "On Broadway" (1963) by the Drifters, for example.[115] Reports vary regarding the impetus for the luncheon and the discussions that took place, but the stated motivations of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller are significant here. They had apparently discovered that Goldner was 'pressing, shipping and selling records off the books for personal profit' through a parallel business he had set up.[116] As Mike Stoller related,

> 'The idea [of a merger] was exciting for more than one reason: George Goldner, despite his extraordinary ability to pick and push hits, was someone we could never trust. Some employees claimed he was selling our records out back of the warehouse and pocketing the cash. There were rumors that he was back at the track, where his losses were piling up. A merger with Atlantic would mean close supervision over George's practices, something that Jerry and I, who stayed busy in the studio, weren't able to handle. If Goldner was stealing, as we strongly suspected, Wexler would quickly catch him.'[117]

This carefully-worded version of events is from the official Leiber and Stoller biography which was published early in 2009. In 1993, Jerry Leiber was quoted as saying, rather more forthrightly,

> 'We were trying to use Atlantic to drive Goldner out. Goldner was involving us with guys with faces you'd only see at fights at the old Madison Square

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[114] Picardie and Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers*, pp. 106-110; Emerson, p. 229.
[115] See Emerson, pp. 214-15.
[116] Emerson, p. 229; Picardie and Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers*, p. 111.
[117] Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, p. 210.

> Garden. We were afraid of George and thought of Ahmet and Jerry as executives strong enough to control him. We thought of Goldner as crass and Atlantic as class.'[118]

As discussed in the previous chapter, Goldner's chronic gambling addiction had resulted in the loss of a series of pioneering labels that he had established. As Leiber put it:

> 'Goldner was practically singlehandedly responsible for some of the greatest hits of the day. His labels were legendary – Tico, Gone, End, Gee, Roulette, Rama. The word was that Goldner was hooked on the horses. In spite of his success on the charts, he'd find himself so deeply in debt that his "friend" Morris (Moishe) Levy, bailed him out by buying his labels for a song. Goldner had lost them all at the track.'[119]

According to Leiber and Stoller, Goldner sabotaged the Atlantic/Red Bird merger lunch meeting, drinking heavily and behaving belligerently, knowing that if the merger took place, he would be held accountable and would no longer get away with his underhanded moneymaking. As it was, for the time being, Goldner remained a partner and was able to continue.[120]

Matters apparently came to a head after Jerry Leiber was accosted on Broadway, probably early in 1966. Josh Alan Friedman, whose book contains a lengthy description of this incident, names the accoster as 'Morris Levy's right hand enforcer' and Roulette employee Nate McCollough (aka Nathan McCalla) 'a highly decorated former marine officer' and 'an outside hitter connected to the Genovese mob.'[121] McCalla had his own subsidiary label at Roulette, Calla Records, which released recordings by soul singers including Bettye Lavette and J.J. Jackson; he also had his own publishing company, JAMF.[122] According to Leiber, he

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[118] Jerry Leiber, quoted in Jerry Wexler and David Ritz, *Rhythm and the Blues: A Life in American Music*, New York: Knopf, 1993, p. 164, quoted by Emerson, p. 229.
[119] Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, p. 198.
[120] For Leiber and Stoller's account of the merger luncheon, see Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, pp. 209-212.
[121] Josh Alan Friedman, *Tell the Truth Until They Bleed: Coming Clean in the Dirty World of Blues and Rock 'n' Roll*, New York: Backbeat, 2008, pp. 10-17.
[122] JAMF stood for Jive-Ass Mother Fucker; Freidman, p. 15; Fredric Dannen, *Hit Men: Power Brokers and Fast Money Inside the Music Business*, New York: Times/Random House, 1990, p. 50.

was ‘escorted’ by the man Freidman named as McCalla to a room at the back of a deli near the Brill Building, where (again according to Friedman) John ‘Sonny’ Franzese, the capo in the Colombo mafia family who was involved with Artie Ripp and Kama-Sutra, waited with a number of his offsiders. Exactly what took place at this meeting remains unclear. According to Leiber, Franzese indicated that Red Bird’s partnership with Goldner now included Franzese, because ‘Goldner brought us into the business when he needed some funding.’ Franzese had also apparently made it clear in a terrifying and threatening manner that he knew Leiber had young children.[123] Leiber and Stoller’s account of this incident names neither the ‘enforcer’ nor the capo/mobster, who is referred to as ‘Sal’, with a note that ‘Sal isn’t his real name.’[124] Josh Alan Friedman then commented that

> Whatever happened next is deeply buried within the shadows of music business lore...I’ve heard tall tales, like one about Jerry being hung outside the Brill Building penthouse by his ankles. Jerry and Mike made a pact never to discuss it, and remain paranoid forty-five years later.[125]

According to Leiber, the situation at Red Bird became unworkable - ‘guys started showing up in our office, brutes who could barely fit through the door.’ Confronted about the situation, Goldner apparently responded, ‘“It’s only temporary. Once I pay them off, they’ll be out of here. It’s nothing to worry about.”’[126] It appears that, yet again, Goldner had run up gambling debts, borrowed money from questionable sources (almost certainly involving Morris Levy), and used Red Bird shares as collateral.[127] When Goldner was unable to ‘pay them off,’ the ‘debt collectors’ moved in.

John ‘Sonny’ Franzese was a silent partner in Buddah Records, which was an arm of Artie Ripp’s Kama-Sutra company. Franzese had almost certainly partially funded the establishment of Kama Sutra as well, and was a close acquaintance of Phil Steinberg, who, along with Artie Ripp

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[123] For Leiber’s account of the deli incident, see Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, pp. 212-214; Friedman pp. 15-17.
[124] Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, pp. 212.
[125] Friedman, p. 17.
[126] Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, p. 215.
[127] Picardie and Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers*, p. 114.

and Hy Mizrahi, founded the production company. In the early 1990s, Sonny Franzese's son Michael turned informer, became a Christian and wrote a book called *Quitting the Mob*, and a more recent one entitled *Blood Covenant*. This *began* with an anecdote about Kama Sutra, Phil Steinberg, the Shangri-Las, and Morris Levy. He related that, according to Steinberg, Morris Levy had visited the Kama-Sutra offices at 1650 Broadway (an address also home to Aldon Music, where Ripp had once been employed, and a host of other publishing houses). Morris Levy had apparently walked in and said to Steinberg,

> The Shangri-Las, nice kids! Great group! Great song!...They're mine, and I want my cut.

According to Michael Franzese,

> Steinberg knew the streets: Levy was an associate of Gaetano "Tommy the Big Guy" Vastola, a vicious soldier in the DeCavalcante Mafia family. He was also the childhood friend of Vincent "the Chin" Gigante, a menacing hood on his way to becoming the boss of the Genovese family. In short, Levy was big trouble.[128]

This was quite regular behaviour for Levy, who had a history of and formidable reputation for shaking down performers and songwriters for royalties. Levy was not a songwriter, but his name appears on songwriting credits for an extraordinary amount of material.[129] Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter Two, both Goldner and Levy had long histories of siphoning record company monies and artist royalties into their own pockets. According to Michael Franzese, his father Sonny 'enjoyed popping into the record company [Kama-Sutra] as he made his Manhattan rounds' and did so quite regularly.[130] Apparently Steinberg told Franzese senior what had happened, Sonny told him not to worry about it, and the next time Steinberg saw Levy, there was no mention of a cut, nor was there ever

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[128] Michael Franzese, *Blood Covenant*, New Kensington PA: Whitaker House, 2003, pp. 22-23.

[129] Fredric Dannen, 'The Godfather of Rock and Roll,' *Rolling Stone*, 17 November, 1988, pp. 88-97, 164; see BMI listing http://repertoire.bmi.com/title.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&keyID=1668557&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 7 September, 2009). These include "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" by Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers,

[130] Franzese, p. 24.

again. In other words, Sonny Franzese had sufficient mob clout to be able to successfully call Levy off this particular shakedown, which, according to Michael Franzese, was over the Shangri-Las.[131]

However, it is likely that matters were somewhat less straightforward than Michael Franzese has presented them. Artie Ripp's version of why Sonny Franzese was a frequent visitor to Kama Sutra's offices is quite different. He maintains that Kama Sutra was started by Mizrahi and Steinberg with dubious funding *before* Ripp was 'invited to become a partner.'[132] That dubious funding included $60,000 worth of insurance money after a fire, and

> The partners were shamed into confessing they had borrowed $10,000 from mobsters, then greater amounts when that ran out – in return for shares in the company. 'It was rather disturbing,' says Ripp. 'I took it upon myself to figure out how I was going to get mercy from a what was supposed to be a merciless group of people – people who now had a piece of this hot, happening rock-and-roll production company.'[133]

Ripp had apparently been so busy 'making records with groups like the Shangri-Las and the Critturs' that when he finally 'had time to relax and look around' he was horrified to find his offices being haunted by mobsters. George Morton and Ellie Greenwich have both emphatically denied that Ripp ever worked with the Shangri-Las in the studio, certainly not any of the Red Bird material anyway – he got production credits in lieu of the Shangri-Las previous 'commitment', whatever form that took, to Kama-Sutra. According to Ripp, he solved the problem by telling Sonny Franzese he didn't want him involved, paying him off, and getting really drunk with him.[134] This account exonerates Ripp, paints him as the innocent victim of mob figures, and, to put it mildly, strains credulity. But what IS likely to be largely accurate from Ripp's story is that Sonny Franzese was a regular visitor to the Kama Sutra offices because he had

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[131] Franzese, pp. 24-5.
[132] Picardie and Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers*, pp. 112-113. Inexplicably, they describe Kama Sutra as 'a record and production company based in Los Angeles' (p. 112).
[133] Picardie and Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers*, p. 113.
[134] Picardie and Wade, *Atlantic and the Godfathers*, pp. 112-114.

stakes in the company and was checking on his investments, which Michael Franzese rather odiously whitewashed as pleasant family outings.

It is unlikely that the details of all this will ever be accurately known. But this tangled morass of mob involvement is significant because it goes some way toward explaining the tremendous obfuscation surrounding the demise of the Shangri-Las, the absolute impossibility of obtaining any accurate information, and the wall of silence around these events that exists to this day. It also demonstrates the manner in which the established practices of George Goldner, Morris Levy, and Artie Ripp, which had been going on for years before the Shangri-Las were involved with any of them, played out on the fortunes (literally) of the group in a devastating way.

Mercury Records

The upshot of the alleged Franzese and McCalla shakedown of Jerry Leiber, which was almost certainly only one of a number of factors at play, was that, as indicated in the *Billboard* article cited earlier, that Leiber and Stoller sold their share of Red Bird and Blue Cat to Goldner. Among the many other things not reported in the article was the price – one dollar.[135] Leiber and Stoller effectively walked away from Red Bird, and the label quickly collapsed. Before it did, two final Shangri-Las singles were released: “He Cried” b/w “Dressed in Black” in April, 1966, and “Past, Present and Future” b/w “Paradise” in July, 1966. The group was reaching new heights of sophistication with their material, particularly “Past, Present and Future,” which is discussed at length in Chapter Six. This madeg the timing and consequences of these events all the more disastrous. According to John Grecco, as a consequence of Red Bird’s demise,

> Many things, including master tapes, were sold to various scavengers, scattering most, but not all of them to at least three different companies,

[135] Emerson, p. 232.

> possibly more. Other master tapes either reverted back to some lessors or may simply have been discarded. File cabinets, literally filled with promotional pictures, records, demos, contracts and the like were sold off, intact, for pennies on the dollar. Other items were sold, repossessed or just simply abandoned.[136]

Jerry Leiber related that

> George attempted to keep Red Bird going. Within a few months, however, he sold all the master recordings to record company owner Shelby Singleton in Nashville.[137]

These masters included the Shangri-Las' Red Bird recordings. Singleton worked for Mercury Records, which by this time had grown into an international recording conglomerate. Mercury was founded in Chicago in 1945 by Irving Green, owner of a record pressing plant, and Berle Adams, a booking agent, whose clients included Louis Jordan. Initially Mercury signed African American performers ignored by other major labels, but soon began releasing pop records and by the end of 1945 'was ranked sixth in national sales.' [138] By the end of the 1950s, Mercury was a fully fledged major label, recording and releasing pop, jazz, classical and rhythm and blues. In 1961 Mercury was taken over by the North American arm of the European recording giant Philips. By the mid-1960s Mercury, in short, was big business, an international concern, and had the impersonal industry mechanisms and operating systems of a powerful company.

Late in 1966, following the collapse of the Red Bird label and Mercury's acquisition of the Shangri-Las' back catalogue, the group signed contracts with Mercury Records.[139] Mary and Betty Weiss, and Mary Ann Ganser

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[136] Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 15 July, 2010).

[137] Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz, p. 219. For Singleton's career at Smash and Mercury, see John Broven, J., *Record Makers and Breakers: Voices of the Independent Rock 'n' Roll Pioneers*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009, pp. 287ff.

[138] Robert Pruter, *Chicago Soul*, Champaign: University of Illinois, 1991, p. 293; Frank W. Hoffmann & Howard Ferstler, *Encyclopaedia of Recorded Sound*, v.2, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 676; 'Tiny Hill Inked as Wax Star-Flacker of Disks and Dukes,' *Billboard*, 3 November, 1945, p. 14.

[139] There is a picture of this signing here: Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 22 March, 2010) but unfortunately no details about the origin of this clipping are included. Significantly, George 'Shadow' Morton and Larry Martire are also present, as producer and manager respectively.

signed as a trio; according to John Grecco, Marge Ganser had 'had it with being overworked, underpaid and under-appreciated,' and wanted to obtain her high school diploma.[140] Mercury hastily issued a compilation of Red Bird material called "Golden Hits of the Shangri-Las."[141] *Billboard* encouragingly reported:

> There's absolutely no risk in stocking this LP. The Shangri-Las are constant chart toppers in both singles and LP's. This contains some of their big hits like "I Can Never Go Home Anymore," "Walkin' the Sand," (sic) and "Leader of the Pack." It will be one of their biggest LP's to date.[142]

To this day, the most readily available Shangri-Las compilation is 'The Mercury Years' which retails (in Australia) for around $10. The contrast between Mercury and Red Bird – a small label where the owners, producers, song-writers and artists all knew each other and worked together in close proximity – was considerable. The Shangri-Las were the biggest selling act on Red Bird; at Mercury they were a minor concern, lost in the greater and more impersonal mechanisms of a corporation. Mercury issued the first of two new Shangri-Las singles in January of 1967 – "Sweet Sounds of Summer" / "I'll Never Learn." It was produced by Morton, who continued briefly to work with the group at Mercury, while devoting himself to future trends with Janis Ian and Vanilla Fudge.

The Shangri-Las' second and final Mercury single was "Take the Time" b/w "Footsteps on the Roof," released in May of 1967. These four Mercury recordings are discussed more in more detail in Chapter Seven. The Shangri-Las languished at Mercury, where their two releases failed to chart, and after which the label did not see fit to make any further investment in recordings. The group continued to be popular on the live circuit though, apparently performing for the rest of 1967 and into 1968. However, with little support coming from Mercury, and no new material imminent, the group disbanded. The exact circumstances of and impetus

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[140] Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 21 February 2010).
[141] Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 15 January, 2010).
[142] 'Album Reviews,' *Billboard*, 31 December, 1966, p. 31.

for the split remain murky and unclear, and Mary Weiss consistently refuses to discuss this except to remark that ‘the litigation was thicker than the music,’ beyond which she will not elaborate.

For the Shangri-Las, 1965 had begun with the release of their first album, which firmly established a new image for the group, as the sullen, bad-girl heroines of their hit, “Leader of the Pack.” Their whiteness allowed for an experimentation with identity that was not available to African American singing groups, due to stereotypical notions of race, class and gender. The consolidation of the Shangri-Las aesthetic power continued with their promotion of the national Revlon Natural Wonder ‘Swingstakes’ competition. Endless touring followed, and as a consequence the group members stopped attending high school, which was a disruptive and destabilising experience common to other teen recording artists. The tours were long, chaotic, dangerous affairs in many cases, characterised by a lack of adequate security, supervision, and attention to basic requirements of health and well-being, including sleep and regular meals. The physical and psychological strain of all this was immense, and many coped by using alcohol and various drugs as means to make life more bearable. To add insult to injury, the Red Bird label collapsed in mid-1966 as a result of debts resulting from George Goldner’s gambling addiction, record bootlegging and a complex morass of mafia involvement. As a consequence of this, the Shangri-Las signed with Mercury Records as a trio, a move that in retrospect was disastrous. After the release of two unsuccessful singles in 1967, and more touring throughout 1968, the group members went their separate ways. The fallout, however, was immense, and would play out for years afterward as the full the extent of the toll on the personal lives of the group members became apparent, as did the degree of contractual exploitation to which they had been subjected.

POSTLUDE

The Aftermath

The eventual implosion of the Shangri-Las as a performing and recording entity remains shrouded in mystery, as the surviving members refuse to this day to discuss it. The group members were prevented by an exploitative contract from recording with any other group or label, which effectively closed off other musical projects as options. After the death of Mary Ann Ganser from complications following an overdose in March, 1970, the Shangri-Las occasionally reformed as a three-piece for performances in the early 1970s. In 1977, they reformed for a lengthier period, rehearsing and recording material for an album which remains unreleased, and also performed a one-off show at CBGBs, the famous New York punk club. Their last performance together was in 1989, after fighting and winning an extraordinary legal battle over the Shangri-Las' name, which had never been registered in the 1960s. Marguerite Ganser died as a result of breast cancer in 1996, and Mary Weiss released her first post-Shangri-Las album, *Dangerous Game*, in 2007.

The Shangri-Las were involved with three record companies – Kama Sutra, Red Bird, and Mercury. By the time the group disbanded, Red Bird had, of course, collapsed, but from the glimpses available into the company's shady business practices, mob involvement and the circumstances surrounding its demise, it is certainly not difficult to envision that multiple parties pursued conflicting claims on the Shangri-Las recorded legacy. This, as we have seen, had been happening almost since the group's inception, and it seems that the group's affairs, through no fault of theirs, were in considerable disarray. Mary Weiss has said that

> Everybody around us was suing each other. Basically to me, the litigation just got so insane it wasn't about the music anymore.[1]

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[1] Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, 2006, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/ (accessed 28 February, 2010).

Weiss has consistently refused to elaborate on any of the litigation she was referring to here. However, she did go on to say, in this particular interview that

> It was hard to get into the record industry and even harder to get out. I couldn't go near another record company for ten years...it was absolutely insane. And that was also how long I was still recognised on the street, which made it even more difficult.[2]

Even if she had chosen to, Weiss was effectively prevented from pursuing a singing career, solo or otherwise. In the short term, Mary said that she

> moved out on my eighteenth birthday. I moved into a hotel in Manhattan, then Gramercy Park, and then I moved to San Francisco for a while.[3]

Here, perhaps in an attempt to make up for some lost teenage time, Mary Weiss roller-skated a lot and immersed herself in the city's 'peace and love' hippy culture.[4] Eventually, Weiss returned to New York City and got involved in the commercial interiors industry. For seven years, she worked for an architectural firm, and ultimately

> ended up in the technical end, running crews of men around and analysing electrical and layouts, making sure your project's going to stand...[5]

Weiss maintained that she never went to college or trained formally to do this work, but said that she had 'a natural talent' for architecture inherited from her father, who she described as 'self-taught' and

> an exceptional builder. I found a complete set of blue prints in my mom's attic, after she died. He designed and built the first house they ever lived in, from the ground up...I could read blue prints from day one. I ended up running multi-million dollar projects (commercial interiors)... There is no other explanation, other than that talent came from my father. There are certain strengths that I have, that my mother never did.[6]

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[2] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 12 September, 2009).
[3] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 12 September, 2009).
[4] Michael Martin, 'The Leader of the Pack is Back,' *New York*, 25 February, 2007, http://nymag.com/arts/popmusic/profiles/28500/index1.html (accessed 23 JUly, 2010).
[5] *Night Talk interview with Mary Weiss*, 20 April 2008, http://noolmusic.com/utube/night_talk_interview_with_mary_weiss_part_2_lead_singer.php (accessed 20 July, 2010).
[6] 'In What Ways Did Your Father Influence Your Life? : Mary Weiss,' *Growing Bolder*, 13 June, 2008, http://growingbolder.com/thoughtleaders/in-what-ways-did-your-father-156322.html (accessed 6 October, 2010).

Before the Shangri-Las signed with Mercury as a trio in late 1966, Marge Ganser had left the group and returned to study in order to gain her high school diploma. Her twin sister Mary Ann, who stayed on with the group, had at some point, almost certainly while on the road with the Shangri-Las, developed drug-related health problems. From what we have seen of the pressures of hellish road/tour schedules, disorganisation, lack of supervision and the drug use that took place, this is not particularly surprising, and was certainly not uncommon. Tragically, Mary Ann Ganser died as the result of an overdose on March 15, 1970. Her funeral was held on Thursday 19 March, 1970, at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Cambria Heights, close by the grammar school of the same name that she had attended as a child.[7] She was then buried at St. Charles Cemetery in Farmingdale, Long Island.[8]

The date and circumstances of Mary Ann's death have been consistently obfuscated and inaccurately reported, and this remains one of the biggest historiographical black spots concerning the Shangri-Las, and one that this study can, finally, to some extent clarify. As Jerry Simmonds commented, in his *Encyclopaedia of Dead Rock Stars*:

> The facts behind Mary Ann's sudden death in 1970 still, to this day, divide her fans, friends and family. For a long time, it was believed that she might have suffered from encephalitis brought on by a malignant mosquito bite, and that she died following an untreated seizure while visiting a friend. Others – including, allegedly, the Ganser's mother – suggest that Mary Ann had battled heroin addiction for the last two years of her life, an overdose of barbiturates causing her death at just twenty-two.[9]

Over the years, it has been regularly reported that Mary Ann died from encephalitis, contracted from a mosquito bite, in 1971, not 1970.[10] In

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[7] 'Funeral Notices,' *Long Island Press*, 18 March, 1970, p. 47. For some images of the church interior, see http://www.sacredheartny.com/parish_photo_gallery/ (accessed 18 September, 2010).

[8] John Grecco, *Out in the Streets,* http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010).

[9] Jeremy Simonds, *The Encyclopedia of Dead Rock Stars: Heroin, Handguns, and Ham Sandwiches*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008, p. 34.

[10] This version of events is consistently reported as factual by accepted authorities on rock, including music scholars; see Patricia Romanowski Bashe, Holly George-Warren and Jon Pareles, *The Rolling Stone Encyclopaedia of Rock & Roll*, Rev. edn.; New York:

1985, Kurt Loder conducted what was at the time a rare interview with Mary Weiss. The resulting short piece, part of a larger "Where Are They Now" feature on former pop stars, was published in *Rolling Stone*. In it, Loder noted that 'Mary Ann Ganser died in 1971 (of encephalitis, not a drug overdose, as is sometimes reported).'[11] This gave the strong impression that Mary was 'putting the record straight,' as it were.[12]

In 2001, Phil Milstein, a regularly published rock writer, ephemera collector and world renowned expert on song-poem music, interviewed Mary Ann's mother, Rita Ganser, for a piece he was researching on the Shangri-Las' 1977 reunion (which will be discussed shortly).[13] Rita told Milstein that

> In the sixties and seventies...they were all into the drug thing, and that's what she got into. She was talking barbiturates and that's what killed her, hanging out with these people. My husband and I, we never knew it...one day she was sitting around the table having a meal with us, and all of a sudden she took a seizure, and we didn't know what it was all about and we had to rush her to hospital, and they told us there that it was an overdose she had.[14]

That it took an overdose for Mary Ann's parents to become aware that their daughter was struggling with drug problems is an indication of the extent to which addicts can veil their addictions, and manage to keep the symptoms from their closest relatives. Rita's account also strongly suggests that neither she nor her husband had any knowledge or experience with the signs of and issues surrounding drug addiction. This is entirely consistent and to be expected; the readily available common knowledge that we take for granted now was simply non-existent for Rita

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Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 2001, p. 876; Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 213.

[11] Kurt Loder, 'Where Are They Now? The Shangri-Las,' *Rolling Stone*, 12 September, 1985, pp. 50, 52.

[12] I suspect strongly that the incorrect date has been perpetuated, or at the very least, not corrected, to make the obtaining of accurate information more difficult, as I found during my own attempts.

[13] Phil Milstein, 'Shangri-Las 77!', http://www.spectropop.com/Shangri-Las/ (accessed 23 July, 2010). 'Song-poem' music refers to poems/lyrics solicited from the public and, for a fee, set to music and pressed on a 45 rpm single. See Milstein's site for more detail: http://www.songpoemmusic.com/what_is.htm (accessed 19 April, 2012).

[14] Phil Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser, 14 October, 2001.

and Herman Ganser's generation. On this occasion, prompt medical intervention enabled Mary Ann to recover. Rita continued:

> She got over that fine, then she came home, and she was doing good for a while and then she went to one of her friend's, one of the girls in the singing group, Betty Weiss, she went to her house with my other daughter, her sister, and that's when she got into the drugs again. That night. And Betty didn't know what to do, and she passed right out in her house. That was a terrible shock, that she wasn't even *home*, oh! At least if she was home, we would have been able to help her, but here she was, up at Betty's house, and Betty didn't even have a telephone in the house, so how could she get help?[15]

It also seems that Mary Ann's problems may have been more complex than Rita Ganser's account suggested. On March 17, 1970, under the headline '4 Teen-agers Die From Heroin Here', *The New York Times* reported that:

> Five addicts over 21 years old were also reported dead from acute reactions to heroin...Margaret (sic) Ganser was found dead at 105-24 64th Road in Queens Sunday afternoon.[16]

Although the writer of the article managed to name the wrong twin, as well as wrongly name the wrong twin as Margaret instead of Marguerite, this is clearly a reference to the death of Mary Ann Ganser. The *Long Island Press* published an obituary for Mary Ann Ganser on Wednesday 18 March, 1970, and in the Death Notices on the same page, reported that Mary Ann had died 'suddenly, on March 15, 1970,' which was the previous Sunday.[17] The obituary does not state a cause of death, but noted:

> Miss Ganser died on Sunday while visiting a friend in Rego Park. The reason for her death is not yet known. She lived at 116-19 219th St.[18]

This address, 116-19 219th Street (Queens), was that of her parents, Rita and Herman Ganser, her family home. It is likely that Mary Ann was living at home with her parents while trying to recover; Rita had said, 'she came

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[15] Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser.
[16] '4 Teen-agers Die From Heroin Here', *The New York Times*, 17 March, 1970, p. 40.
[17] 'Mary Ann Ganser, Singer, Dies at 22,' *Long Island Press*, 18 March, 1970, p. 47.
[18] 'Mary Ann Ganser, Singer, Dies at 22.'

home, and she was doing good for a while.' The address at which Mary Ann died, 105-24 64th Road, is in the Rego Park section of Queens.[19]

There is some evidence that Mary Ann had in fact developed a heroin addiction.[20] *The New York Times* reported that Mary Ann's death was heroin-related, and it seems that this was mentioned on her death certificate, all of which suggests that heroin did play a role in her death. Why then did Rita Ganser state to Phil Milstein that Mary Ann died of a barbiturate overdose? There are several plausible possibilities. The first is that she did. After all, *The New York Times* did get Mary Ann's name wrong, and it is entirely possible that Mary Ann had been treated previously for heroin addiction, and/or was, at the time of her death, a registered addict participating in a treatment program.[21] The Department of Health's implementation in 1966 of the New York City Narcotics Register increases the likelihood that Mary Ann would have been on record as an addict.[22] When she then *died* of an overdose, it is quite conceivable that it was inaccurately reported by the *New York Times* as a heroin overdose.[23] Furthermore, recovering heroin addicts often use other substances to dull the pain, both physical and psychological, of heroin

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[19] I include all this to demonstrate the detective work that was involved in locating Mary Ann's obituary, which I never would have managed without the date provided by the article in *The New York Times*, which, unlike the *Long Island Press*, has been digitised and is searchable by keyword. When dealing with microfilm without having a date, a year's difference (1971 instead of 1970) is significant. At the time of my first research trip to NYC in 2007, when I located Mary Ann's obituary on microfilm in the Long Island Division of the Queens Public Library, Simmonds' book (cited earlier, which does list the date correctly) had not been published.

[20] An anonymous online fan reported that 'I called [Rita Ganser] & she was very gracious & sent me Mary Ann's death papers and answered all my questions...When I mentioned a mosquito bite, she was taken aback. She said her daughter died of a barbituate (sic) overdose. Her death papers confirmed she had battled heroin addiction for 2 yrs (sic).' See http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview/id/173707.html (accessed 19 September, 2009); although a questionable source, there are consistencies with Milstein's experience that lead me to believe that this is fundamentally accurate.

[21] It is also possible that *Marge* had experienced problems, and was on record as having been treated accordingly, but nothing I have read elsewhere has suggested this.

[22] J.J. Fishman, Donald P. Conwell & Zili Amsel, 'New York City Narcotics Register: A Brief History,' *International Journal of the Addictions* 6:3 (1971), pp. 561-569.

[23] The New York Times article did, however differentiate between drugs for one of the other deaths listed; 15-year-old Barbara Montabono died 'after she took 80 nembutal tablets – barbiturates used as "goofballs."' Her death 'was not listed among the heroin death totals for the weekend.' '4 Teen-agers Die From Heroin Here', *The New York Times*, 17 March, 1970, p. 40.

withdrawal, which, depending on the length of time a person has been an addict, are lengthy and severe. It is also common for addicts to use other substances if for some reason (lack of money, erratic supply) heroin is unable to be purchased. One New York study from the early 1970s noted that anecdotal evidence from health care workers suggested that barbiturate addiction or abuse seemed to be 'more troublesome among females,' occurring in women at higher rates than for other drugs.[24] It is entirely plausible that Mary Ann could have been using barbiturates to 'take the edge off', or to get stoned occasionally, or both, and this would be consistent with the rest of Rita's account.

However, as Rita Ganser made so painfully clear in the interview, she was not present when the overdose that claimed Mary Ann's life occurred. It could just as easily been the result of a heroin overdose, especially if, as Rita indicated, 'she was doing good for a while', not using heroin, and her tolerance was lowered. This would also be consistent with her brother Robert's understanding that Mary Ann was 'under some kind of medication' and that she had been having occasional problems, but 'was OK on the medication.'[25] This strongly suggests a heroin-substitute treatment program, such as methadone, which was in use in New York at this time. While this prevents heroin withdrawal, and allows the addict to manage their addiction legally, it does not produce a 'high.' It was (and is) so common as to be a cliché, for the addict to reward themself for all their hard work of staying 'straight' with a hit of heroin from which they then overdose because of their reduced tolerance. In yet another tragic parallel, this occurred with Frankie Lymon, whose tolerance was much reduced after a stint in the army in the mid 1960s. It is entirely likely that this is what happened to Mary Ann, especially if she was in the company of someone doing the same. Furthermore, there was an enormous heroin

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[24] Robert T. Dale & Farley Ross Dale, 'The Use of Methadone in a Representative Group of Heroin Addicts,' *International Journal of the Addictions* 8:2 (1973), pp. 293-308, esp. p. 300.
[25] Phil Milstein, interview with Robert Ganser, 14 October, 2001.

problem in New York at this time. In a study of opiate use in New York City in the 1960s, it was noted that

> According to the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics Report, fifty-two percent of the nation's active addicts lived in lived in New York State, and 94 percent of the State's "active" addicts lived in New York City as of December 31, 1967.[26]

Furthermore, heroin use was becoming particularly problematic in Queens. On the day that Mary Ann Ganser's obituary was published in the *Long Island Press*, the same newspaper ran an article about the rapidly rising incidence of heroin usage in New York. Of the five boroughs, Queens had the highest rate of newly registered heroin users, a staggering 83.9% increase between 1967 and 1968.[27]

It is unlikely that the circumstances surrounding the death of Mary Ann Ganser will ever be clarified, and certainly the prevention of even this much becoming public knowledge is a significant factor in Mary Weiss's unwillingness to participate in this study, and Betty Weiss's refusal to be interviewed by anyone at all. That all this took place at Betty Weiss's house was difficult and painful for all concerned, and remains so to this day. Robert Ganser commented that

> [Mary Ann] was with this girl Betty and nobody ever got the story on what happened. My mother asked her and she won't talk about it.[28]

Robert Ganser was certainly of the opinion that Betty Weiss was having some drug issues of her own at this point.[29] Betty Weiss was married to Jeremy Storch, who had played organ in the Vagrants, a Long Island rock band with whom the Shangri-Las shared management at some point in the mid-1960s.[30] By the late 1960s he was signed to RCA Victor as a solo

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[26] Mary Koval, *Opiate Use in New York City*, New York: New York State Narcotic Addiction Control Commission and New York City Narcotics Register, 1969, p. i.
[27] 'Queens Tops All Boroughs in Heroin User Increase,' *Long Island Press*, 18 March, 1970, p. 3.
[28] Milstein, interview with Robert Ganser.
[29] On several occasions throughout the interview, Robert Ganser stated that Betty was 'heavy into drugs', but when pressed for details about what type(s), said that he didn't know because he had never been interested in drugs himself.
[30] I have not been able to ascertain when Storch and Weiss were married. If the photo labelled 'Mary dressed up for Liz's wedding' on the Norton website is accurate, Mary's age and clothing would indicate a date in the mid-1960s: see Linna, *Mary Weiss of the*

artist.[31] Jeremy Storch is now a rabbi with the Tabernacle of Praise Ministries, and the biographical section of his website locates his decision to pursue this career path in the context of his earlier rock lifestyle:

> Once "The Vagrants" disbanded, in 1968, RCA Records picked up Jeremy to record and release two solo albums, "From a Naked Window" and "Forty Miles Past Woodstock." This popularity and success led him further into the rock culture of the sixties - including all the trappings of a typical rock star: experimentation with and heavy use of various drugs and plunging into wild parties and illicit affairs. In short, he became a prodigal son.
>
> In 1970, Jeremy's excessive lifestyle caught up with him and he died of a drug overdose on the way to the hospital. In this death experience, God spoke to Jeremy saying, "I am giving you back your life to do some work for Me!" As soon as that was spoken, Jeremy awoke in a hospital bed.[32]

Neither Rita nor Robert Ganser mentioned that Jeremy was present at Betty's on the day that Mary Ann died, so it must be presumed that this was a separate occasion. It is not clear whether he and Betty were living together at this time (they did subsequently divorce), but in 1970 Storch's drug use was clearly at its peak. In any case, Robert Ganser felt that the only way that he and his family might learn more about the circumstances of his sister's death was if Betty

> ever came forward with it, but I don't think she ever will. She's got some guilt over what she did, or something, I don't know.[33]

What does seem clear is that the details of Mary Ann's death have been obfuscated to elide Betty's involvement. In a 2007 interview with Mary Weiss in *New York* magazine, the author, Michael Martin, commented,

> As for her former bandmates, Mary Ann Ganser died in 1971; conflicting accounts cite a drug overdose or a seizure. "And I'll leave it that way. It

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Shangri-Las, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 22 July, 2010). This could indicate that Storch was the father of Betty's daughter, assuming that Betty Weiss was not married to someone else before Storch, but this is informed speculation at best.

[31] See 'Jeremy Storch: From a Naked Window,' http://fantasy0807.blogspot.com/2008/09/jeremy-storch-from-naked-window-us.html (accessed 22 July, 2010).

[32] *Jeremy Storch, Official Website*, http://www.jeremystorch.org/bio.html (accessed 20 September, 2009).

[33] Milstein, interview with Robert Ganser.

> doesn't much matter anymore," pronounces Weiss, sounding a bit like an intro to one of her old songs.[34]

Mary Ann's death remains absolutely off-limits in any interviews with Mary Weiss, as does the subject of Betty's departure from the group in 1964, and the litigation that followed the demise of the group. Pursuit of these subjects as lines of enquiry in an interview is likely to result in its swift termination.[35] Betty Weiss, according to John Grecco, worked for a time at Rhiengold Breweries, then later worked for a cosmetics company in Manhattan. She remarried in the early 1980s, and is known as Betty Weiss Nelson. Marge Ganser married Bill Dorste in 1972.[36]

The Shangri-Las reformed, with Marge Ganser, for at least one show in the early seventies, at the New York Academy of Music in Manhattan. This was billed as Gus Gossert's Rock and Roll Revival Show, and featured, along with the Ronettes, a selection of doo-wop groups including the Mystics and the Tokens.[37] Gossert was a disk jockey whose 'Doo Wop Shop' radio show on WCBS in New York won a loyal following in the early 1970s, despite the unfashionability of street corner vocal harmony at the time.[38] Ironically, the Shangri-Las found themselves labelled a 'revival' or

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[34] Martin, http://nymag.com/arts/popmusic/profiles/28500/index1.html (accessed 22 July, 2010).

[35] In an interview with Mike Schneider on American TV talk show *Night Talk*, to promote Weiss's 2007 album, *Dangerous Game*, Schneider asked Mary Weiss about her sister Betty: 'There was a lot of talk back in the old days, that she didn't show up all the time on the album covers, right? And what was that…' At that point, Schneider, clearly warned off the subject by someone off-camera, interrupts himself and says, 'But now you are well-represented, right?' See Mike Schneider, *Interview with Mary Weiss Part 3*, 28 April, 2008: http://eisentube.magnify.net/video/Night-Talk-Interview-With-Mary (accessed 17 May, 2012). Weiss has consistently refused to discuss any details of the litigation that accompanied the group's demise. Her comments to Suzi Quatro are typical: 'When the litigation started everybody was suing everyone. I won't go into any details.' Suzi Quatro, 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25 May 2008).

[36] Grecco, *Out in the Streets,* http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010).

[37] Program Guide for sale at http://groovytunesday.com/fanzines.html (accessed 16 October, 2010), described as: '7th NOSTALGIC ROCK'N'ROLL SHOW- Program Guide styled artist overviews of Gus Gossert's NYC Concert w/ Johnny Maestro & The Crests; Nolan Strong & The Diablos; Schoolboys; Turbans; Moonglows; Ronettes; Shangra-Las [sic]; Mystics; Buddy Knox; Tokens; Diamonds & others, plus articles on Dick Clark & Rock & Roll.'

[38] Simmonds, p. 88.

nostalgia act, despite the fact that all members were still only in their early twenties. They were also pigeonholed within a category, but significantly, it was not 'girl group,' but vocal harmony, or doo-wop.

In 1977 the three remaining members of the Shangri-Las reformed for a lengthier period than that required by a couple of one-off performances. This episode is one of the few aspects of the Shangri-Las' career that has been chronicled in any depth, in a lengthy piece by Phil Milstein, entitled 'Shangri-Las 77!' [39] The group made some recordings for Sire, a label owned and run by Seymour Stein, who had worked briefly at Red Bird. [40] According to Andy Paley, who was the producer of the sessions,

> The Shangri-Las contacted Seymour, and they were old friends because Seymour used to work for Leiber and Stoller at Red Bird...Seymour told me about this and that the Shangri-Las wanted to make a record and they wanted to talk to different producers.[41]

It is unlikely that the timing of this decision is a coincidence, given that Mary Weiss has repeatedly stated that, around the time of the group's demise, she was contractually prevented from recording with another label for ten years. This suggests that it was the Mercury contract signed by the group late in 1966 that contained this stricture. If this was the case, this contract would have expired by late 1976, leaving them free to record again, and they approached Stein 'in late spring or early summer of 1977.'[42]

The sessions were ultimately successful, but for reasons that Andy Paley did not completely understand, did not progress beyond those initial

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[39] Phil Milstein, 'Shangri-Las 77!', http://www.spectropop.com/Shangri-Las/ (accessed 23 July, 2010).
[40] Seymour Stein started Sire in 1966 as Sire Productions, which licensed progressive British records for release in the US. By the mid 1970s Sire was issuing seminal early American punk records, including all the early Ramones records, and albums by Richard Hell and the Voidoids and the Dead Boys. Sire also licensed for American release the debut albums of Australian groups the Saints (*I'm Stranded* [1977]) and Radio Birdman (*Radios Appear* [1978]). Sire released Madonna's first album in 1983. For Sire discography, see http://www.bsnpubs.com/warner/distributed/sire.html (accessed 20 September, 2009).
[41] Phil Milstein, interview with Andy Paley, 20 September, 2001.
[42] Milstein, 'Shangri-Las 77!', http://www.spectropop.com/Shangri-Las/ (accessed 20 September, 2009).

recordings. Despite the fact that Stein was apparently happy with the standard of the material, it was never released, and there are no extant copies of the master recordings. When asked about the sessions, Mary Weiss has indicated that, in her opinion,

> it wasn't there, material-wise. I don't want anything released that I don't believe in...it just wasn't right. I welcomed the opportunity from Seymour Stein, but it just didn't work out.[43]

The group also played a spontaneous, one-off gig at the famous CBGBs bar (now closed) on the Bowery in Manhattan. This was the epicentre of New York City's punk scene from the mid-1970s and well in to the 1980s. The show was a resounding success, since the Shangri-Las were firm favourites and counted as important influences for many of the groups central to the Bowery punk scene, including the New York Dolls, Blondie and the Ramones. The band that backed the Shangri-Las included Andy Paley playing guitar, and Lenny Kaye and Jay Dee Daugherty of the Patti Smith Group playing bass and drums respectively.[44] Kaye is a long-time fan and collector of group vocal harmony music, and had written a piece called 'The Best of A Cappella' that was published in *Jazz and Pop* magazine in the late 1960s.[45] Furthermore, Sire Records was one of the labels releasing seminal records by the Ramones, Richard Hell, the Dead Boys and other stalwarts of this (at the time) underground scene. In many ways, the Shangri-Las presence in this milieu made perfect sense.

The CBGB's gig was, according to Paley, the climax of his work with the Shangri-Las; after that, he said, it was the end of summer, and everything just fizzled out. He was at a loss to explain this, but suspected that the group chose *him* over more experienced and famous producers at their disposal at least in part so that they would be under less pressure. Paley surmised that their thinking ran along the lines of

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[43] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 23 July, 2010).
[44] Kaye is still the guitarist in the Patti Smith Group, but on this occasion he played bass. He is visible in this photo by Roberta Bayley of the CBGBs show: http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/85358621 (accessed 22 September, 2010).
[45] Reprinted as Lenny Kaye, 'The Best of Acappella,' *The Age of Rock II*, ed. Jonathan Eisen, New York: Vintage, 1970, pp, 287-301.

> We're gonna go make some records maybe, but really we're just gonna sing together and just hang out in the studio, which is this kind of funky little studio...why don't we just use this guy, cos if we use Stephen Galfus or Richard Gottehrer, then it's all of a sudden more big-time, then there's more pressure. They might well have thought, well, here's this guy in his twenties, let's use him instead.[46]

According to Paley, they did a lot of hanging out and just having fun, eating pizza and playing pool. Furthermore, they reconnected with the whole reason it all happened in the first place, as Paley explained,

> That is the magic thing about it. That would make everyone smile, no matter what the hell was going on...and the funny thing about them is that...they had these chips on their shoulders, and they were kind of tough. You know, the Long Island thing...but as soon as they started singing and got down to work, it was just all about sounding good, and they all started smiling and everything was really fun and loving and really, really good. And they could be hilarious, they were hilarious people just to hang around with, because they were all really smart and all really funny. They could cut somebody down to size really quick if they wanted to, and I saw them do that a few times. Part of this was almost like they had a club. And I was allowed into that club. For that summer, and it was just like, it was really, really fun.[47]

The contrast between these conditions and their gruelling schedules and tours in the mid-1960s could not be greater. They did material of *their* choosing, and played around with one of Margie's songs, but according to Paley, did not record it. Given what we know of the group members' experiences as teen stars in the mid-1960s, it seems quite possible that, in some way, the Shangri-Las were reconfiguring their memories and asserting control. Once that had been achieved, it was no longer necessary to do more, and release a record. Had they done so, they would certainly have been required to do concert performances and tour to promote the record; little wonder that there was some reluctance on their part to revisit that world. Paley repeatedly commented on how 'great' they sounded, reiterating that

> If somebody said that they found them on a street corner singing harmony I would believe it because that is the essence of what I heard...whenever they

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[46] Milstein, interview with Andy Paley.
[47] Milstein, interview with Andy Paley.

> wanted to they could just break into three-part harmony and they were really, really good. They were *really* good at that.[48]

A number of Roberta Bayley's photos taken during these sessions are of the Shangri-Las singing, *a cappella*, in the street outside the Sire studios at 165 W74th Street in Manhattan.[49] It is tempting to speculate that the Shangri-Las had taken their voices back to the street, back to their doo wop *a cappella* origins. They had made it fun again, and that was enough.

In 1989 the Shangri-Las fought and won an extraordinary case over the name of the group. The Shangri-Las had been booked to make a rare appearance, performing at an 'oldies' show, Cousin Brucie's Palisades Park Reunion Show, on 3 June 3, 1989. The show was in an early-1960s revue format, similar to those on which the Shangri-Las performed early in their career, and featured Lesley Gore, Little Anthony, The Tokens, The Chimes, Freddy Cannon and Bobby Rydell.[50] The 'Shangri-Las' name had, apparently, never been registered, and enterprising oldies/nostalgia promoter Dick Fox had realised this some years earlier, registered the name, and assembled a fake Shangri-Las group to perform concerts and shows.[51] At what point Fox took this action is not clear. Juan Casiano, a fellow Queens native who had known the group when he was a teenager and has been an obsessive fan since then, remembered seeing a fake group perform in New Jersey as early as the mid-1970s.[52] Joseph Alexander, drummer in the Shangri-Las' backing group in the mid-1960s,

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[48] Milstein, interview with Andy Paley.

[49] Roberta Bayley is a New York photographer most famous for her shots of rock identities from the 1970s, particularly Blondie and the Ramones: see http://www.robertabayley.com/ (accessed 22 September, 2010). The Shangri-Las, singing on the steps outside the Sire studio with Andy Paley: http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/85356955 and http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/85356986 ; the Shangri-Las, singing in the street: http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/85356960, (all accessed 22 September,2010).

[50] Juan Casiano, *The Shangri-Las '89 Reunion Concert*, http://www.theshangri-las.com/89reunion.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010).

[51] Ken Emerson, *Always Magic in the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era*, New York: Viking Penguin, 2005, p. 233; Milstein, *Shangri-Las 77!*, n.8, http://www.spectropop.com/Shangri-Las/index.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010).

[52] Juan Casiano, 'The Shangri-Las' '89 Reunion Concert,' http://www.theshangri-las.com/89reunion.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010).

commented (presumably) to Alan Betrock, whose book was published in 1982, that

> 'Later on, it got crazier, with all these lawsuits flying around, and people came in and told them that they had no rights to the name 'The Shangri-Las' – that they couldn't get work and play under that name. Can you believe that?'[53]

Whether this was connected to the contractual strictures that prevented Mary Weiss from recording for ten years after the demise of the group is not clear. However, in 1989 the Shangri-Las, booked to perform at the aforementioned Cousin Brucie show, found themselves the subject of an injunction from Dick Fox and his fake Shangri-Las, preventing the *real* group from performing on the basis that the name had not been used in years and Fox was its legal owner. Outraged, Mary and Betty Weiss, and Marge Ganser took the matter to court. In an interview on *Entertainment Tonight*, Marge (Ganser) Dorste, visibly livid after viewing footage of the fake group, said,

> That is [rape?]...what we worked so hard for, what we went on the road for...what we did the one-nighters for, and stayed in the lousy hotel rooms...[54]

This truly ludicrous situation speaks volumes about the durability of the contractual mechanisms implemented in the 1950s and 1960s to exploit teenaged performers.[55] This was not an isolated occurrence; surviving members of Marvelettes have been threatened with legal action if they perform under their name, which is now owned by Dick Fox's partner, Larry Marshak, who has caused similar problems for other groups, including the Coasters, the Platters and the Drifters.[56] Particularly galling

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[53] Betrock, p. 110.
[54] 'The Shangri-Las on Entertainment tonight, 1989,' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQB8mYd-ozo (accessed 25 July, 2010).
[55] And beyond, for that matter – alarming parallels exist between the Shangri-Las and the Runaways, a teenaged Los Angeles band that formed in the mid-1970s. Lead singer Cherie Currie's biography, *Neon Angel: A Memoir of a Runaway*, New York: Harper Collins, 2010, is the basis of a new feature film starring Kristen Stewart and Dakota Fanning.
[56] Marc Taylor, *The Original Marvelettes: Motown's Mystery Girl Group*, Aloiv, 2004, pp. 170-176; see also Karen DeMasters, 'Pop Music: There are Oldies, and there are New Oldies,' *New York Times*, 22 August, 1999, p. NJ9, http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/22/nyregion/pop-music-there-are-oldies-and-there-are-new-oldies.html (accessed 25 July, 2010).

is that many of the performers, prevented by exploitative contracts from receiving any substantial and reliable earnings in their heyday, have found the costs of pursuing legal action prohibitive. Promoters like Fox and Marshak have gleefully exploited this situation while holding the performers responsible for being somehow complicit in their own oppression. According to Fox:

> 'You can talk to them today, and they didn't care! They say, "We wanted to hear ourselves on the radio. We were driving in our car, we heard ourselves on the radio," and that was it. Money? What was money?...They signed these contracts that said, 'You turn over all your royalties, you turn over your first-born, you turn over your house, you turn over your parents.' They care now, but they didn't care then.'[57]

As we have seen, many of the performers in question were minors, and their parents/adult guardians signed the contracts, which in itself is an acknowledgement that the performers were not considered to yet possess the requisite knowledge, judgement and maturity to sign legal documents. Furthermore many, like Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, the members of the Marvelettes, and the Shangri-Las, were poor, as Mary Weiss pointed out:

> I come from an extremely poor family. The Gansers were relatively poor. Nobody had any money. No money for attorneys. So considering where the four of us came from, with no support, no guidance, and nothing behind us, we didn't have proper outfits on stage. I mean nothing. It's a miracle in itself to come from those circumstances and have hit records.[58]

The Shangri-Las took Marshak and Fox to court over the group's name, and won the right to perform their 1989 engagement. Betty Weiss commented tellingly, 'We're not teenagers anymore, and we don't have to take it anymore. And we're not taking it anymore.'[59] A settlement was reached through which the surviving members of the Shangri-Las receive a percentage payment whenever the Marshak/Fox group performs.[60] This

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[57] Dick Fox, quoted by Emerson, p. 233.
[58] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 25 July, 2010).
[59] 'The Shangri-Las on Entertainment tonight, 1989,' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQB8mYd-ozo (accessed 25 July, 2010).
[60] Grecco, *Out in the Streets*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010); Milstein, interview with Rita Ganser.

1989 performance was the Shangri-Las' last together, as Marge Ganser Dorste died from breast cancer on 28 July, 1996. As she had instructed, her ashes were divided between her sister Mary Ann's grave and Hampton Bays.[61]

In 2007, Mary Weiss released her first solo album, *Dangerous Game*, on Norton Records, a small Brooklyn-based label run by rock stalwarts Billy Miller and Miriam Linna. Weiss was backed by the Reigning Sound, a garage rock band from Memphis usually fronted by singer/songwriter Greg Cartwright, who also wrote several songs on the album. The release of the record and live shows generated considerable radio, press and television coverage, over the course of which Weiss spoke more openly than she had for decades about her experiences with the Shangri-Las, and her excitement about being back in the recording studio. Weiss toured and performed extensively with the Reigning Sound, and is reportedly in discussions with the Drums, a New York four-piece 'boy group,' about recording a new album.[62]

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[61] Grecco, *Out in the Streets,* http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 25 July, 2010).
[62] 'The Drums to work with the Shangri-Las' Mary Weiss,' *NME*, 23 June, 2010, http://www.nme.com/news/the-drums/51639 (accessed 5 April, 2012).

PART THREE

CHAPTER FIVE

‘Hmmm, he’s good-bad, but he’s not evil...’: Leader of the Pack, ‘Shadowy’ Guys, and Rebellion[1]

‘As I wrote the song, I heard Mary singing and I saw Mary. This song was written about the girl on the street corner. Her, I touched on in a personal way,
allowed her to open up... but *him*, he’s the mystery.’
George ‘Shadow’ Morton on “Leader of the Pack”[2]

Rebellion against parents and the mores of a conservative society are themes that run through much of the Shangri-Las’ oeuvre. The most famous and spectacular expression of this is in “Leader of the Pack,” released in November 1964. The first part of this chapter explores the representation of the motorcycle rider, Jimmy, in this song. On the surface, Jimmy is a dark, brooding presence, a *Wild One*-inspired figure that embodies post-war government and parental fears of the male juvenile delinquent. Panics over juvenile delinquency are indeed reflected in the song, but closer examination reveals Jimmy to be a far more complex character, unfixed and malleable. As a voiceless, ghostly figure, he functions as a cipher for a range of white, postwar, generational, gendered, and class-based conflicts. Responses to “Leader of the Pack” upon its release in 1964 are examined, as are the various parodies to which it was subjected. I also discuss production techniques and the use of sound effects, and parallels are drawn with Kenneth Anger’s *Scorpio*

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[1] Part of this chapter has been published as ‘“Mmm, he’s good-bad, but he’s not evil…”: The Shangri-Las, “Leader of the Pack,” and the Cultural Context of the Motorcycle Rider,’ *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* 4:1 (March 2008), http://ijms.nova.edu/March2008/IJMS_Artcl.MacKinney.html (accessed 13 October, 2010).
[2] Lisa MacKinney, interview with George ‘Shadow’ Morton, 24 April, 2007.

Rising (1963) in order to further illuminate the complex figure of the rider in this deceptively simple and compact pop song. This figure recurs in other Shangri-Las songs, most notably in “Give Him a Great Big Kiss” and “Out in the Streets.” Other forms of rebellion are explored in “Give Us Your Blessings” and “I Can Never Go Home Anymore,” which is a complex exploration of a single-parent household that seems likely to have been based on Morton’s own experiences and those of the Weiss sisters.

On 28 November 1964, the Shangri-Las’ single “Leader of the Pack” reached Number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. The subject matter of the song, its dramatically compelling performances, and innovative production techniques catapulted the Shangri-Las into international fame and controversy. The central figure in the song is Jimmy, a motorcycle rider whose teenage girlfriend is forced by her parents to end their relationship. Distraught, he rides off into the rainy night, crashes his bike and dies. On the surface, it seems that Jimmy could have ridden straight out of *The Wild One*[3] and over to pick up Betty after school, but closer examination reveals a far more complex character, unfixed and malleable. Musicologist Jacqueline Warwick has observed that Jimmy functions as ‘a shadowy male figure’ to give the girls something to talk about, noting that this ‘is a strategy common to soap opera writing.’[4] Jimmy is certainly this, but also much more. As a silent, partially-sketched figure, Jimmy is able to function as a cipher for a range of white, postwar, generational, gendered, and class-based conflicts. By 1964, the motorcycle rider was a well-established icon of white American masculinity, and, together with his bike, was a figure of tremendous cultural resonance – a solo traveler, a man-machine. Although the initial impetus for the figure of Jimmy seems to have been a real-life biker, I would also like to suggest that George ‘Shadow’ Morton infused more of his fantasy of himself into his songs than has previously been acknowledged. The figure of the rider, who re-

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[3] *The Wild One*, dir. Laslo Benedek, 1954.
[4] Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 193.

appears as an anti-hero archetype in later songs, shares significant features with Morton, nicknamed 'Shadow' as a response to his elusive, mysterious, 'shadowy' persona. In "Leader of the Pack," both the rider and his bike are transformed through the complex processes at work in this intricately constructed pop song.

"Leader of the Pack" is credited to three songwriters – Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich and George 'Shadow' Morton. As we saw in Chapter Three, Greenwich and Barry were already signed to Trio Publishing and employed as professional songwriters at Red Bird before Morton began his tenure there.[5] Morton has claimed sole authorship of the song, which both Greenwich and Barry have denied vehemently. However, there is some evidence supporting his case, even acknowledging his considerable ability for mythologising his past. Rod McBrien, the engineer with whom Morton recorded the original demo at Ultrasonic Studios in Hempstead, Long Island, certainly supported Morton's claim.[6] By his own account, Morton grew up in Brooklyn, and moved to Hicksville, Long Island, in the mid-1950s, at the age of about fourteen. He claimed to have already experienced a degree of exposure to gang culture by this point, contending that

> By the time I moved out of Brooklyn, I'd already been stabbed once--nothin' serious but you know, it was over nothin', for no reason. It was common...I'd been shot at, I was tossed through a candy store window because I would take no bull. And this was a good neighborhood, just south of Flatbush Avenue. My gang was The Red Devils. There was The Little Red Devils and there was The Big Red Devils. One night there was a big fight and the next night, they came to me and asked me to become the youngest member of The Big Red Devils. That's when it was exit time.[7]

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[5] The Shangri-Las, "Leader of the Pack" (Barry/Greenwich/Morton) b/w "What is Love?" (Michaels/Morton) RED BIRD 014, 1964.
[6] Lisa MacKinney, interview with Rod McBrien,10 April, 2008; Ken Emerson, *Always Magic in the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era*, New York: Viking, 2005, pp. 225, 227.
[7] The "Shadow" Reappears - A Rare Talk with Producer George "Shadow" Morton,' *Goldmine*, Vol. 17, No. 14: Issue 286, 12 July, 1991, reproduced at http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 7 October, 2010).

Elements that appeared later in “Leader of the Pack” are present in this narrative: candy stores, gangs, urban street culture and Morton himself, apparently negotiating his way his way through this dangerous milieu by accepting and responding to its violent terms - growing up fast on ‘the wrong side of town.’[8] According to Morton, more specific inspiration for the song stemmed from an incident that took place after the Mortons had left Brooklyn. This move was motivated, at least in part, by a desire to remove young George from the lure of street gangs; Morton commented that his parents

> ‘had the theory, “my boy’s gonna get in trouble so we’re gonna move him out of Brooklyn.”’[9]

However, it seems that other wayward teenagers found themselves in Hicksville for similar reasons:

> …my mother….gave me a few dollars and said, "Go down to the diner and get yourself a cup of coffee. Get out of the house, you're driving me crazy."…I came over the hill and...I couldn't believe what I saw….at least 150, 200 kids at this diner. Bikers, hot rodders, gum smacking ladies - not careful at all about their language and what they had to say….I found in Hicksville the toughest gang you could ever imagine. All the kids were…yanked from Queens, The Bronx, Brooklyn - and a lot of them because they'd been in trouble, they were going the wrong way. They all gathered around this diner, mostly hot rods...about a dozen bikes. Bumpy was the man. He was the head guy. He was my inspiration for "The Leader of the Pack." He took me under his wing as I was one of the newest kids around…I became like his little brother....[10]

This scene, as described by Morton, conjures up a postwar parental and governmental nightmare of wayward, rampaging youth. The popularity of motorbikes, hot-rods and gangs with teenagers was one of many causes of consternation among middle-class parents and authority figures, since this was generally seen as evidence of the ‘infiltration of lower-class and

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[8] See Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press,1999, pp. 106-136 for a discussion of gangs and adolescent masculinity, and pp. 126-8 for the cementing of junior gang members’ ‘reputations as masculine tough guys’ through street violence.
[9] Ralph M. Newman, ‘Only the Shadow Knows: An Interview by Ralph M. Newman,’ *Time Barrier Express* 26 (Sept/Oct 1979), p. 40.
[10] ‘"Shadow" Reappears,’ http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 14 June, 2007); see also Newman, p. 40.

criminal values into youth culture.'[11] It is also significant that the figure of 'Bumpy' made such an impression on Morton, and that the young Morton to some extent identified with him and 'became like his little brother.'[12]

As we saw in Chapter Three, Morton was in a 'high school' doo-wop group called the Markeys, who released two singles on RCA in 1958. The first of these, as 'the Markeys featuring George Morton,' was "Hot Rod." [13] It was co-written by Morton and is a telling forerunner of "Leader of the Pack." On the surface, "Hot Rod" is a not particularly spectacular twelve-bar blues-based song in which the protagonist takes his 'turtle-dove' on a date in his hot rod. However, it contains several significant features that would manifest themselves in Morton's writing later in a far more developed fashion. The first is the presence of vehicles with delinquent associations, reflective of Morton's account of the 'bikers' and 'hot rodders' he recalled at the diner. This song features a hot rod; "Leader of the Pack," of course, features a motor bike. "Hot Rod" also contains what is likely to be Morton's earliest attempt at utilising sound effects, and opens with his guttural vocal imitation of a hot rod engine, brass instruments approximating car horns, and a motor-revving electric guitar. This is restated by the complex doo-wop backing vocals which imitate the chugging of a motor. All this accompanies the lyrical subject matter, which is replete with mildly sexually suggestive motor imagery of, for example, 'going for a ride' and 'turned my motor over, threw it into first.' About two thirds of the way through the song, however, Morton intones,

> She looked at me with those big big eyes
> And says honey I have a sad surprise
> Our romance, it is through...

At this point, Morton makes a screeching tyre noise, clearly indicating the skidding of the hot rod to an abrupt halt, and explodes, 'Out with you!'

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[11] James Gilbert, *A Cycle Of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 18.
[12] Schneider, pp. 118-123.
[13] The Markeys featuring George Morton, "Hot Rod" (George Francis Morton and Joseph J. Monaco) b/w "Yakkaty Yak", RCA 47-7256, 1958.

Peaking at this angered climax, the song tapers into an existential plateau:

> And now I ride all night til the dawn's early light
> For my mind is crazy and my eyes are hazy
> Til my wheels burn out and my motor's dead
> I got a girl that I want to forget...

The breakup of this romance is aligned with the screeching of tyres, and the protagonist responds to this rejection by abandoning his 'turtle-dove' on the side of the road and roaring off into the night:

> Well now it's in third and I really really move
> Doing 65, 75, 105 man alive!
> Baby...oh little baby why'd you go and make me cry
> Oh oh my honey we're going for a ride.

The song then concludes with a *spoken* couplet that is delivered in a delirious, accusing, and sadistic tone:

> So long honey, tonight I'll cry
> Tonight I might even die...

The elements and imagery that would make the Shangri-Las second Red Bird single, "Leader of the Pack," such a complex and compelling song are here in embryonic form, but performed from the perspective of the rejected male. Throughout the entire song, the protagonist is aligned with his hot rod – he causes it to move and moves with it, speaks its noises. He is at one with his vehicle. Rejected by his date, his response is to violently eject her from the car/himself, and then drive around all night, speeding and delirious. Finally, the death of the male protagonist as a result of this sexual rejection is suggested in the final line of the song, which quickly fades out following Morton's delivery of it. These elements are realised with greater sophistication and complexity in "Leader of the Pack," and both songs reflect the teenage delinquent gang-related behaviour that authorities in mid-century America found so worrying and problematic.

Understandings of class are central to this discussion, but also notoriously slippery.[14] The robust postwar American economy offered some increase in opportunities for social mobility, and suburban developments allowed white Americans with middle-class aspirations to own their own homes at affordable rates, as we saw in Chapter Two of this study.[15] Markers of middle-class identity included home-ownership, a family composed of a hard-working, industrious male breadwinner with a steady income, a supportive and morally virtuous wife, children, and a lifestyle that revolved around 'family values.' However, the maintenance of class boundaries was understood to be central to respectability, which was in turn 'a powerful signifier of class.'[16] Restrictive covenants endorsed by the Federal Housing Association aimed to keep white neighbourhoods free from 'undesirable,' that is, African American, residents, thus preserving the economic value of white ownership, and through this exclusion enabling greater opportunities for upward mobility for poorer or working-class whites.[17] This in turn fostered the mythology of

> this period of growth, individual success, and some class mobility exclusively as the result of individual industriousness and merit. By this interpretation, those worthy and virtuous individuals pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps to achieve class mobility and some measure of economic success.

According to this logic, those who did *not* were lazy, lacked industriousness and motivation, and were unwilling to succeed; their failure was personal and of their own making.[18] Jean Halley, Ashley Eshleman, and Ramya Mahadevan Vijaya trace the origins of this idea to the discomfort of white workers about

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[14] Linda Holtzman, *Media Messages: What Film, Television, and Popular Music Teach Us About Race, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000, pp. 104-6.
[15] See pp. 61-66; see also Holtzman, pp. 113-14.
[16] Warwick, p. 141; Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*, London: Sage, 1997, pp. 1-4.
[17] This is discussed, with particular reference to Queens, on pp. 61-66; see also Jean Halley, Ashley Eshleman, and Ramya Mahadevan Vijaya, *Seeing White: An Introduction to White Privilege and Race*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011, pp. 109-110.
[18] Holtzman, p. 114.

> whether workers who did not own their own land and depended on wages could really be considered free…against the backdrop of slavery…To overcome this complex fear of comparison between wage labor and slave labor, a class identity emerged where white working-class people identified themselves as hardworking, independent-minded people as opposed to their perception of enslaved Black people as lazy and dependent.[19]

From these formulations, it is possible to see the manner in which young white males who eschewed 'industriousness,' belonged to gangs and rode motorbikes could be perceived as adopting lower-class 'ethnic' behaviours, thereby contributing to a weakening of class and racial boundaries.

The fear of 'respectable' society being infiltrated by so-called lower-class characteristics fuelled an intense scrutiny of teen culture, and panics over the juvenile misbehavior that many felt was inextricably linked with it.[20] This was reflected in a veritable explosion of academic treatises examining juvenile delinquency, gang warfare, street culture, and urban offenders, which attempted to develop theories pertaining to the understanding, development and prevention of these social problems.[21] In his 1955 sociological study, *Delinquent Boys*, Albert K. Cohen noted that

> the hallmark of delinquent subculture is the *explicit and wholesale repudiation of middle-class standards and the adoption of their very antithesis*…the delinquent is the rogue male. His conduct may be viewed not only negatively, as a device for attacking and derogating the respectable culture; positively it may be viewed as the exploitation of modes of behavior which are traditionally symbolic of untrammeled masculinity, which are

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[19] Halley, Eshleman, and Vijaya, p. 101.

[20] Gilbert, esp. pp. 200ff; for an excellent examination of the impact of international politics on responses to the biker/juvenile delinquent in the USA, see Lily Phillips, 'Blue Jeans, Black Leather Jackets, and a Sneer: The Iconography of the 1950s Biker and its Translation Abroad,' *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* 1 (2005), http://ijms.nova.edu/March2005/IJMS_ArtclPhilips0305.html (accessed 14 June, 2007).

[21] These include Albert K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*, London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1956; August Aichhorn, *Wayward Youth: A Psychoanalytic Study of Delinquent Children, Illustrated by Actual Case Histories*, New York: Meridian, 1955; Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*, Glencoe Ill: Free Press, 1960; for a useful survey see *Juvenile Delinquency: A Book of Readings*, ed. Rose Giallombardo, New York: Wiley, 1982, pp. 108-188.

> renounced by middle-class culture because incompatible with its ends, but which are not without a certain aura of glamour and romance.[22]

It is undeniable that Marlon Brando's character in *The Wild One*, Johnny Strabler, inhabits this dual territory that Cohen described. But Lily Phillips has argued persuasively that the age of Brando's Strabler was a crucial component in the development of his iconic status. He was not merely a biker, he was a *young* biker - the sullen, defiant leader of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club, and the poster boy for post-war juvenile biker delinquency.[23] As Norma Coates observed, clean-cut teen idol pop singers, including Frankie Avalon and Fabian, who came to prominence in the years following *The Wild One*, operated in an oppositional manner to more '"authentic masculine"' rock personages, foreshadowed by Strabler's anti-hero delinquent figure.[24]

How does Jimmy, the rider in "Leader of the Pack," who seems at least partially influenced by Morton's familiarity with a real-life juvenile delinquent biker, compare with the Strabler-type figure as characterized by Cohen? In the spoken introduction to "Leader of the Pack," which takes the form of seemingly vacuous schoolgirl chatter, the listener is immediately alerted to a problem with Jimmy, before we even know his name. The opening question is not, 'Are they really going out together?', or some other form of equal pairing – but 'Is she *really* going out with him?' There is something odd, unusual, problematic - about *this girl* going out with *this boy*. We soon learn ('Gee it must be great riding with him..') that Jimmy rides a bike.[25] It's also implicit in the question 'Is he picking

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[22] Cohen, pp. 129, 140 (italics added); Michael Barson and Steven Heller, *Teenage Confidential: An Illustrated History of the American Teen*, San Francisco: Chronicle, 1998, p. 51. For the historical background of these ideas, and fears of hyper-masculinity among the working classes, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 16-31.

[23] Phillips, 'Blue Jeans,' http://ijms.nova.edu/March2005/IJMS_ArtclPhilips0305.html (accessed 13 October, 2010).

[24] Norma Coates, 'Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s,' *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15:1 (2003), pp. 69-70.

[25] 'Riding' can also be understood as a metaphor for sex, given the common investment of motorcycles with feminine/sexual qualities and their role as an object of desire: see

you up after school today?' that sometimes he does – so Jimmy is not at work, at least not at a regular nine-to-five job. Nor would he be likely to be coming from school, as the submission to authority required by school attendance is also incompatible with Jimmy's soon-to-be revealed 'occupation.'[26] Then, finally, Betty bursts into song, declaring:

> I met him at the candy store
> He turned around and smiled at me…
> You get the picture?
> (Yes, we see…)
> That's when I fell for
> The Leader of the Pack.[27]

The revving of a bike, this time a real one, leaves the listener in no doubt that Jimmy is the leader of a pack – gang – of motorcycle riders. That Betty met Jimmy 'at the candy store' is also noteworthy - far from being neutral public territory, candy stores were spaces often known to be frequented by gang members. Eric Schneider, in his study of postwar gangs in New York, described them as

> typically small storefronts, with a counter, a soda dispenser, magazine racks, and perhaps a jukebox and some stools or a small table, candy stores provided a place where gang members could meet, gossip, and, if space permitted, dance with their debs.[28]

Particular candy stores were known to be the headquarters specific gangs; rival gangs knew where to find the leaders of their opponents, police knew which candy stores to raid, and street workers attempting to reform gang members hung out and made contact with them at a given gang's candy store.[29] Of course, not all candy stores were gang hangouts, but in the context of this song, the location is significant.

Betty's family is none too pleased about her choice of boyfriend, who not only eschews some core middle-class values, but possesses

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John Pigot, 'Symbolic Identities: Masculinity and the Motorcycle,' *Artlink* 16:1 (1996), p. 48.

[26] See Schneider, pp. 107-118 for the problematic relationship between school attendance and gang membership, and concomitant issues that arose later for gang members and the labour market.

[27] "Leader of the Pack" (Barry/Greenwich/Morton).

[28] Schneider, p. 153.

[29] Schneider, pp. 152-3.

characteristics clearly recognizable to the average white middle-class parent as delinquent. Betty complains to her girlfriends about her family's response to Jimmy, lamenting,

> My folks were always putting him down
> They said that he came from the wrong side of town.[30]

This loaded lyric introduces a class element – whether literally or metaphorically 'from the wrong side of town' – as far as her parents are concerned, Jimmy is *not* suitable for their daughter. Implicit here is the commonly held assumption that juvenile delinquency, and its concomitant gangs of leather-jacketed motorcyclists, was a product of working-class neighborhoods and behaviors. The perceived spread of this social problem into 'nice' middle-class families was a source of great anxiety, as parents became 'fearful that their children were adopting the form and substance of working-class alienation in their music, dress, slang, and attitudes.'[31] Through her alliance with Jimmy, Betty is effectively contributing to a weakening of class boundaries, alarm about which is the prerogative of an older generation. Betty is not concerned – on the contrary, this is one component of Jimmy's attractiveness.

All this locates Betty in the realm of delinquent girls, since dating a rebel itself constituted an act of rebellion.[32] Jacqueline Warwick has observed that the 'juvenile delinquent' discourse concerning

> "bad girls" differed significantly from the perceptions of male teens in trouble…while bad boys were more easily understood as individuals, responsible for their wrongdoings, bad girls at mid-century were seen as evidence of inadequate patriarchal control, and they threatened an entire social order. Taking up with a bad boy was often understood as the first step on a slippery slope away from father's loving control and towards a life of adolescent and eventually adult disrepute.[33]

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[30] "Leader of the Pack" (Barry/Greenwich/Morton).
[31] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, Cambridge Mass & London, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 295; Schneider, p. 138; Gilbert, p. 18; see also Walter B. Miller, 'Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency,' *Journal of Social Issues* 14:3 (1958), pp. 5-19.
[32] Warwick, p. 197.
[33] Warwick, p. 196.

It is significant, then, that Betty's *father* is the one to deliver the wrecking ball. Betty tells her girlfriends that

> One day my dad said "Find someone new."
> I had to tell my Jimmy "We're through."[34]

The way the song contextualizes Betty's parents' handling of *her* implied delinquency is therefore telling. In theory, Betty has a model dad - present, and involved enough in the life of his teenage daughter to be concerned for her welfare, and insist and ensure that she ends her relationship with the undesirable biker/delinquent Jimmy.[35] However, this is categorically *not* where the song's sympathies lie, creating a critique of Betty's father and the particular brand of middle-class conservative, conformist patriarchy that he espouses. It is a mark of the song's complexity that it is possible to miss this. Ian Inglis, discussing a group of eleven 'teenage death discs'[36] released between 1959 and 1964, argued that

> in those songs where there is parental opposition, it is made abundantly clear that resistance to their instructions will inexorably lead to tragedy…in "Leader of the Pack" the girl's disagreement with her parents results in the boyfriend's death.[37]

In fact, precisely the opposite takes place. Jimmy died because he rode off into the rainy night in acute distress after Betty ended their relationship *in accordance* with her father's directive. It was Betty's *obedience* to her parents' instructions that resulted in Jimmy's death, not her defiance of them.

"Leader of the Pack" walked a fine line, as those involved in its creation were acutely aware. Morton claims that, when asked about what he had as a follow-up single for "Remember," he took the idea for the song to

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[34] "Leader of the Pack," (Barry/Greenwich/Morton).
[35] On father/daughter relationships during this period, see Rachel Devlin, 'Female Juvenile Delinquency and the Problem of Sexual Authority in America 1945-1965,' *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness, New York and London: New York University Press, 1998, pp. 83-106, esp. pp 84-6; see also Rachel Devlin, *Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters and Postwar American Culture*, Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
[36] This genre is discussed in more detail later.
[37] Ian Inglis, 'A Brief Life: Broken Hearts and Sudden Deaths,' *Popular Music and Society* 27:4 (2004), p. 486.

Jerry Leiber, the lyricist half of the renowned Leiber and Stoller songwriting team, and co-owner of the Red Bird record label to which the Shangri-Las were signed. “Leader of the Pack” was (ultimately) the Shangri-Las’ second single on Red Bird.[38] According to Morton, initially he was told not to produce it, and that the label would not pay for it:

> It was dangerous. They were afraid of the repercussions. "Radio stations aren't going to play it! Parents aren't going to let their daughters go out and buy it!" I mean, it's a song about a young girl falling in love with a motorcycle man…clearly a bad girl.[39]

In a 2007 radio interview, Mary Weiss, whose impassioned singing contributes immeasurably to the song’s compelling narrative, revealed her own trepidation about “Leader of the Pack”:

> I really had to sit down with this one. I took it home and listened to it for a very long time before I agreed to do it…even at the time, it was pretty much out there. There was a very rigid environment, even globally….I mean, the record was banned in England the first time it came out.[40]

“Leader of the Pack” reached Number One in the US, but the ban in England by the BBC ignited a storm of controversy and forced the cancellation of a planned English tour.[41] As Iain Aitch noted,

> Some radio stations refused to play the record, feeling it would fuel the violent clashes between mods and rockers, and the TV music show *Ready, Steady, Go* would not show the girls performing it.[42]

In January 1965, *New Musical Express* (*NME*) ran an article entitled ‘No-One Objected to Shangri-Las in States,’ which essentially downplayed the hullabaloo.[43] What is really striking, though, is exactly what the fuss was over. In stark contrast to the apparent concerns of the song’s creators, it

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[38] For the circumstances surround the recording of this song, see Chapter Three.
[39] ‘"Shadow" Reappears,’ http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 14 June, 2007).
[40] Terry Gross, ‘Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game*’, interview for Fresh Air on NPR (National Public Radio) by Terry Gross, 6 March, 2007, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[41] Alan Betrock, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*, London: Omnibus, 1982, p. 102.
[42] Iain Aitch, ‘The Leader’s Back,’ *The Telegraph*, 14 April, 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3664489/The-Leaders-back.html (accessed 1 July, 2010).
[43] Keith Altham, ‘No-One Objected to Shangri-Las in States,’ *New Musical Express*, 29 January, 1965, p. 3.

seemed that neither English nor American audiences particularly objected to the notion of a young girl falling in love with a biker.

The author of the *NME* article noted that 'one of the greatest criticisms of "Leader of the Pack" was the inclusion of a motorbike used virtually as a musical instrument.'[44] Today, George 'Shadow' Morton is hailed as a pioneer in the field of record production techniques, and his particularly innovative use of sound effects frequently cited as ground-breaking. But at the time, it seems there was some difficulty accepting "Leader of the Pack" on its own terms. English pop singer Lyn Ripley, better known as Twinkle, was sixteen when she wrote and performed "Terry", which has as its subject matter a girl whose motorcycle-riding boyfriend died in a crash. "Terry" was released in England before "Leader of the Pack" and was already in the charts.[45] It too had been banned by the BBC, but had apparently received enough airplay on pirate stations to generate considerable sales.[46] Given the similarities in subject matter of the two songs, Twinkle was called upon for her opinion of "Leader of the Pack," and said:

> People in this country tend not to go for gimmick records and I thought that the sound of the motorbike on disc might put people off. I say good luck to them with their musical motorbike.[47]

The conception of "Leader of the Pack" as 'gimmicky' is one that recurred frequently, and it seems this was a common frame of reference through which to understand the use of sound effects, which in turn led to the perception of the song as a novelty record. The Shangri-Las never completely escaped this tag. In an extremely positive review of their first

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[44] Atham, p. 3.
[45] There is some speculation about whether Twinkle could possibly have heard "Leader of the Pack" before she wrote "Terry." Her sister worked as a pop music reporter, and could have acquired a promotional copy before the record was generally available in England, but this remains conjecture. For more about Twinkle and to hear "Terry": http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=177287041 (accessed 14 June, 2007).
[46] See 'Twinkle – Banned by the Beeb,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/england/essex/johns_journey_archive/johns_journey_26_12_64.shtml (accessed 11 June, 2007); see also Alan Clayson, *Death Discs: An Account of Fatality in Popular Song*, London: Sanctuary, [1992] 1997, pp. 49-50.
[47] Altham, p.3.

LP which praised their singing, 'fascinating sound-patterns' and the 'most exciting, restless sound – with an organ' of the live material featured on the record, Allen Evans still noted that 'the girls do some lines in speaking voices, which adds to the novelty.'[48]

This was brought into stark relief on an episode of the New York based TV panel quiz show *I've Got a Secret*, which aired on 16 November, 1964. An elaborate charade was performed by some of the adult contestants, and lines from "Leader of the Pack" acted out as a prelude to a studio performance of the song.[49] The Shangri-Las then mimed the song to a leather-jacketed 'Jimmy' figure on a bike, played by Robert Goulet, who had already taken an active role in the charade.[50] Goulet pretended to rev the bike in time with the motorcycle sounds, throwing it around in pseudo-comedic attempts at wheelies. All the while, he pulled faces and acted the fool, eliciting laughter from the audience. The song was relentlessly sent up, the rider completely caricatured into a ridiculous, laughable figure.[51] Mary Weiss - fifteen years old, intent on her performance, completely inhabiting the song (albeit in ultra-modest knee-length skirt and blouse combo) - looked unsure a couple of times but did not laugh. Goulet clearly had the star power here; the Shangri-Las were a foil for his antics, and were virtually dismissed at the end of their performance while the

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[48] Allen Evans, 'LPs by Allen Evens,' *New Musical Express*, 12 March 1965, p. 13. This idea persisted well into the 1980s - Monica Syrette, writing in 1996, noted that she knew "Leader of the Pack" as 'a staple of AM radio when I was growing up, played as a gimmick song like "The Monster Mash" or something.' Monica Syrette, 'I Was a Teenage Shangri-La-holic,' *Bust* Spring/Summer (1996), pp. 66-7. My thanks to Monica for providing me with a copy of this.

[49] The Shangri-Las and Robert Goulet on *I've Got a Secret*, including a performance of "Leader of the Pack," 16 November, 1964, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WA5I2t26w (accessed 18 June, 2010).

[50] Robert Goulet achieved considerable fame on Broadway for his role as Sir Lancelot in *Camelot* (1960) alongside Richard Burton and Julie Andrews. By 1964 he was a well-established theatre and television performer; while introducing Goulet, the compere of *I've Got a Secret* promoted his upcoming TV special 'on the CBS network', *An Hour With Robert Goulet*. Goulet performed regularly until his death from a lung condition in October 2007. See http://www.robertgoulet.com/biography.html (accessed 25 February, 2012).

[51] See Lily Phillips' comments on the Eric von Zipper character featured in the Annette Funicello-Frankie Avalon Beach movies for the depiction of the biker as an absurd figure, Lily Phillips, 'Blue Jeans,' http://ijms.nova.edu/March2005/IJMS_ArtclPhilips0305.html (accessed 13 October, 2010).

compere fussed over Goulet. Ultimately, the attempts to make a joke of the song seem incongruous; the spectacle is unintentionally riveting.

There are several reasons for this. It has already been noted that although "Leader of the Pack" was a hit, it also generated considerable debate and discomfort. Sending the song up, and parodying the intense emotion and alienation experienced by the protagonist as performed by Mary Weiss, is a particularly adult response to teen angst. There is a deep tension between the ironic, emotionally-distant and somewhat patronising adult world, and the all-or-nothing emotional vortex of the distraught teenage girl. Added to this is the difficulty of 'performing' such a sonically and narratively complex piece of music in a studio and in front of an audience that is expecting quiz-show laughs, not operatic emotional intensity. Furthermore, Jimmy's shadowy complexity, left vague and partially sketched in the song, is rudely and ham-fistedly stamped with the imprint of a cavorting Robert Goulet, which leaves little to the imagination of the audience and robs the song of much of its mystery.

"Leader of the Pack" was also parodied as "Leader of the Laundromat" by a group of male singers calling themselves the Detergents. Their version was in the charts concurrently with "Leader of the Pack," and peaked at Number 19 on 9 January, 1965.[52] In this version, the gender of the protagonist was changed to a girl who was doing her washing – 'I met her one day at the Laundromat.' "Murray" was told by his dad to break it off with "Betty" 'because her laundry came back brown,' and, distraught at this news, Betty ran into the street and was hit by a garbage truck. Although certainly meant in fun, it is interesting to note that the Jimmy/rider figure was feminized and converted into a character whose inability to fulfil basic expectations of feminine behaviour (produce clean washing) mirrored Jimmy's rejection of middle-class patriarchal norms.

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[52] "Leader of the Laundromat" (Pockriss/Vance), ROULETTE 4590,1964. *Billboard Hot 100*, 9 January, 1965; see also 'The Detergents are Cleaning Up the Music Business', *Hit Parader*, May 1965, pp. 12-13, 52. The four members of The Detergents were also from New York – three from Brooklyn, one from Staten Island.

Again, the power of the biker figure was negated, especially since the feminized version had no association with motorbikes whatsoever. Nevertheless, the revving noises were retained in “Leader of the Laundromat,” partly because they were such a distinctive component of the original version, but they have a greater significance which I will discuss shortly.[53]

On the other hand, if the record *was* taken seriously, it was seen as morbid and death-obsessed. Vicki Trent, writing in *Pop Weekly* in 1965, said of “Leader of the Pack”:

> To me the disc, which describes in those awful pseudo-sad tones the leader of a motor-cycle gang being killed, is just about the very bottom of the barrel as far as records go…to anyone who has had a teenage son, brother, or sweetheart even, killed on a motorbike (and that must be quite a few) it must be sickening…No wonder people, especially parents, are always condemning teenagers for being "juvenile delinquents." Why shouldn't they when records are sold by the thousand which deal with death and nothing else?[54]

Trent’s explicit linking of songs about death with juvenile delinquency reflected an assumption that became widespread during the 1950s. This was the perception that the mass media, which included television, movies, comics, radio, and records, was having a negative effect on youth, encouraging juvenile delinquency and contributing to family

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[53] “Leader of the Laundromat” also constituted a successful attempt to cash in on a popular song with minimal original input. The ‘authors,’ Lee Pockriss and Paul Vance, were extremely successful professional songwriters who tended to work in the spoof/novelty area (they also wrote “Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini,” a hit in 1960 for Bryan Hyland). One of the Detergents, Danny Jordan, was Vance’s nephew. Pockriss and Vance are listed as sole writers of “Leader of the Laundromat,” see American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers [ASCAP] listing: http://www.ascap.com/ace/search.cfm?requesttimeout=300&mode=results&searchstr=420124841&search_in=i&search_type=exact&search_det=t,s,w,p,b,v&results_pp=10&start=1 (accessed 13 September, 2010). It seems odd that, given that this song was clearly based on an existing one, the writers of the original received no songwriting credits. In a later comparable example, Weird Al Yankovic’s version of “Beat It” (“Eat It”), is simply listed as a variation of the Michael Jackson song; Yankovic is not credited as writer. Given what we have seen of Morris Levy’s behaviour, it may also be noteworthy that “Leader of the Laundromat” was released on his Roulette label.

[54] Vicki Trent, *Pop Weekly*, 6 February, 1965; see http://www.teenageheaven.org/tragedy/sddbb.html (accessed 14 June, 2007).

breakdown.[55] This popular perception was shaped most famously by psychiatrist and neurologist Fredric Wertham, author of *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953). In this book, and in numerous public appearances, Wertham argued that a strong causal link existed between mass culture, particularly comic books, and juvenile delinquency.[56] His 'articulate and coherent explanation for the rise of juvenile misbehavior' had tremendous popular appeal among worried adults seeking explanations for what they perceived to be unfathomable teenage conduct.

The wider implications of Wertham's argument are observable in a letter from an irate mother to the editors of *Modern Teen* magazine, a copy of which apparently made its way into the house through a friend of her daughter's. The letter conflated comic books with a number of other features of teen culture, which she perceived as tasteless, alarming and harmful:

> I have never seen such a collection of tripe in my entire life. Don't you realize what you are doing? You are encouraging teenagers to write to each other, which keeps them from doing their school work and other chores. You are encouraging them to kiss and have physical contact before they're even engaged, which is morally wrong and you know it. You are encouraging them to have faith in the depraved individuals who make rock and roll records when it's common knowledge that ninety percent of these rock and roll singers are people with no morals or sense of values.
>
> I can just picture a cross-section of your readers, complete with acne, black leather jackets, motorcycle boots, comic books and all. Any fan of yours spends his time failing at school, talking back to his parents, sharpening his switchblade for the next gang fight, wearing sensual revealing clothing, and last and certainly not least, feeding his curious mind with the temptations put forth on the pages of your lewd and demoralizing publication.[57]

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[55] Gilbert, p. 3.
[56] Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, New York & Toronto: Rinehart, 1953, esp. pp. 148-71; Gilbert, pp. 91-108.
[57] Quoted in Charles H. Brown, 'Self-Portrait: The Teen-Type Magazine,' Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 338 (1961), p. 15; Gilbert, pp. 202-3. The first issue of *Modern Teen* was published in the spring of 1957; it was one of the earliest of what the publishers of *Dig* magazine (who also published *Modern Teen*) called '"a new publishing field. It's a break for you teenagers…now there will be magazines

For this parent, mass teen culture, as epitomized by *Modern Teen*, was a checklist of perceived lower-class attributes and items that signified rebellion, delinquency, and a fundamental rejection of 'decent' middle-class standards. These included black leather jackets and motorcycle boots, which were here explicitly linked with, among other things, switchblades, gangs, and rock and roll. As Eric Schneider noted,

> parents, journalists and public officials mistook the stylistic affectations of rebellion for its substance. They saw the spread of leather jackets, Levi's, and rock 'n' roll as proof that juvenile delinquency was like a contagious disease spreading outward from the slums, rather than as the expression of clever marketing.[58]

Of course, this is not to say that these symbols were meaningless. Rather, their meanings had been transformed; wearing a 'gang' or leather jacket 'became the symbol of youthful rebelliousness, guaranteed to worry parents and teachers,' instead of an indication of gang membership, as it had been previously.[59] And 'clever marketing' included professionally composed songs like "Leader of the Pack," which captured and expressed aspects of a certain zeitgeist that ultimately transcended its original milieu of mid-1960s New York City.

It is also important to note that "Leader of the Pack" was the latest in a long line of what were termed 'teen death' records. This did not go unnoticed at the time - Phyllis Lee Levin, writing in *The New York Times* in 1965, discussed "Leader of the Pack" in the context of 'certain teen-age fads,' in this case,

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edited exclusively for you."' These magazines were marketed at teenagers of both sexes, with a heavy emphasis on teen idols (Sandra Dee, Elvis Presley and Annette Funicello graced early covers) and their readers were also encouraged to write letters to the editors for advice on teen issues: parents, shyness, dating and the like. See Ronald S. Green, *Innovation, Imitation, and Resisting Manipulation: The First Twenty Years of American Teenagers 1941-1961*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1998, pp. 28-32.

[58] Schneider, pp. 144-5.

[59] Schneider, p. 144; see also Dick Hebdidge's discussion of subcultural 'communication' through 'working class' style and clothing in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Methuen, 1979, esp. pp.100-106.

> the sick songs, or, more politely termed, tragedy songs. The heroes and heroines of these songs issue last messages – or noises – from foxholes, coffins, motorcycles, and even garbage trucks.[60]

Some of the more famous 'teen death' records include "Endless Sleep", a hit in 1958 for Jody Reynolds, "Tell Laura I Love Her" by Ray Peterson, from 1960, and "Teen Angel" by Mark Dinning, also from 1960.[61] In 1955, the Cheers had a hit with a 'death disc' about a biker and his girlfriend, "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots."[62] It was written by Leiber and Stoller, who were now Morton's superiors at Red Bird, and who had objected to his proposal of "Leader of the Pack" initially. Part of their objection, as reported by Morton, was that 'you can't make a hero out of that situation,' that is, portray the "Leader" in a sympathetic light. [63] So it is noteworthy that, in "Black Denim Trousers," the biker is a clichéd thug – he is cranky, dirty and treats his pretty girlfriend Mary-Lou so badly that

> everybody pitied her because everybody knew
> He loved that dog-gone motorcycle best.[64]

He is a resolutely unsympathetic figure, and when he roars off, impervious to Mary-Lou's pleadings that 'if you ride tonight I'll grieve' and crashes into a 'screaming diesel that was California bound,' the strong sense is that he will not be sorely missed; his death will in fact liberate the long-suffering Mary-Lou.[65] Although the subject matter is similar and the songs undeniably have common elements, "Black Denim Trousers.." has none of the narrative complexity and emotional impact of "Leader of the Pack."

Nor was "Leader of the Pack" alone in its use of sound effects. A real motorbike belonging to one of the sound engineers at the recording

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[60] Phyllis Lee Levin, 'The Sound of Music?', *The New York Times*, 14 March, 1965, p. 72.
[61] This is a very small sample – Inglis (pp. 477-88) discusses eleven examples released between 1959 and 1964; for a fuller account of this 'genre,' see Clayson, pp. 47-60. "Tell Laura I Love Her" was written by Jeff Barry, who is credited, along with Morton, as co-writer of "Leader of the Pack."
[62] The Cheers, "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots," (Leiber/Stoller) b/w "Some Night in Alaska" (Levin), CAPITOL 3219, 1955. Audio of "Black Denim Trousers": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGNBBZDRqFo (accessed 14 September, 2010).
[63] Newman, p. 42.
[64] The Cheers, "Black Denim Trousers," see Emerson, p. 227. Morton's association with Leiber, Stoller and Red Bird began almost ten years after this release, so it is by no means a given that he would have been aware of this song.
[65] The Cheers, "Black Denim Trousers."

session, Joe Venneri, was used for the revving noises.[66] The skid and crash effect was a standard one from a sound effects record – in fact, the exact same effect was used on "Transfusion" by Nervous Norvus (1956), "Car Crash" by The Cadets (1960), "Two-Hour Honeymoon" by Paul Hampton (1960, written and arranged by Burt Bacharach), and "Dead Man's Curve" by Jan & Dean (1964).[67] Nevertheless, the use of sound effects in "Leader of the Pack" struck reviewers as completely inappropriate. According to one,

> If you like Twinkle's "Terry," then you'll dig The Shangri-Las' smash American hit, "Leader of the Pack" in a big way…the rumbling, reverberating Spector-like sound, and the absorbing harmonies by the girls are great. But they're interspersed by a sugary monologue, revving noises, and even the sound of the crash. Personally, I think it's obnoxious and tasteless, but I'm sure it'll be a walloping hit.[68]

It was indeed, and it seems that most of this discomfort came from adult listeners. As Mary Weiss later commented, of "Leader of the Pack,"

> I don't think teenage years are all that rosy for a lot of people – they certainly weren't for me. They are the most confusing time of people's lives and there is a tremendous dark side to the record, which I think teenagers related to.[69]

Seemingly, the teenagers who were its main buyers identified directly with its intense emotionality and themes of parental conflict.[70]

However, a significant role played by the motorcycle sounds has been lost in all of this. It is important to note that Jimmy is voiceless in the song, and before the song begins, Jimmy is already dead. He comes to us as a shifting mirage - a memory glimpsed through Betty's tears, the stunned awe of her girlfriends, and the blinkered authoritarianism of her father. The

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[66] Emerson, p. 227; Lisa MacKinney, interview with Brooks Arthur, 18 March, 2008.
[67] I thank Phil Milstein for pointing this out and providing me with copies of these tracks, especially Nervous Norvus's truly extraordinary "Transfusion" (Drake) b/w "Dig" (Drake), DOT 15470, 1956; audio of "Transfusion": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtzKr7ERmXE (accessed 16 September, 2010).
[68] Derek Johnson, 'Fury's Latest was Worth Waiting For,' *New Musical Express*, 25 December 1964, p. 4.
[69] Aitch, 'The Leader's Back,' http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3664489/The-Leaders-back.html (accessed 1 July, 2010).
[70] Richard Goldstein, 'Pop Eye: The Soul Sound from Sheepshead Bay', *Village Voice*, 23 June, 1966, p. 8.

revving of the bike is his leitmotif, his signature melody, his voice. There is a long tradition associating masculinity with machinery and technology, and the revving sounds simultaneously announce Jimmy's presence and identify him as a rider at one with his vehicle, hyper-masculine, a man-machine.[71] As Hunter S. Thompson put it in *Hell's Angels*,

> The whole – man and machine together – is far more than the sum of its parts. His motorcycle is the one thing in life he has absolutely mastered. It is his only valid status symbol, his equalizer…without it he is no better than a punk on a street corner.[72]

When Jimmy and his bike crash, the sounds of the accident invite the listener 'to imagine all its horrors for themselves.' As critic Jack Sargeant has noted, during the final part of the song an 'extended skid is replayed and faded out' and 'never allowed to culminate in an impact.' This has the effect of eternally suspending Jimmy in oblivion, the looped skid his requiem.[73]

Parallels can be seen in Kenneth Anger's 'silent' film *Scorpio Rising*, from 1963.[74] There is no dialogue – all the riders, including Scorpio, are voiceless. In a sort of cinematic inversion of Jimmy's role, the soundtrack of the film is entirely popular songs from the late 1950s and early 1960s - very much of the vocal group milieu from which the Shangri-Las emerged - which segue into each other like a long sequence played by a disc jockey on radio.[75] Anger has also used sound effects, predominantly of motorcycles. Tellingly, the first time this occurs is several minutes into the

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[71] On the association of masculinity with technology, see Pigot, pp. 47-49; for a more theoretical analysis of the 'man-machine interface' and the musicality of throttles, see Steven L. Thompson, 'The Arts of the Motorcycle: Biology, Culture and Aesthetics in Technological Choice,' *Technology and Culture* 41 (2000), pp. 99-100, 107-9; John Alt, 'Popular Culture and Mass Consumption: The Motorcycle as Cultural Commodity,' *Journal of Popular Culture* 15:4 (1982), p. 133.
[72] Hunter S. Thompson, *Hells Angels*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1966] 1987, p. 96.
[73] Jack Sargeant, 'Violence and Vinyl: Car Crashes in 1960s Pop, in *Car Crash Culture*, ed. Mikita Brottman, New York: Palgrave, 2001, pp. 262-3.
[74] *Scorpio Rising*, dir. Kenneth Anger, 1963. The entire twenty-eight minute film can be viewed at http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4704748884284449320# (accessed 16 September, 2010). I thank Tony McMahon for insisting years ago that I see this film, and Bradley Eros for lending me his books on Kenneth Anger.
[75] These include "He's A Rebel" by The Crystals and "My Boyfriend's Back" by The Angels, both from 1963. It is very tempting to speculate that had "Leader of the Pack" had been recorded and released just a little earlier, it would almost certainly have been included by Anger.

film, after a series of slow, lingering shots that fetishize the machinery of the bikes and their accoutrements. The capped head of a biker appears at the bottom of the screen, rising until the studded words on the back of his leather jacket are visible: SCORPIO RISING – KENNETH ANGER. He turns around, a lingering shot of his open jacket and bare abdomen. All the while, the bike revs – flesh and gears, the man-machine.[76]

"Leader of the Pack" was not attempting anything like the mythic apocalypse of *Scorpio Rising*, which director Kenneth Anger famously described as 'a death mirror held up to American culture.'[77] But Anger used a careful selection of popular music of the day, bike sound effects and voiceless riders who appear as a series of images, to achieve his particular ends. *Scorpio Rising* also concludes with a violent motorcycle accident, complete with skidding noises, crash sounds, sirens, flashing lights - all while "Wipe Out" by the Surfaris hammers the point home. Anger's innovative use of music is central to *Scorpio Rising*, and Juan Suárez has argued compellingly that the film's engagement with pop songs, comic books and images of teen idols is at least as important to its artistic success as the avant-garde tradition within which it is usually discussed.[78] As *Scorpio Rising* straddles 'high' and 'low' culture, the barriers between these traditions are dissolved – so Jesus walks down the street to "He's A Rebel" by The Crystals.[79] Shots of Brando in *The Wild One* are juxtaposed with Christ and Hitler, all forming part of Anger's technique, as Carel Rowe put it, of reducing religion, political history and popular culture into

> sets of systems which destroy one another…different dogmas are equalized (and subsumed by) their structural and ideological parallels.[80]

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[76] For a detailed discussion of the homoerotic aspects of *Scorpio Rising* and their contexts, see Juan A. Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens and Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
[77] Anna Powell, 'The Occult: A Torch for Lucifer' in *Moonchild: The Films of Kenneth Anger*, ed. Jack Hunter, London: Creation, 2001, p. 74.
[78] Suárez, p. 142.
[79] Suárez, pp. 167-8.
[80] Carel Rowe, 'Myth and Symbolism: Blue Velvet,' in *Moonchild*, ed. Hunter, pp. 21-2.

The ‘black-leathered motorcyclists who exist outside and in defiance of the prevailing culture’ become symbols - they are the catalysts for revolution and the fall of an age.[81] Their blank voicelessness is central to their ability to function in this way, just as Jimmy’s emptiness enables him to function as a complex symbol of postwar anxieties and teenage desire. That *Scorpio Rising* and “Leader of the Pack” were made within a year of each other in New York is further suggestive of their cultural connectedness.[82]

The Shangri-Las’ next single, “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” featured another, differently sketched version of a ‘Jimmy’ figure, who in this song remained nameless.[83] There is nothing overt to indicate that he is a biker, but plenty to suggest at least the trappings of gang involvement. The opening lines of the song,

> Here comes my guy
> Walking down the street
> Look how he walks
> With a dancing beat

locate him in the street, *the* gang locale. That he walks ‘with a dancing beat’ is not mere affectation, but a territorial assertion. Walking ‘bop style,’ or using the ‘diddleybop walk’ was part of the language of the street, and functioned as a ‘direct challenge’ to others who might lay claim to a particular piece of turf or street. Israel Narvaez, of the Mau Maus, a Brooklyn-based gang, described walking

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[81] Rowe, p. 26.
[82] *Scorpio Rising* was at least partially shot in Brooklyn: see Gregory Markopolis, ‘Scorpio Rising (First Impressions After A First Viewing, 10/29/63)’, *Film Culture* 31 (Winter 1963-4), p. 5; George ‘Shadow’ Morton, Ellie Greenwich, and all four members of the Shangri-Las were from Long Island, and given Morton’s background, it is very tempting to speculate that he may have seen *Scorpio Rising* before writing “Leader of the Pack.” For an extended discussion of Kenneth Anger’s utilization of popular music, see Suárez, pp. 114-18; for *Scorpio Rising* and popular culture more generally, Suárez, pp. 141-180.
[83] For a live studio performance, see the Shangri-Las, “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” *Shindig!*, 1965, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01YePzk29Mc (accessed 14 September, 2010).

> ‘down the street like we owned it – doing the slow easy walk of the jitterbug, loosely swinging our shoulders, hips and knees, bobbing and weaving to our own individual rhythm.’[84]

In gang culture, the walk functioned as a statement that commanded respect. Furthermore, this was directly related to music, and the music of gangs was predominantly doo-wop, performed by street corner groups who often shared this terrain with neighbourhood gangs.[85] Dion DiMucci (Dion and the Belmonts) and Anthony Gourdine (Little Anthony and the Imperials) both started out as gang-associated street corner singers.[86] In the next lines of “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” we find that the ‘Jimmy’ figure has

> Thick wavy hair
> A little too long
> All day long he’s
> Singing his song
> And when I see him
> In the street
> My heart takes a leap
> And skips a beat...

That he is ‘in the street’ and singing ‘his song’ ‘all day long’ strongly suggests that he has ties to doo-wop singing. Furthermore, he is ‘always wearing shades,’ has ‘dirty fingernails’ and wears

> Tight tapered pants, high button shoes
> He's always looking like he's got the blues...[87]

This ‘Jimmy’ figure is moody, sullen and mysterious, but contextualised quite differently from the dark intensity of “Leader of the Pack.” “Give Him a Great Big Kiss” is light-hearted and playful; nevertheless, these resonances inform the persona of the object of the ‘great big kiss.’ In a live performance on the pop music TV show *Shindig!*, the group performed the song to a actor wearing a leather bike jacket, dark pants, boots, sunglasses and a peaked black cap – a very clear reference to the

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[84] Quoted in Schneider, pp. 142-3.
[85] The link between the dark and brutal world of (bike) gangs and doo-wop style popular music is very strong in *Scorpio Rising*.
[86] See Schneider, pp. 140-1.
[87] The Shangri-Las, “Give Him a Great Big Kiss” (Morton) b/w “Twist and Shout” (Russell/Medley), RED BIRD 018, December, 1964.

protagonist of their previous single.[88] At the very least, he is an outlaw figure, again, like Jimmy, not gainfully employed, and resisting the standards of 'order and decorum imposed by the dominant society.'[89] And in the final couplet of a section of mid-song dialogue, the lead singer's friends express concern about her boyfriend: 'Yeah? Well I hear he's bad,' to which she replies, 'Mmm, he's good-bad, but he's not evil...'[90] Good negates bad, and bad good. He's not evil – but he *is* a silent prop, rendered by complex processes of production, narrative and performance into a blank page – nothing, and therefore everything.

This figure was introduced in "Leader of the Pack" and established remarkably rapidly (by the end of 1964), as the Shangri-Las' archetypal 'guy' by his reappearance in "Give Him A Great Big Kiss." Of this figure, Morton said,

> I had an image of the guy...but not trying to paint the picture of him allows everybody else to create whatever image or fantasy they want.[91]

He added that a lot of people had made the mistake of thinking that the "Leader" was based on a particular person:

> People were asking me, and rather than give an explanation, after a while, when they said, "Well, who's the motorcycle guy? Is it you? Is it this?" I would just simply say, "It's anybody you want it to be." I have my image, why should I give you my image? Create your own.[92]

By the time "Leader of the Pack" was released, George Morton had also bought his 'first Harley' (as he put it) and had metamorphosed into 'Shadow' Morton.[93] This nickname was bestowed, apparently by George

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[88] The actor is Ian Whitcomb, an English US-based performer who had a hit in 1965 with the self-penned "You Turn Me On." The Shangri-Las' *Shindig*! performance from 1965 can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuNlEGbAKf0 (accessed 14 June, 2007).
[89] Schneider, p. 143.
[90] The Shangri-Las, "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" (Morton) b/w "Twist and Shout."
[91] MacKinney, interview with Morton, 24 April, 2007.
[92] MacKinney, interview with Morton, 24 April, 2007.
[93] 'When Leiber asked me in the hallway, what do you have, what he did not know was that morning, since I was now a big writer, I had a hit record, I was up on 11th Avenue looking to buy my first Harley.' MacKinney, interview with Morton, 24 April, 2007. The labels of both "Leader of the Pack" and "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" credit production to 'Shadow Morton.' The production of "Remember," was credited to Jeff Barry and Artie Ripp, as detailed in Chapter Two. The point is that by the time "Leader of the Pack" was released, George had metamorphosed himself into 'Shadow.'

Goldner, because Morton 'was never where he was supposed to be.'[94] In order to create the 'Jimmy' figure that became the signature Shangri-Las 'guy,' Morton drew on events with which he was familiar, and used a loose amalgam of his own personal experiences. Morton had extensive exposure to gangs (or claimed to), perceived the biker figure as 'a solo man,' and acted and saw himself as an outsider, an outlaw hustler who had grown up fast and learned how to fight and survive at a young age.[95] Morton also identified with the street; he commented in 1991 that

> In one of my new songs, there's a line "I got my education in the alley of St. Tom's..." That was my school, St. Thomas Aquinas. I got more education in the streets than I did from the sisters.[96]

The 'Jimmy' figure can be understood as a fantasy of Morton himself, biker-gang tough, but underneath it all, sensitive and alluring enough that beautiful young women would intone his paeans of doomed love back in his direction. But by keeping this character as 'a *shadowy* male figure,' as Jacqueline Warwick put it, with just enough sketching to make him real, but vague enough to operate as a fantasy, he could effectively function as a *tabula rasa* and operate as a mythic, larger than life figure.

Consciously or unconsciously, and using similar techniques to those which found expression in his songs, Morton constructed an elusive, 'shadowy' persona for himself. As we saw in Chapter Two, Morton has persistently played down his pre-Shangri-Las work, and presented himself as an untutored novice who accidently found himself in the music industry. He became 'Shadow,' an elusive, mysterious, mythological figure, notoriously slippery and unable to be pinned down. Ian Aitch, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph* (London) in 2007 and frustrated after making several attempts to contact Morton, reported:

> Back at my hotel, the bedside phone is flashing – a message from Morton asking me to call him back at the same, non-existent New York number. Shadow was so-named after staff at Red Bird were trying to track him down

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[94] Newman, p. 46.
[95] 'A solo man': MacKinney, interview with Morton, 24 April, 2007.
[96] '"Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 14 June, 2007).

> to finalise the credits on Leader of the Pack. When no one could find him, he was credited on the record as 'Shadow' Morton. He has lived up to his name ever since. The next day, as I prepare to fly home, the phone rings.[97]

This has been so completely codified into legend that such behaviour is expected of Morton; anything less would be a disappointment.

"Out in the Streets" was the Shangri-Las' fifth Red Bird single, and is credited to Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich as writers, with Morton as producer.[98] In this song, another complex exploration of a young woman's relationship with a delinquent anti-hero figure, the protagonist's boyfriend is a "Leader of the Pack" type, but he has reformed his ways to be with his 'respectable' girlfriend:

> He don't hang around
> With the gang no more
> He don't do the wild things
> That he did before
> He used to act bad
> Used to, but he quit it
> And it makes me so sad
> Cause I know that he did it for me
> And I can see
> His heart, is out in the street...
> He don't comb his hair
> like he did before
> He don't wear those dirty old
> black boots no more...

Along with the 'wild things', hairstyle and 'dirty old black boots' that have been shed, an intrinsic part of himself has been lost too. This time, it is not parental strictures that prevent the success of the romance, but, as Jacqueline Warwick has pointed out, 'the futility of love across social

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[97] Aitch, 'The Leader's Back,' http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3664489/The-Leaders-back.html (accessed 1 July, 2010).

[98] The Shangri-Las, "Out in the Streets" (Barry/Greenwich), RED BIRD 10-025, 1965, for credits on the record label, see http://www.pbase.com/kim_messmer/image/44100075 (accessed 16 September, 2010). Greenwich and Barry are registered with BMI (Broadcast Music Incorporated); but there is also an ASCAP listing for the song, which credits Artie Butler, Jerry Leiber, and Morton as writers. I point this out because the origins of the anti-hero figure seem so closely connected with Morton.

boundaries.'[99] Again, the anti-hero is misunderstood, has had it tough, and is at home in the streets:

> He grew up on the sidewalk
> Streetlight shinin' above
> He grew up with no-one to love
> He grew up on the sidewalk
> He grew up running free
> He grew up and then he met me...[100]

The Shangri-Las performed this song on *Shindig!* in 1965, miming to the record (as was the case for most pop music TV performances). At this point Betty was still absent from the group, so it features Mary Weiss, with backing vocals by Mary Ann and Marge Ganser.[101] All three are dressed in shiny black 'catsuits' and are on individual pedestals, very separate from one another. In addition to emphasising the impending loneliness of the protagonist, the pedestals place the group members above the street level to which the boyfriend of the protagonist must be returned. She is, quite literally, on a pedestal, unreachable to him, despite his efforts at class mobility – not wearing his dirty old back boots, and combing his hair like he did previously.[102] As the clip begins, the group appears in silhouette, then lit briefly. Quickly, the lights fade and the entire song is performed with minimal lighting. In conjunction with the catsuits, their bodies disappear into the darkness, causing the minimal light to highlight their faces, and their hands, heightening the effect of the 'performative choreography' with which the lyrics are emphasised.[103]

The effect is unnerving and strongly emotional, creating a powerful sense of disembodiment that metaphorically emphasises the loss experienced by the anti-hero, who has sacrificed keys parts of himself in the process of

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[99] Warwick, p. 193; see also Emerson, pp. 228-9.
[100] The Shangri-Las, "Out in the Streets" (Barry/Greenwich) b/w "The Boy" (Morton) RED BIRD 025, April, 1965.
[101] The Shangri-Las, "Out in the Streets", *Shindig!* , 1965, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZK1-u0yHNSU (accessed 15 September, 2010).
[102] For another reading of pedestals, see Jacqueline Warwick, '"He Hit Me, and I was Glad": Violence, Masochism and Anger in Girl Group Music,' in *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*, ed. Laurie Stras, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010, pp. 96-7.
[103] See discussion of 'performative choreography' in Chapter Two.

being ‘respectable.’ This process, in turn, has resulted in the demise of the protagonist’s relationship with him, and she is obliged to ‘set him free.’ As the song fades out, the two opposing forces in the song, the protagonist and the streets, fight it out musically: ‘He don’t hang around with the gang no more’ is contrapuntally placed against ‘Out in the streets.’ The entire song is drenched in reverb, adding to the effect of the otherworldly backing vocals.

“I Can Never Go Home Anymore” was released on the Red Bird record label in November, 1965. In this deeply emotional song, a teenage girl refuses to end a relationship her mother disapproves of and runs away from home, causing her inconsolable mother to die, in an unspecified manner, from loneliness. On one level, the song functions as a paean to the sacredness of the American home, and a warning to teenagers to take their loving moms and homes for granted at their peril. But viewed within the context of the group’s oeuvre, this song contains several well-established themes - parental conflict, an inappropriate love interest, and death – that function in a more complex manner than is initially apparent. Like Betty in “Leader of the Pack”, this teenage girl has been forced by parental strictures to embark on a course of action that ends in disaster, thus creating an implicit critique of the middle-class homely values that the song appears to espouse. Furthermore, there are indications that the ‘home’ in question is a single-parent one, headed by the protagonist’s mother. All this makes “I Can Never Go Home Anymore” a valuable window into idealised behaviour in America in the mid-1960s, especially given that, as recently as 2003 in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, Laura Oswald claimed that

> Forty years ago, digressions from the traditional nuclear family were omitted from popular culture.[104]

On the contrary, as a close reading of this song will demonstrate, the digressions are there if you look for them.

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[104] Laura Oswald, ‘Branding the American Family: A Strategic Study of the Culture, Composition, and Consumer Behaviour of Families in the New Millennium’, *Journal of Popular Culture* 37:2 (2003), p. 324.

“I Can Never Go Home Anymore” was a substantial success for the Shangri-Las, their biggest hit since “Leader of the Pack”, reaching Number 6 on the US charts. It was written by George ‘Shadow’ Morton, and is one of the most emotionally charged in their repertoire. The main character in the song, like lead singer, Mary Weiss, is a teenage girl. She and her mother fight over her choice of boyfriend, with her mother insisting that ‘the boy and I would have to part.’ Instead, the daughter packs her clothes and leaves home, only to find that the relationship fails with boy, who remains nameless. As a result, her mother dies, lonely and broken hearted, and the protagonist is left wracked with remorse and forever lamenting that she ‘can never go home anymore.’

Conflict with parents is a recurrent theme in the recordings of the Shangri-Las. In “Give Us Your Blessings” (1965), disquiet and foreboding are established immediately with the sound of a thunderstorm, which hangs over the whole song.[105] This is an established literary tradition for establishing tension, and as a metaphor for various forms of disharmony, both internal and external. To cite but one example, Shakespeare regularly employed storms in this manner, one of the most famous instances being the tempest that dominates *King Lear*. In Act III, Lear, (significantly for this discussion) in a raging fury with his daughters, rushed out into a similarly furious storm to excoriate them.[106]
Lear was aligned with the storm but also ‘his little world of man’ was pitted against it; his humanity against the far more cosmically powerful elements.[107] In “Give Us Your Blessings,” the weather is a significant presence interacting with the demise of the protagonists, a metaphoric

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[105] The Shangri-Las, “Give Us Your Blessings” (Barry/Greenwich) b/w “Heaven Only Knows” (Barry/Greenwich) RED BIRD 030, May, 1965.
[106] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, Act III, Scene 1, lines 4-11. See also E. Catherine Dunn, ‘The Storm in King Lear,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 3:4 (1952), pp. 329-33; Josephine Waters Bennett, ‘The Storm Within: the Madness of Lear,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 13:2 (1962), pp. 137-55.
[107] This is but one aspect of the storm’s function: see George W. Williams, ‘The Poetry of the Storm in King Lear,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 2:1 (1951), pp. 57-71, esp. pp. 58-61.

counterpart to the tension and conflict between Jimmy and Mary and their parents. As the thunderstorm booms, the vocals begin:

> Run, Run, Run,
> Mary Run, Run, Run

The storms fades out temporarily (it reappears toward the end of the song), replaced by booming piano, and

> Run, Run, Run,
> Jimmy Run, Run, Run

The narrator (Mary Weiss), employing a spoken delivery, explains that Mary and Jimmy's parents refuse to allow them to marry, and this has forced the young lovers to elope:

> Their *folks* just laughed
> And called them kids
> So Mary said
> Give us your blessings
> Please don't make us
> Run away...[108]

Which they did, crashing the car because their vision was blurred by tears:

> The next day when they found them
> Mary and Jimmy were dead
> And as their folks knelt beside them in the rain
> They couldn't help but hear
> The last words Mary had said:
> Give us your blessings....[109]

In a similar technique to that used in the closing bars of "Leader of the Pack", the song ends with cyclic ghostly choral backing vocals. 'Give us your blessings....on our wedding day,' along with the thunderstorm, and 'Run, run, run', all operate simultaneously in a conflicted counterpoint, which eventually fades out; this in turn is a similar technique to that used in the final bars of "Out in the Streets". The use of names (Jimmy, Mary) personalises the narrative, but also suggests a continuity with "Leader of the Pack," which of course also features a 'Jimmy.' In "Give Us Your

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[108] The Shangri-Las, "Give Us Your Blessings" (Barry/Greenwich) RED BIRD 030, 1965, (emphasis added).
[109] The Shangri-Las, "Give Us Your Blessings" (Barry/Greenwich).

Blessings" Jimmy is not an anti-hero figure; nevertheless, he and Mary pay a heavy price for their defiance, as do their parents, condemned to hear Mary's pleas on repeat, eternally haunted by their refusal to endorse her love.

In the most famous of their songs dealing with parental conflict, "Leader of the Pack," it was also Betty's *folks* that were always putting Jimmy down, but, as we have seen, it was Betty's *dad* who said

> "Find someone new."
> I had to tell my Jimmy "We're through." [110]

This was entirely consistent with understandings at the time of so-called unruly teenage girls, as lacking patriarchal control. However, "I Can Never Go Home Anymore" is unique in the Shangri-Las catalogue as a representation of *mother*/daughter conflict. There is no mention of 'folks', or 'my dad' in this song, only 'mom.' The song opens with a D minor chord that barely has time to be heard before we are plunged, immediately, into the protagonist's world, into a conflict about which we know nothing:

> I'm gonna hide
> If *she* don't leave me alone
> I'm gonna run
> Away...[111]

This is disorienting, disarming, and compelling. The sense of immediacy this creates is heightened by the first person narration – and this is not simply in reference to the narrative voice, but because of lead singer Mary Weiss's intimately personal style, which (in this song) is more spoken than sung, and which by this time was a Shangri-Las trademark. Mary speaks *directly, personally*, to an audience that can safely be assumed to be teenage girls, counselling them - 'if that's happened to you, don't let this...', unlike "Leader of the Pack," in which the audience essentially eavesdrops on a conversation between 'Betty' and her girlfriends. This makes "I Can Never Go Home" almost confessional, as if the protagonist

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[110] The Shangri-Las, "Leader of the Pack" (Barry/Greenwich/Morton) RED BIRD 014, 1964.
[111] The Shangri-Las, "I Can Never Go Home Anymore" (George Morton), RED BIRD 043, 1965, (emphasis added).

is desperately seeking to forgive herself and receive absolution.[112] This intimacy is further enhanced the placement of Mary's vocals high up in the mix, so that they float, cloudlike, over the rest of the instrumentation and harmonies. This is especially so during the verses, in which the accompaniment is sparse, and drenched in Morton's (and engineer Brooks Arthur's) trademark reverb.[113] This creates a sense of cavernous space, adding to the desolation and despair conveyed by the protagonist. All this makes the middle section of the song, with its strings and Mary's anguished cries of 'Mama!' all the more climactic, powerful, and intense.

'Intense' seems an appropriate way to describe the relationship between this mother and daughter. After nostalgia-ridden assurances that

> My mom is a good mom
> And she loves me with all her heart

We are told that

> *She* said I was too young to be in love and
> the boy and I would have to part....
>
> *She* told me it was not really love
> But only my girlish pride.[114]

And when, despite the pleading of her mother, the protagonist leaves home to be with the boy, the memories she is wracked with all revolve around her mother: home = mom. This comes to a climax in the anguished middle section of the song, which lyrically evokes a lullaby, but is juxtaposed with a haunted, string-laden lament:

> Hush little baby
> Don't you cry
> Mama won't go
> Away...

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[112] Other Catholic overtones will be discussed in the next chapter.
[113] The use of reverb will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.
[114] The Shangri-Las, "I Can Never Go Home Anymore" (George Morton), RED BIRD 043, 1965, (emphasis added).

Unlike, the implication is, her father, who for whatever reason – divorce, death – is not present in this household. This is further reinforced by the lines toward the end of the song

> Don't do to your mom what
> I did to mine.
> She grew so lonely in the end,
> Angels picked her for a friend.

For this to occur, the mom is clearly alone in the house, deserted by her only companion, her daughter. And her daughter can 'never go home anymore' quite literally – because with the death of her mother, 'home' no longer exists. This would not be the case if her father was present, which he is not – on the contrary, he is completely absent from the picture.

This is significant on a number of levels. The first is that in a culture suffused with images of the nuclear family presented as the norm, it is a notable deviation. Certainly, TV sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver* and *Ozzie and Harriet*, and movies like *Marty*, from 1955, presented the white suburban nuclear family as ideal, and normal.[115] In the famous 'kitchen debate' of 1959 between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev, Nixon promoted the idea that

> American superiority rested on the ideal of the suburban home, complete with modern electrical appliances and distinct gender roles for family members. He proclaimed that the 'model' home, with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide array of consumer goods, represented the essence of American freedom.[116]

During the 1950s and 60s the programmers of television, which sociologist Ella Taylor has described as 'the most relentlessly domestic of our mass media,' adopted a policy of 'least objectionable programming,' that denied race, class, and structural diversity.[117] In doing so, 'they reproduced...not the reality of most American family lives, but just the kind

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[115] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, New York: Basic Books, 1992, pp. 23-29; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, New York: Basic Books, [1989], 1999, pp. 19-20.
[116] May, p.11.
[117] Ella Taylor, 'From the Nelsons to the Huxtables: Genre and Family Imagery in American Network Television,' *Qualitative Sociology* 12:1 (1989), pp. 16-17; Coontz, pp. 30-1.

of consensus desired by advertisers.'[118] Elaine Tyler May has demonstrated conclusively the manner in which the nuclear family, as the lynchpin of domesticity, was embraced as a bastion of security during the Cold War. As part of this strategy, mothers were deemed responsible for everything from stocking the bomb shelter to keeping their husbands sexually satisfied in order to prevent sexual deviancy which could lead to communism, and, significantly for this discussion, not lapsing into 'momism' by making their children weak and passive through overprotection.[119]

Furthermore, this song reflected realities in the lives of the performers, if not its author as well. As we saw in Chapter Two, sisters Betty and Mary Weiss had what Mary described as a 'difficult' upbringing in a single-parent household, since their father had died when Mary was six weeks old.[120] She later commented that

> I think most kids have a more structured home than I did. Years ago I remember people having like two parents, and finishing school...we kind of raised her [their mother], as much as we could.[121]

Their mother 'had periodic jobs on occasion, but nothing really substantial.'[122] The family was 'pretty poor' and struggled to make ends meet, a situation Mary later described as 'a hell of a way to grow up. I always kind of supported myself – it was a question of survival.'[123] Mary

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[118] Taylor, p. 17.
[119] May, pp. 10-29, 64-5.
[120] M. Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/01.html (accessed 19 June, 2008).
[121] Gross, 'Mary Weiss comes back for a *Dangerous Game*,' http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009).
[122] Gross, 'Mary Weiss comes back for a Dangerous Game,' http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7728783 (accessed 14 June, 2009); M. Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 13 October, 2010).
[123] Kurt Loder, 'Where Are They Now? The Shangri-Las,' *Rolling Stone*, 12 September, 1985, p. 50; see also Emerson, pp. 225-6.

also alluded to experiencing a great deal of 'personal pain' that she channelled into her performances.[124] As she put it,

> I'm kind of a shy person, but I felt that the recording studio was the place that you could really release what you're feeling without everybody looking at you...I had enough pain in me at the time to pull off anything and get into it and sound believable.[125]

In specific reference to 'I Can Never Go Home Anymore,' Mary said that she

> had to turn the lights down in the studio for that one...I don't think I was even talking to my mother at the time

and commented further on what she called 'that love/hate thing' between daughters and their mothers. She added that for her the song was 'very real', to the point where she had been crying while she recorded her parts.[126]

The author of the song, George 'Shadow' Morton, was well aware of the ability of the group to be emotionally convincing, but particularly of Mary's capabilities, as the lead singer. In a 2007 interview, Morton said,

> 'I had no idea until years later how fortunate I was to have Mary Weiss on the microphone. I made demands of her that Scorsese wouldn't make of his actresses. I would plead with her, threaten her, hug her; I'd do whatever I had to do, and she would end up nailing it. I was so lucky.[127]

By the time "I Can Never Go Home Anymore" was released, late in 1965, Morton had been producing and writing material specifically for the Shangri-Las for at least a year and a half. Morton was not a hack songwriter churning out songs for groups he had no personal connection with. According to Morton, there had been a clash early on at Red Bird over this exact issue, when he had been told not to record "Leader of the Pack" because it was too controversial. He went ahead and recorded it

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[124] Suzi Quatro,'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08).
[125] Quoted in Emerson, p. 227.
[126] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08).
[127] Aitch, 'The Leader's Back,' http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3664489/The-Leaders-back.html (accessed 1 July, 2010).

anyway, using his old Long Island contacts, Rod McBrien and Billy Stahl at Ultrasonic, and using a group called the Goodies to sing on it, who were under the impression that it would be released as *their* first single.[128] Management apparently insisted that Morton write/give material only to one group – the Shangri-Las.[129] Morton commented further,

> Four girls, out of Cambria Heights, who fell into my lap from the get-go, and I never realized how much talent I had on my hands. Mary and the others had the ability to make my stories believable. I don't know too many actresses out there who could do it. If you took them off the screen and told them, "By word alone, convince people," they'd fail. The Shangri-Las were capable of pulling that off.[130]

Morton wrote material *specifically* for the Shangri-Las – and he wrote highly emotional teen mini-operas because they could deliver his material completely convincingly and with the requisite intensity.

Furthermore, Morton could not have been ignorant of the Weiss sisters' family situation, given that *all* the group members were minors (being between the ages of 15 and 17 in 1964) and had to have their parents sign contracts on their behalf. In fact, one of the few comments that Mary Weiss has made about the litigation that the group found itself embroiled in during and after its demise was that

> I couldn't go near another label for ten years because of contracts...my mom unintentionally kinda signed my life away... [131]

Furthermore, when I spoke with Morton in 2007, he told me that

> at sixteen I found out my real name wasn't Morton, and my grandfather wasn't my grandfather...but he did love me like a grandfather, he took care of me, and he gave me the name Morton...[132]

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[128] See discussion in Chapter Three.
[129] '"Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 14 June, 2007); Dave the Rave, interview with the Goodies on 'Relics and Rarities', WQMA Oldies Radio 1520AM, date unavailable. Copy supplied by Phil Milstein.
[130] '"Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 14 June, 2007).
[131] 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08).
[132] MacKinney, interview with Morton, 24 April, 2007.

Morton did not elaborate about this, and although it must remain inconclusive, it strongly suggests that Morton was not raised in a nuclear family either. He did also comment that

> probably of all of the songs, "I Can Never Go Home Anymore" touches on my life more than the others...they were just things that came to me.[133]

That Morton wrote "I Can Never Go Home Anymore" specifically for the Shangri-Las is not open to question. It seems strongly probable that his inspiration for the song was a loose amalgam of his own experiences and those of the Weiss sisters, and was written with the expectation that it would touch raw nerves in such a way that Mary could completely inhabit the song, and deliver an emotionally charged, compelling performance.

The 1965 Christmas Edition of *KRLA Beat*, a Californian music paper named after a local radio station, contains a quite extraordinary reference to "I Can Never Go Home Anymore." A number of pop singers are pictured, accompanied by captions indicating what they would like for Xmas presents. The captions were penned by the *KRLA Beat* writing staff, and were largely humorous references to their recordings, clothing, hair, reputation and other things associated with the artists in question. In what was clearly a reference to their current hit, "I Can Never Go Home Anymore", Mary Weiss was pictured, with a caption that read "A NEW HOME and a new mother." The personal resonances are telling, to say the least.[134]

Rebellion against the authority of parents is a theme that runs through much of the Shangri-Las' repertoire. In "Leader of the Pack", this is explored through the figure of the motorcycle rider, who emerges as an elastic entity resisting easy definition. Tragically misunderstood, misjudged, Jimmy inhabits the song like a shadow - a martyr to and critique of the type of parenting that is informed by middle-class, conservative, conformist family values. It is this social milieu that

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[133] MacKinney, interview with Morton, 24 April, 2007.
[134] 'From the Beat,' *KRLA Beat*, 25 December, 1965, p. 4; http://krlabeat.sakionline.net/issue/25dec65.pdf (accessed 25 October, 2009).

produced the panics over juvenile delinquency that are reflected with such sophisticated complexity in “Leader of the Pack.” This is no laughing matter; Jimmy’s death is a direct result of dogged adherence to the core assumptions espoused by white, middle-class America. The figure of Jimmy, so spectacularly successful in “Leader of the Pack”, became the Shangri-Las’ signature ‘guy’ – a silent, misunderstood type whose essential blankness enabled him to fulfill complex roles within their songs. This figure reappeared in “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” and “Out in the Streets,” and was arguably inspired by a loose amalgam of Morton’s own experiences with bike, street and gang culture, interspersed with Morton’s own perception of himself as an outsider. Morton projected this back onto himself and became the ‘Shadow’ of his nickname, an elusive, enigmatic figure whose very ability to elide clarification enabled him to actively develop a mythic larger-than-life persona. Morton also drew on his own experiences, and those of the Weiss sisters, to create a compelling study of a mother-daughter relationship in a single parent household in “I Can Never Go Home Anymore.” This was a significant deviation from the standard presentation of the nuclear family and suburban home as the epitome of American progress and freedom. Weiss drew on her own traumatic experiences as well as her troubled relationship with her mother to infuse this song with very genuine anguish, and Morton has repeatedly acknowledged that the Shangri-Las were uniquely capable of interpreting and conveying the material he wrote specifically for them in this manner. The intense emotionality conveyed by the Shangri-Las, and its links to established Western artistic traditions, particularly Romanticism, are explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

The Shangri-Las, Romanticism and the Western Artistic Tradition: "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" and "Past, Present and Future"

"Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" and "Past, Present and Future" were the Shangri-Las first and last singles to be issued on the Red Bird Label. They were released almost exactly two years apart, in the summers of 1964 and 1966 respectively, and both made reference to the beach. With no prior knowledge of either group or song, one might easily assume that "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand) was yet another in the vast catalogue of songs released in the early-to-mid 1960s that revolved around the beach and surfing. At this time, surf-themed singles and albums were being churned out by record companies anxious to cash-in on this teen craze. Surf and beach-related records celebrated the sunny southern Californian coast of Dick Dale, Jan and Dean, and The Beach Boys, reinforcing the notion that this was indeed, Shangri-la – paradise. "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand')", on the other hand, was two minutes and fifteen seconds of desperately intense teen anguish, a young woman's haunting lament for her lost love, in which the symbolism of the beach and sea have an altogether different significance. In 1974, Mitchell Cohen observed that

> the commercial success of the Shangri-Las began and ended on the beach. One can only assume that the swain who used and abused the protagonist of 'Remember (Walking in the Sand)' is the cause of her defensive frigidity in 'Past, Present and Future', where she warns a boy who walks with her along the shore, 'Don't try to touch me, 'cause that will never...happen...again'.[1]

The Shangri-Las' profoundly emotional 'beach' songs tap into deep Western artistic traditions of Romanticism, in contrast to other more obviously market-driven beach-themed pop music. This lends these songs considerable gravitas, enabling them to transcend their original mid-1960s pop music milieu, and be located within the context of an established

[1] Mitchell Cohen, 'Shangri-Las: A Teenage Melodrama,' in *Let it Rock*, December, 1974, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=7479 (accessed 13/3/2009).

artistic tradition that elevated emotion and depth of feeling over rationality and reason.

"Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" was released in August, 1964.[2] At this time, the dominant image of the beach in American popular culture was as a sun-drenched spot filled with teenage girls and boys surfing and having fun. Surfing originated in Hawaii, where it was known as the sport of Hawaiian kings,[3] but by the early 1960s it was firmly and famously associated with Southern California. *Time* magazine reported in August, 1963:

> surfing was until recently the private passion of a few bronzed daredevils. But in the past few years, surfing has become something like a way of life for thousands of devotees all along the Southern California coast. Every weekend an estimated 100,000 surfers paddle into the briny on 7-ft. to 12-ft. balsa or polyurethane boards, struggle upright into a precarious balance with nature, and try to catch the big breakers coming in.[4]

The adoption of surfing as the 'private passion of a few bronzed daredevils' had links to the beat aesthetic of hedonism, and the pursuit of thrills, kicks and danger. The 'surf bum' can be understood as a descendent of the free-spirited non-conformist beatnik, and the beach as a locale conducive to a concomitant resistance to and distaste of traditional notions of work and responsibility. The beach was for the pursuit of pleasure and fun.[5]

Teen movies, including *Gidget* (1959), which featured Sandra Dee as a tomboy surfer, helped to redefine surfing as young person's pursuit, a teen phenomenon.[6] In the process, as Carol Cooper explained, *Gidget*

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[2] The Shangri-Las, 'Remember (Walkin' in the Sand) (Morton) b/w 'It's Easier to Cry' (Steinberg/Jackson/De Angelis) RED BIRD 08, 1964.
[3] The first European description of men surfing dates from 1779; see Ben Marcus, 'From Polynesia with Love: The History of Surfing From Captain Cook to the Present', http://www.surfingforlife.com/history.html (accessed 7 March, 2008).
[4] 'Surf's Up!', *Time*, August 9, 1963, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,870411,00.html (accessed 29 February, 2008).
[5] R.L. Rutsky, 'Surfing the Other: Ideology on the Beach,' *Film Quarterly* 52:4 (1999), pp. 15-16. For the relationship of surf culture to the beat fascination with notions of primitive, exoticised, non-western cultures, see Rutsky, pp. 19-21.
[6] Joan Ormrod, '*Endless Summer* (1964): Consuming Waves and Surfing the Frontier,' *Film and History* 35:1 (2005), p. 40.

> replaced the spooky Zen-hobo aura of the actual surf community with the clean-cut glow of a varsity letterman. Fusing the weedy, dissipated hipster with the sun-bronzed high school jock to make a new, improved heterosexual male was as tricky a maneuver as desexualizing intimate friendships between half-naked boys and girls.[7]

Surfing/beach films, like those starring Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello, presented and reinforced an image of clean white teens having harmless fun at the beach, and were immensely popular at the box office.[8] Joan Ormrod has estimated that there were around seventy surf-themed films produced by Hollywood and independent producers between 1959 and 1966.[9] The films often starred actors, like Avalon and Funicello, who had already made a name for themselves as pop singers, thereby capitalising on their popularity in another teenage market.[10] This worked the other way too. The music that grew out of and came to be inextricably associated with associated with surf culture – be it instrumentals with echo-laden guitar and booming drums (Dick Dale, The Surfaris, The Ventures) or songs about the beach featuring distinctive doo-wop inspired falsetto harmonies (The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, The Rip Chords) - was hugely popular in the early 1960s.

From the late 1950s, Dick Dale was one of the most important innovators in what came to be known as the 'surfer sound.'[11] Dale, a passionate surfer and guitar player, worked closely with Leo Fender to create an amplifier that would not blow up when Dale played at punishing volumes.[12] Significantly, when questioned by Fender about the necessity of playing at such high volumes, among other things, Dale stated that he wanted to recreate 'the roar of mother nature's creatures and the roar of

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[7] Carol Cooper, 'Surf Pop: The New Wave', *Village Voice*, 17 September, 1996, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=2475 (accessed 7 March, 2008).
[8] Rutsky, p. 12.
[9] Ormrod, p. 40.
[10] Rutsky, p. 16.
[11] George O. Carney, 'Cowabunga! Surfer Rock and the Five Themes of Geography,' *Popular Music and Society* 23:4 (1999), p. 4; see also the Official Dick Dale Homepage, http://www.dickdale.com/history.html (accessed 6 March, 2008).
[12] This became known as the Dual-Showman Piggy Back Amp; its 2x15 inch speaker cabinet and 100 watt transformer (that peaked at 180 watts, according to the Official Dick Dale website) revolutionised the volume and power with which the electric guitar could be amplified: see http://www.dickdale.com/history.html; Carney, p. 4.

the ocean.'[13] Importantly, Dale was also responsible for developing (again with Leo Fender) the Fender Tank Reverb, an effects unit that gave his guitar playing an echoey sound that was simultaneously thick, wet, piercing and twangy. The original impetus for this was *not* as a guitar effect, but for Dale to run his vocal microphone through to 'correct' his voice, which he perceived as being flat and lacking vibrato.[14] Since reverb quickly became inseparably associated with the sound of the 'surf guitar', this original development as a vocal effect has a significance which will become apparent shortly.

Beach/surf music had represented sizable revenue for record companies. On July 11, 1964, Capitol records ran a full-page advertisement in *Billboard* headed 'CATCH THIS GIANT WAVE OF SUPER-SELLING SUMMER SURFING SOUNDS FROM CAPITOL'. Surrounded by pictures of nine album covers, including The Beach Boys' *All Summer Long* and Dick Dale's *Surfer's Choice*, the advertisement continued:

> The hottest, sellingest, chart-bustingest stable of surfing stars on any label. The Beach Boys! Dick Dale and his Del-Tones! The Super Stocks! Jerry Cole and his Spacemen!

It then roared, in huge letters, 'FREE BONUS SINGLES', announcing that

> Included with four of these great new Capitol albums is a free 45 rpm surfing single – different one with every album. And, that's just one of Capitol's many fantastic merchandising aids! Other Capitol albums have free colour Hot Rod pictures included. Or motorcycle pictures...And more! It's going to be a HOT summer...with a Capitol "H".[15]

Several things are apparent from this advertisement. Capitol, anxious to maintain the popularity of surf music and the careers of the Beach Boys in the face of the 'British Invasion,' had decided that extra promotional push was required, giving away singles as extra incentive to buy LPs. It also demonstrated that surf culture was closely associated with hot rods, drag racing, and motorbikes, which were in turn understood by record company

[13] The Official Dick Dale website, http://www.dickdale.com/history.html (accessed 3 September, 2010). I witnessed Dick Dale playing at the Central Club Hotel in Melbourne, Australia, in 1995. It was very, very loud.
[14] The Official Dick Dale website, http://www.dickdale.com/history.html (accessed 3 September, 2010).
[15] 'Catch this Giant Wave of Super-Selling Summer Surfing Sounds from Capitol,' *Billboard*, 11 July 1964, p. 7.

executives as a set of interlinked teen crazes. Capitalising on the popularity of such trends before others arose to take their place(s) was an important source of revenue for record companies. By purchasing these records, so the marketing logic went, you could obtain your own piece of California sun, no matter where you lived in America, which effectively extended the appeal of what could otherwise have been a localised market. Those unlucky enough to be elsewhere felt it too. As Gene Sculatti observed,

> So complete was the idealized California portrait as sung by the Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, Hondells, etc., everybody wanted in. Surf bands sprang up in Colorado (the Astronauts), Minnesota (the Trashmen of 'Surfing Bird' fame) and Michegan [sic] (the Rivieras with 'California Sun'). In California, the influx of teenagers eager to join the in-crowd overcrowded the public beaches and kicked sand over the once noble surfer image.[16]

In a letter to the editors of *Teen* magazine in October, 1964, Bob Oxley wrote:

> Us Michigan surfing bugs think California is tops, and the kids are too, but how do we get out there to enjoy it? Hang onto your boards you California surfers! Dearborn, Michigan has a Surf Club!
>
> We watch as many surfing pictures as possible and have beach parties, a dance band and two Woody's [sic], but WHERE'S THE SURF? We have the Surfin' disease and just have to get out to California and see all the great kids that live out there at those swingin' beaches.
>
> We are looking for jobs, anything in Southern California. We want a chance to live among all those surfin' guys and gals. California, here we come!!!!
>
> Bob Oxley
> 23050 Sheridan
> W. Dearborn, Mich[17]

Furthermore, in 1965, the Mamas and the Papas also famously lamented:

> I'd be safe and warm
> If I was in LA

[16] Gene Sculatti, 'Surfin' USA,' in *Let It Rock*, August, 1973, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=1940 (accessed 29 February, 2008).
[17] 'How Do We Get There?' *Teen*, October, 1964, p. 14.

California dreamin'
On such a winter's day.[18]

Although not explicitly stated in the song, there is an implied dichotomy between a cold, gloomy east coast and a sunny, joyous west coast in "California Dreamin."

And right in the middle of the summer that Capitol Records had declared would be so HOT with surf music, the Shangri-Las' "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" was released, early in August, 1964.[19] It was written by George 'Shadow' Morton, who maintains that he hastily penned "Remember" on the side of the road on the way to the recording studio when he realised that he did not have a song for the singing group that he had inveigled into recording with him. Given that the original version was over seven minutes in length, this does strain credulity somewhat.[20]

"Remember" is, on the most basic level, a teenage girl's lament for her lost lover – he has left, and, instead of returning, has sent a letter ending their relationship. The sea plays a number of roles simultaneously in 'Remember,' both literal and metaphoric. This is an integral component of the heightened sense of drama and emotion created in the song, which is established immediately. The song begins with a descending third, leading into a thundering D minor chord. This is a cadential figure which would normally be used to close, not open, a song. Musically, it's the end, before the song has even begun, which is an ominous portent of what lies ahead.[21] At this point, the vocals begin, delivered with piercing emotional intensity by Mary Weiss:

Seems like the other day
My baby went away
He went away

[18] The Mamas and the Papas, "California Dreamin" b/w "Somebody Groovy" DUNHILL 4020, 1965.
[19] The Shangri-Las, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" (Morton) b/w "It's Easier to Cry" (Steinberg/Jackson/De Angelis) RED BIRD 08, 1964.
[20] 'The "Shadow" Reappears - A Rare Talk With Producer George "Shadow" Morton,' *Goldmine*, Vol. 17, No. 14: Issue 286, 12 July, 1991, reproduced at http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 7 October, 2010).
[21] I thank Dr. Laurie Stras for pointing this out in her examiner's report.

> ‘cross the sea...[22]

Here the ocean is established as the separator / remover of the protagonist’s absent lover - he has travelled somewhere unspecified, but it involves an ocean, which now keeps the two lovers apart. But what began as a physical separation has deepened into an emotional and psychological one:

> It's been two years or so
> Since I saw my baby go
> And then this letter came for me
> It said that we were through
> He found somebody new
> Oh! Let me think...let me think...
> What can I do?[23]

He is not coming back; the ocean between them is now eternal, as is the ocean itself. This is reinforced by the backing vocals throughout this verse, which consist of even measures of ooooh cascading into aaaaahhh,[24] which mimic the rhythmic push and pull of the tide, waves receding, crashing, receding, crashing, a ‘movement’ which is also sexual. The motion of the ocean is inevitable, unstoppable, and controlled by the moon, long associated in literary symbolism with altered states, emotional instability, and in extreme cases, lunacy.

As the reality of her situation hits the protagonist, she and the song come to an abrupt halt. ‘Oh no,’ she half-sings, half-speaks, in distracted disbelief: ‘Oh no. Oh no no no no no.’ The instrumentation has dropped away, except to punctuate her ‘nos’ – sharp dabs of piano and double bass. These few bars act as a prelude to the chorus, which, in contrast to the standard pop song structure of understated verses and climactic choruses, is a study in emptiness. There are no backing vocals – the singer’s words echo in space accompanied by handclaps, finger-snaps, and accentuating stabs of bass and piano. But the most distinctive aspect of the chorus is the use of sound effects – the sound of seagulls that squeal and caw overhead. In this musical context of utter desolation,

[22] The Shangri-Las, “Remember (Walkin’ in the Sand)” (Morton).
[23] The Shangri-Las, “Remember (Walkin’ in the Sand)” (Morton).
[24] There are six ooohs and six aaaahs, a total of twelve.

located on the beach, the protagonist escapes the emotional turbulence of her new reality by hurling herself back in time to the early stages of her romance:

> (Remember) Walking in the sand
> (Remember) Walking hand in hand
> (Remember) The night was so exciting
> (Remember) His smile was so inviting
> (Remember) Then he touched my cheek
> (Remember) With his finger tips
> (Remember) Softly, softly we'd meet with our lips...[25]

The slowed-down, dramatic intensity of this chorus is heightened by its incantational, repetitive nature. The rhythmic exhortation to 'Remember!' at the beginning of every line has a devotional quality reminiscent of ancient Catholic religious practices like the use of rosary beads, or the meditative contemplation of key moments in the Christian story like the Stations of the Cross. The original impetus for these devotional practices was as aids to the memory, and they also demanded a high degree of emotional involvement.[26] Given that the Shangri-Las were from Catholic families and attended Catholic schools in suburban Queens, New York, and George 'Shadow' Morton had an Irish Catholic background and had attended St. Thomas Aquinas School in Brooklyn, this may not be drawing too long a bow.[27] Furthermore, this modal quality is emphasised by the fact that there is no chord change for the entire chorus, which stays on the D minor. The 'Walkin' in the sand' melodic phrase is repeated, six times in succession, creating a sense of tension and suspense.[28]

This chorus stands in complete contrast to the heavy, thick and rhythmically ponderous verses. The emptiness of the chorus, its

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[25] The Shangri-Las, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" (Morton).

[26] For an overview of emotional religiosity in the late Middle Ages, see Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe 1300-1500*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994; for rosaries specifically, see MacKinney, 'Rosaries, Paternosters and Devotion to the Virgin in the Households of John Baret of Bury St. Edmunds,' *Parergon* 24:2 (2007), pp. 93-114.

[27] 'That was my school, St. Thomas Aquinas. I got more education in the streets than I did from the sisters.' See 'The "Shadow" Reappears,' http://www.limusichalloffame.org/lirock/shadow01.html (accessed 14 June, 2007).

[28] The Chantels, who were signed to George Goldner's Gone label in the late 1950s, met while at St. Anthony of Padua School in the Bronx. Lead singer Arlene Smith, who wrote much of their material, was heavily influenced by Gregorian chant. The Shangri-Las would record a version of the Chantels' "Maybe," soon after the chart success of "Remember." See Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music And Identity In The 1960s*, New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 14-17.

incantational vocals, harmonic minimalism, and sounds of seagulls (which *suggest* fluttering whether or not we actually hear their wings) evokes an altered mind-state. The protagonist is in shock: distracted, floating, unmoored, as she relives an encounter firmly located, by the sand and the seagulls, at the beach. Instead of the sunlit locale of teenage surfing and fun, however, this took place *at night* – mysterious, "so exciting" - fraught with the danger of sexual frisson. That danger is realised as the beach is transformed from a sunny carefree teenage hangout into a dark place of desolation, empty but for the cries of seagulls, echoing in space overhead. 'Space' is a crucial concept here. The instrumentation is minimal – just piano, double bass and drums, but the entire song is drenched in echo and reverb. This is particularly noticeable on the snare drum in the verse, the stabs of piano and bass in the pre-chorus, and the hand-claps in the chorus. It is equally evident on the vocals, especially in the last line of the second verse, 'What will I do with it now,' in which the 'now' lingers on palpably in space after the singing has stopped. As noted earlier, reverb was an effect at this time firmly associated with the amplified guitars of surf music. So, having turned the dominant conception of the beach in 1964 on its head, George 'Shadow' Morton has reinforced this by doing the same thing with reverb. In his hands it evokes, not fun in the sun, but emptiness, desolation, and darkness.

All this evokes a much older set of literary and metaphoric associations with the beach, ocean and sea. The sea has had manifold and ever-changing metaphoric significance in the Western artistic tradition, but one of the most common, and relevant for this discussion, is the idea of the commotion of the sea mirroring internal emotional turbulence, an idea still present in current usage of the use of the term 'at sea' to describe confusion or bewilderment.[29] This idea occurred commonly in Greek myth, drama, and poetry, as sea, fishing, shipping and sailing imagery do generally – not surprising given that the sea was central to everyday life on the Greek islands – and this is the likely origin of this idea in Western

[29] See also the discussion of weather and storms in Chapter Five.

culture.[30] In *The Iliad*, Homer described Achilles, mourning the death of his dear friend and fighting companion Petroclus, and wracked with insomnia:

> With memory his eyes grew wet. He lay
> on his right side, then on his back, and then
> face downward – but at last, he rose, to wander
> distractedly along the line of the surf.
> This for eleven nights.[31]

At *night*, and eleven of them in a row, Achilles was drawn by his anguish to the beach. In 409 BC, Sophocles dramatised the tragic tale of Philoctetes, bitten on the foot by a snake on his way to fight in the Trojan War, and subsequently abandoned on the island of Lemnos with a festering and excruciatingly painful wound. The chorus sang:

> Such suffering my eyes have never seen...
> I have never beheld or heard of another
> Whose fate was harder than this man's...
> I cannot understand how he
> Ever was able to live all alone
> And hear the waves around him,
> Enduring a life so full of tears.[32]

The sound of the waves echoed and emphasised his loneliness, and mirrored his watery tears.

More particularly, the sea has been understood as symbolic of passion, and love itself. In the mythic tale of Tristan and Isolde or Isolt, dating from around the 12th century, the ocean was an omnipresent force which acted as a vehicle for voyages of separation and reunion.[33] In a twentieth-century retelling of the Tristan and Isolde legend, by Edward Arlington Robinson in his 1927 epic poem, *Tristram*, a clear parallel with "Remember" is evident:

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[30] William Chase Greene, 'The Sea in the Greek Poets,' *North American Review* 199:3 (1914), pp. 427-443.
[31] Homer, *The Iliad*, ed. & trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, bk. 24, ll. 10-14; see also Greene, p. 436.
[32] Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, trans. Robert Torrance, ll. 676, 681-2, 687-90, in Oscar Mandel, *Philoctetes and the Fall of Troy: Plays, Documents, Iconography, Interpretations: Including Versions by Sophocles, Andre Gide, Oscar Mandel, and Heiner Muller*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981, pp. 72-3; see also Greene, pp. 436-7.
[33] Margaret S. McCroskery, 'Tristan and the Dionysian Sea: Passion and the Iterative Sea Motif in the Legends of Tristan and Isolde,' *Midwest Quarterly* 13:4 (1972), pp. 409-10.

Isolt of the white hands, in Brittany,
Could see no longer northward anywhere
A picture more alive or less familiar
Than a blank ocean and the same white birds
Flying, and always flying, and still flying,
Yet never bringing any news of him
That she remembered, who had sailed away
The spring before -- saying he would come back,
Although not saying when.[34]

Standing on the beach and staring at the ocean, Isolt waited and waited, as the seagulls continued to fly, echoing her seemingly endless desolation.

In Richard Wagner's version of the tale, the opera *Tristan und Isolde*, which premiered in 1865, the drama is bookended by voyages, and repeatedly the lovers' affinity for and with the sea is emphasised. Land is associated with stability, calm, and 'sterile half-life,' the sea with love and passion.[35] On the first voyage, Tristan delivered Isolde to his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall - Isolde was to be Mark's bride – and it was on this voyage that Tristan and Isolde drank the love potion that destined them to be tragic lovers. In the lengthy extended love scene that is Act Two, the doomed lovers are repeatedly aligned with the night, as Tristan sings:

Oh, now we are night
consecrated!
Malevolent day,
disposed to envy,
though it part us through fraud
can trick us no more by lies!...

Mid the day's idle fancies
he has only one longing,
a longing for
the holy night,
where forever,

[34] Edwin Arlington Robinson, *Tristram*, New York: Macmillan, 1927, p. 9. In *Tristram* there are two Isolts – the Isolt referred to in this section is not Irish Isolt, but Isolt of the white hands (daughter of Hoel of Brittany) who is also in love with Tristan. The Wagnerian version, to be discussed shortly, features only one Isolde.
[35] McCroskery, p. 416.

solely true,
love and rapture await![36]

In the final act, Tristan lies, wounded and dying in his castle, separated by sea from Isolde and waiting for the ship that is bringing her. Isolde arrived in time for him to die in her arms, and in the final part of the *Liebestod* (literally, love-death) she sang,

In the billowy surge,
in the ocean of sound,
in the World's Spirit's
infinite All,
to drown now,
descending,
void of thought –
highest bliss![37]

Here, the ocean and drowning are used metaphorically to convey the idea of love in death, and transfiguration. The lovers, unable to exist in the earthly realm, will be united for eternity in death.[38] The ocean and its endless cycles, are, likewise, eternal. Another of the sea's inherent attributes that makes it such a powerful metaphoric symbol is its dual nature as regenerative and live giving, as well as destructive and deadly. Similarly, love and passion hold great promise, but are fraught with danger, uncertainty and the potential for physical and emotional violence.[39]

I am not suggesting that George 'Shadow' Morton modelled "Remember" on the *liebestod*, but I am contending that these established conceptions of the sea in Western culture contribute to making the ocean such a powerful metaphor, and that these overtones permeate "Remember." These resonances have significant implications for another song by the Shangri-Las that made reference to the beach. "Past, Present and

[36] Richard Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, trans. Stewart Robb, New York: Schirmer, 1965, p. 17.
[37] Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, p. 31.
[38] As would the lovers in a later song by the Shangri-Las, "Give Us Your Blessings" (Barry/Greenwich) b/w "Heaven Only Knows" (Barry/Greenwich) RED BIRD 030, May, 1965; see discussion in Chapter Five.
[39] McCroskery, pp. 418-19.

Future," was released in June, 1966.[40] It was the Shangri-Las' last single for the Red Bird label, which would shortly collapse; and their last (albeit modest) commercial success, reaching number 59 on the national singles chart.[41] Its authorship is credited to George 'Shadow' Morton, Jerry Leiber, and Artie Butler.[42] Conspicuously absent from this list of songwriting credits is Ludwig van Beethoven.

Like "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)," "Past, Present and Future" is an intense teenage lament, suffused with heartbreak and sadness. In this case, the listener is not given nearly as much detail about the circumstances of the protagonist's pain; there are no letters from across the sea, but she has again had her heart broken, and is reeling from the blow. The musical accompaniment to the lyrics is based on the famous first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 in C# Minor (Opus 27, No. 2), the 'Moonlight' sonata. There is a strong tradition in popular music of borrowing and reworking themes from works in the classical music canon. Examples include "A Lover's Concerto" by the Toys (1965), which is based on *Minuet in G*, by J.S. Bach,[43] and Serge Gainsbourg's homage to Brigitte Bardot, "Initials B.B." (1968), which is based on a motif from the first movement of Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9 (New World)*.[44] In choosing a recognisable piece of classical music upon which to base a song for the Shangri-Las, George 'Shadow' Morton was not doing anything particularly unusual or ground-breaking.[45] However, by mid-1966, the Shangri-Las were well-established as purveyors of intensely emotional, highly dramatic pop music, and the opening movement of

[40] "Past, Present and Future" (Morton/Leiber/Butler) b/w "Paradise" (Nilsson/Garfield/Botkin Jr/Spector), RED BIRD 10-068, June, 1966. The second pressing of this single featured a different B-side, "Love You More than Yesterday" (Michaels/Gorman).
[41] John J. Grecco, *Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las,* http://www.redbirdent.com/slas3.htm (accessed 13 February, 2009).
[42] Leiber and Stoller were partners in the Red Bird Record label with George Goldner (see Chapter Two). Artie Butler is an arranger who was responsible for the orchestral arrangements on many of the Shangri-Las' recordings.
[43] "A Lover's Concerto" (Linzer/Randell) b/w "This Night" (Linzer/Randell), DYNOVOICE 209, 1965. This live performance features several shots of a bust of Bach, presumably to acknowledge the actual composer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=im_O06IN9i0 (accessed 13 February, 2009).
[44] Serge Gainsbourg, "Initials B.B." (Gainsbourg), 1968. Audio and television performance: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NuZklVrHspM (accessed 11 October, 2010).
[45] See 'Classical Influences in Popular Music,' http://www.solopassion.com/node/971 (accessed 13/3/2009) for more examples.

Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata was spectacularly appropriate raw material for this purpose.

Beethoven's C# Minor 'Moonlight' Sonata was written in 1801 and published in 1802.[46] It did not acquire its 'Moonlight' nickname until after Beethoven's death (1827), when poet, novelist and music critic Heinrich Rellstab likened the sonata's first movement to a boat gliding on the waters of a lake in moonlight.[47] The sonata was popular and famous during Beethoven's lifetime, to an extent that Beethoven himself found bewildering; he remarked to his pupil, later friend and fellow composer, Carl Czerny that

> Everybody is always talking about the C-sharp minor Sonata! Surely I have written better things.[48]

The work is a piece for solo piano consisting of three movements, identified by their playing instruction: the first, *Adagio sostenuto* (slow and sustained), is the movement upon which "Past, Present and Future" is based. It is followed by the *Allegretto* (rather fast), which composer and virtuoso pianist Franz Liszt (1811-1886) once described as a 'flower between two abysses.'[49] The final movement is the *Presto Agitato* (very fast, restlessly and with agitation).[50] The 'Monnlight' is one of thirty-two sonatas for solo piano composed by Beethoven over the course of his life.

The 'Moonlight' Sonata broke with traditional sonata form in several revolutionary ways. These have a direct relationship to the degree of emotional intensity created by the 'Moonlight,' but also have implications for the use of this sonata in 'Past, Present and Future.' Firstly, the "Moonlight" begins with a slow, quiet, and atmospheric movement, which was virtually unheard of; usually this would take place in the second

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[46] Piano Sonata No. 14. For the sake of ease, I will refer to it as the 'Moonlight' Sonata.
[47] Ernest Kramer, 'Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata Glows Brightly After 200 Years,' *Clavier* 41:4 (April, 2002), p. 20; for biographical details and Rellstab's relationship with Beethoven, see Peter Clive, *Beethoven and His World: A Biographical Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 283-4.
[48] From Czerny's memoranda to Otto Jahn, reproduced by Alexander Wheelock Thayer in *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Elliot Forbes, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964, v.1, p. 297.
[49] Quoted in Ludwig Van Beethoven, Anton Kuerti, and Heinrich Schenker, *Five Great Piano Sonatas*, Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1999, p. ix.
[50] The *Adagio sostenuto* is the movement upon which "Past, Present and Future" is based, and so will be the main focus of this discussion.

movement of *four*, not three. Several commentators have observed that it was as though Beethoven simply dispensed with a first (normally a fast, uptempo '*Allegro'*) movement, and leapt straight into the second movement, the *Adagio*; in doing so, this 'created a sonata opening unique in his output.'[51] In addition, this sonata was designated by Beethoven as '*Sonata quasi una fantasia*', that is, in the style of a 'fantasia,' which is 'a work with an unpredictable number of sections, all played without pause,' segueing into one another. To emphasise this, the end of the "Moonlight" *Adagio* is marked *attacca* - a musical directive for the performer to begin the next movement or section of a composition immediately, without pause. The effect of this was to emphasise the unity of the entire composition, rather than presenting the individual sections as freestanding autonomous movements.[52]

These modifications to traditional sonata form need to be seen in the context of nineteenth-century Romanticism, with its elevation of human emotion over rationality and reason.[53] A crucial component of this was the breakdown of traditional forms – in art, music, literature, poetry - that were a product of rational Enlightenment philosophical ideologies, in order to allow for a more unfettered expression of emotional sensibilities.[54] Beethoven was at the forefront of these developments, particularly with the piano sonatas; of those composed from 1799 through 1801 (which include the 'Moonlight'), Beethoven scholar Lewis Lockwood noted that

> we find in these sonatas a clear sense of innovation and expansion of the genre of the piano sonata, of reshaping it in the service of a stronger and more personal expressivity. Part of this results from new ways of approaching the form of the work, its number and order of movements, and the balance of function between the movements in the formation of the whole.[55]

[51] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano sonata op. 27/2: Sonata quasi una Fantasia* (score), with 'Preface' by Peter Hauschild and 'Notes on Interpretation' by Boris Bloch, trans. Lionel Salter, Vienna: Wiener Urtext Edition, 1994, p. 6; Lewis Lockwood, 'Re-shaping the Genre: Beethoven's Piano Sonatas from Op. 22 to Op. 28 (1799-1801),' *Israel Studies in Musicology* 6 (1996), p. 11.
[52] Lockwood, p. 11.
[53] For an overview of Romanticism and its expression in art, poetry and music, see Marvin Perry, *An Intellectual History of Modern Europe*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993, pp. 173-185.
[54] Perry, p. 179.
[55] Lockwood, pp. 2-3, 14-15.

Beethoven's innovations further modified a form that was already understood to possess uniquely expressive capabilities. The specific qualities and function of the sonata were explicated in 1774 in an influential article by composer and music critic Johann Abraham Peter Schulze.[56] In it he argued that

> There is no form of instrumental music that is more capable of depicting wordless sentiments than the sonata. The symphony and overture have a somewhat more fixed character, while the form of a concerto seems suited more for providing a skilled performer the opportunity to be heard accompanied by many instruments than for the depiction of passions...In a sonata, the composer might want to express through the music *a monologue* marked by sadness, misery, pain, or of tenderness, pleasure and joy; using a more animated kind of music, he might want to depict a passionate conversation between similar or complementary characters; or he might wish to depict emotions that are impassioned, stormy or contrasting, or ones that are light, delicate, flowing and delightful.[57] (italics mine)

This idea is also consistent with the Romantic notion of blurring the boundaries between different artistic disciplines - of merging painting, poetry, music – so that poetry sang, and music painted pictures.[58] More specifically, Kenneth Drake related that

> (Carl) Czerny describes the opening movement of Op. 27, No. 2 as being 'extremely poetic' and easy to grasp – 'a night scene, in which a plaintive ghostly voice sounds from far off in the distance.'[59]

Czerny was a close and trusted friend of Beethoven, and had insights into his compositional methodology that should be taken seriously. Even though Beethoven himself resisted such literal interpretations, Czerny's comments are nevertheless indicative of the manner in which the 'Moonlight' Sonata was received, understood and interpreted by some of

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[56] J.A.P. Schulze's 'Sonate' was published in J.G. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste 2*, Leipzig: M.G. Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1774, pp. 688-89, which Glenn Stanley has described as 'an influential encyclopaedia of the arts.' See Glenn Stanley, 'Genre Aesthetics and Function: Beethoven's Piano Sonatas in Their Cultural Context,' *Beethoven Forum* 6:1 (1998), p. 3.
[57] *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment: Selected Writings of Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich Christoph Koch*, ed. Nancy Kovaleff Baker and Thomas Christensen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 103-105, quoted in Stanley, p. 4.
[58] See Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era*, London: J.M. Dent, 1947, pp. 20-25.
[59] Kenneth Drake, *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience*, Bloomingdale & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 1.

Beethoven's contemporaries.[60] Furthermore, Czerny's reading of the opening movement as suggesting a 'plaintive ghostly voice' has a significance that will become apparent shortly.

During Beethoven's lifetime, piano sonatas were considered, as composer and musical theorist Adolf Marx (1795-1866) put it, 'too heartfelt and internal, too dependent on the intellectual and emotional concentration [of the virtuoso] and the [listener's] undisturbed immersion in their ideal nature' to be performed outside the privacy of a room or salon.[61] Public concert performances were rare, and although gradually adopted into concert halls, this conception of the piano sonata persisted well into the 1850s, and resistance to their inclusion in concert programs was noted as late as the 1870s.[62] Music historian Glenn Stanley commented further that

> The identification of a sonata with a monologue or a dialogue, poetic genres that readily map onto solo or duo sonatas, suggests a personal and subjective intimacy, utterances *in the first person* directly expressive of the speaker's own feelings.[63]

This is significant for this discussion for several reasons. The Shangri-Las' "Past, Present and Future" employed a piece of music that, when composed in 1801, utilised a form (the sonata) that was understood to be personal, intimate, and uniquely capable of conveying emotion – a musical monologue. The song begins with unaccompanied minor arpeggios played on a piano – the first bar of the 'Moonlight' sonata, which is then repeated when the vocal begins, with all group members speaking the word 'Past.' This introduces the first section of the song, which is a *monologue* delivered over a rearranged and compressed amalgam of the first fifteen bars of the sonata. Though not a note-for-note rendition of the score, it is nevertheless instantly recognisable as an arrangement of the 'Moonlight' sonata.

In "Past, Present and Future," the lyrics are delivered by lead singer Mary Weiss in a direct, *spoken*, personal tone of communication - defeated,

[60] However, see Max Unger and Willis Wager, 'From Beethoven's Workshop,' *The Musical Quarterly* 24:3 (July, 1938), pp. 328-9.
[61] Stanley, pp. 2-3; Marx, quoted in Stanley, p. 27.
[62] Stanley, p. 27.
[63] Stanley, p. 4 (italics mine).

world-weary and resigned - and the *entire* song is spoken; not a single lyric is sung.[64] This makes the song unique in the Shangri-Las oeuvre, and is also significant structurally, because the song has no verse/chorus configuration, because a verse/chorus structure is unsuited to a monologue. Instead, it has three 'verse' sections – 'Past', 'Present,' and 'Future' – that, *attacca*, segue into one another. (The 'Present' and 'Future' sections are separated by a waltz-like middle eight – this will be discussed in more detail shortly). This is where the use of Beethoven's sonata takes on an even greater significance, because structurally, as we have seen, the sonata was understood to be a *musical* monologue, so pairing it with a literal monologue is conceptually logical and has a sound historical underpinning.

So much so, in fact, that in 1816, someone else had the same idea. The immediate and immense popularity of the 'Moonlight' sonata resulted in a number of attempts to transcribe it into different media. These included an orchestral arrangement of the first (*Adagio sostenuto*) movement, and, most significantly for this discussion, an attempt to set this movement to words. In 1816, Dr. Georg Christoph Grosheim, composer, teacher, viola player and author,[65] explained how this came about:

> 'I had set [author and poet Johann Gottfried] Seume's poem "At the Grave of a Friend" to music. He was pleased with it and sent me his "Praying Girl." Now...the theme of this poem immediately determines the character that its musical accompaniment should assume...in view of the length of the poem, its necessarily slow movement, and its punctuating pauses and cesuras. Meanwhile I sought indefatigably among Haydn's, Mozart's, and Beethoven's instrumental works for a composition that I might fit to this poem, one of the most touching pictures of filial love I know. And how great was my joy when I found in the fantasia in C-sharp minor of the last-named composer a perfect composition for Seume's "Praying Girl." The praying girl kneels at the high altar; consequently the scene is a subject for churchly music. The harmonious notes, moving in slow figures, beginning with the composition itself, form a four-voiced Kyrie, with an accompaniment of

[64] Richie Unterberger has also noted this; see his Allmusic.com entry for 'Past, Present and Future,' http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=33:jxftxxt5ldte (accessed 21 March, 2009).
[65] Clive, p. 141.

> triplets. The notes that come in at various pauses, beginning towards the end of the fifth measure and later expanded from the upper tones of the harmony, form the melody of Seume's poem...the first words of the poem ('On the steps of the high altar, Lina kneels in prayer') are spoken out masterfully up to the ninth measure...Beethoven probably did not foresee this.... I should be delighted if he were to honor it with his attention, being himself informed of the matter. Perhaps then we shall receive the work from his own hand.[66]

The work never came to fruition, for reasons that remain unclear, despite several further appeals to Beethoven by Grosheim.[67] Nevertheless, it is significant that as early as 1816 the particular qualities of this work suggested itself as appropriate for use in conjunction with a poem – fundamentally, a song. Furthermore, the subject matter of the poem, 'Die Beterin' (The Praying Girl) was deeply intense and emotional; a young woman praying at an altar in a church, for her dying father:

> On the stairs of the great altar kneels
> Lina praying, her visage aglow,
> Carried by her anguished soul,
> To the holiest of feet.
>
> Her hands, wrung hot, tremble,
> Her anxious, wet gaze wavers,
> Beseeching the saviour's crown of thorns,
> For mercy at the foot of the Father's throne:
>
> Mercy for her father, for his pain,
> For her kind, sorrowful heart
> In which life's beautiful years of bloom
> Bitterly gnaw away the seeds of any joy.
>
> Salvation for the father of her virtue
> For the only guide of her youth,
> For him alone she lives her life
> Over which the breath of death hovers.

[66] Translated and reproduced by Unger and Wager, pp. 333-4.
[67] *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Forbes, v.1, p. 297; Kramer, p. 20; Myron Schwager, 'Some Observations on Beethoven as an Arranger,' *The Musical Quarterly* 60:1 (1974), pp. 80-93.

Her sighs from deep within her blow
Her pleas burning with devotion
Over to the incense; cherubim
Stand ready to attend the imploring maiden.

Convey, o angels, her angel's tears
Pray to appease the father!
None have wept more piteously to the crown of thorns
Not even Mary for her dead son.

See, O friend, in the visions of transfiguration
There radiates a quiet, blessed joy;
Lina wipes the tears from her cheeks,
And leaves full of sweet hope.

A tear wets my eyelids, too.
O Father, restore her father to her again.
I would approach death gladly
If she could pray so fervently for me.[68]

The emotional and anguished language employed the imagery of fevered passion that became a staple of later Romantic poetry, like 'Goblin Market' by Christina Rossetti, for example. However, the fervent emotional engagement with the Passion of Christ (the crown of thorns) and the evocation of the *pieta* (Mary nursing the dead Christ and weeping over his body) locate "Die Beterin" within a long-standing tradition of Catholic devotional literature.[69] There is very little action or movement in the poem; rather, it is a depiction of feeling and an emotional state, of a young woman's desperate pain and anguish, intense and fervent. Although the subject matter is very different, the poem focuses on the emotional state of an anguished young woman; and love, in this case, for her dying father.

[68] Johann Gottfried Seume, 'Die Beterin' in *Sämmtliche Werke*, Leipzig: Johann Friedric Hartknoch,1835, pp. 648-9. My sincere and grateful thanks to Dr. Leith Passmore for translating 'Die Beterin' into English for me.
[69] This stretches back to c.1300 AD; for an overview, see van Os, and Lisa MacKinney, *Recovering the Late Medieval Devotional World of Margery Kempe and her* Book, unpublished MA thesis, Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2001, Chapters Two and Three.

All this locates the emotional intensity and heartbreak experienced and conveyed by the protagonist of “Past, Present and Future” in the context of nineteenth-century Romanticism.[70] “Past, Present and Future” is highly emotional and intimate. The protagonist begins by nostalgically evoking an ideal, idyllic past, with images of childhood and innocent play:

> The past...well now let me tell you about the past
> The past is filled with silent joys and broken toys,
> laughing girls and teasing boys...[71]

Lurking in the background, however, are hints of the darkness to come, projected in hindsight; the joys are silent, toys broken. Into this world has intruded the event that has caused the pain and heartbreak that will shortly be evoked in her shattered present:

> Was I ever in love? I called it love...

Unmoored, on shaky ground, she is no longer sure about the reality of this love. Was she taken for a ride, duped? Was it real:

> I mean, it felt like love,
> There were moments when,
> well, there were moments when...

She trails off, and lands in the brutal present. Engaging in an imaginary dialogue with what must be assumed a boy, she asks herself questions that he could be expected to ask, and answers them:

> Go out with you? Why not.
> Do I like to dance? Of Course.
> Take a walk along the beach tonight? I'd love to.[72]

Would you like to go out, to dance, and walk along the beach – these are staples of mid-1960s teen dating activity that would generally be understood to send a teenage girl in 1966 into paroxysms of glee. But instead of excitement, the protagonist is capable only of listless resignation; just as the young woman who is the subject of *Die Beterin* (the Praying Girl) has her bloom of youth gnawed away by anguish. Numb, devastated, it’s easier just to agree. It is all hopeless and pointless anyway, so indeed, why not go out with you? But ominously, she continues

[70] Perry, pp. 173-185.
[71] The Shangri-Las, “Past, Present and Future” (Morton/Leiber/Butler).
[72] The Shangri-Las, “Past, Present and Future” (Morton/Leiber/Butler).

> But don't try to touch me, don't try to touch me
> Cos that will never happen again.

After a detached, rhetorical, almost sarcastic 'shall we dance...', the song then launches full tilt into a middle eight that is a whirling, wall-of-sound, almost psychotic waltz. Not the Shing-a-Ling, the Monkey, or the Sophisticated Boom Boom, but a *waltz*, a dance form that reached its zenith of popularity in the nineteenth century, and was inextricably associated with Romanticism. As Ruth Katz explained, the waltz broke down the formality of earlier dance forms (much like Beethoven was breaking down the sonata form):

> The waltz not only made it possible for different kinds of individuals to come together on an egalitarian basis, it also made possible a kind of 'escape' from reality through the thrilling dizziness of whirling one's way in a private world of sensuality. The 'letting go' function of a waltz seems relevant to a world without clear standards, in which the individual stood alone having to find his own way.[73]

As indeed the protagonist of "Past, Present and Future" must also. But structurally, in this song, the waltz also acts as a breaking pause, an interlude between the 'Present' and the 'Future.' There are hints that this may be reflected psychologically for the protagonist – that despite the devastation of the past and her bleak view of 'the Future', the waltz may perhaps perform a liminal function and allow her break with the past, and move forward:

> Tomorrow? well tomorrow's a long way off
> Maybe someday I'll have somebody's hand
> Maybe somewhere someone will understand...
>
> But at the moment it doesn't look good
> At the moment it will never happen again
>
> I don't think it will ever happen again.

[73] Ruth Katz, 'The Egalitarian Waltz,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15:3 (1973), p. 375; see also pp. 373-5.

"Past, Present and Future" ends bleakly with an evocation of an idealised past, and a shattered future, but our protagonist has moved from 'that will never' to '*I don't think* it will ever' happen again.[74]

In a 1966 interview with Richard Goldstein in the *Village Voice*, just after the release of "Past, Present and Future," one of the Shangri-Las, Mary Ann Ganser, said of this song:

> 'They say our stuff is corny, well a lot of people eat corn. Besides, if that were true, then we wouldn't sell. Which we do. Our lines are realistic and frank. Take our latest single. The girl who's talking in it has had one tragic affair, and is obviously hung up on it. Well, we never say she's hung up because she let herself go. We don't put her down for it.' [75]

In other words, as far as the group members were concerned, the Shangri-Las spoke to their teenage audience with sincerity and directness, and took the pain of their heartbreak seriously. The author of the article, Richard Goldstein, commented further that

> Their heroines are the victims of high tragedy and negligent parents, intense loyalty and exotic romance. The teens in these songs have never heard of the "cool" generation; they are actively, passionately, hopelessly involved. Crying is a sign of tragic involvement in Shangri-La ballads; it never implies cowardice or effeminacy.[76]

Forty years later, reflecting on her performance in "Past, Present and Future," Mary Weiss said,

> I had no conception of what love was at the time. But I really, I had to have almost every light in the studio out on that one, and I was crying my brains out...if you have a lot of issues in your life, and you've converted it into music, everything you're feeling, that's your release, that's where you put it, and that's what I did. It was a very helpful release, I think much like anybody that paints, or does anything like that.[77]

This calls to mind the notion of method acting, but it also recalls the Romantic idea of total immersion in art. Beethoven's close associate Carl Czerny had an understanding of a "correct performance" of a Beethoven

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[74] Warwick, p. 194.
[75] Richard Goldstein, 'Pop Eye: The Soul Sound From Sheepshead Bay,' *Village Voice*, 23 June, 1966, p. 30.
[76] Goldstein, p. 8.
[77] Suzi Quatro, 'Suzi Quatro's Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: Interview with Mary Weiss,' BBC Radio 2, broadcast 24 October, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/musicclub/doc_heroes_rnr.shtml (accessed 25/5/08).

work as being characterised by 'an *attitude* toward the music.' As Beethoven scholar Kenneth Drake explained,

> Czerny was stating, as the one, all-encompassing rule of performance practice for the playing of Beethoven, total personal involvement...becoming possessed by the music, cerebrally, muscularly, and subjectively.[78]

I am not arguing that Mary Weiss's performance in "Past, Present and Future" constituted one that Czerny would recognise as 'the playing of Beethoven.' However, I *am* suggesting that dimming the lights in the studio and crying her brains out was a fair way along the road to 'total personal involvement' and 'becoming possessed by the music.' As George 'Shadow' Morton commented,

> Here she was, this teenage girl with no experience in show-biz, and I made her act out all these crazy parts…Nobody else was doing anything like "Past Present and Future" and "I Can Never Go Home Anymore"…I musta been out of my skull…but no matter what I asked her to do, she delivered, each and every time.[79]

Mary Weiss was accessing personal anguish in order to achieve emotional conviction, and to enable a deep emotional engagement with the material she was performing. By keeping the event(s) that were the source of the pain oblique rather than explicit, any heartbroken teenager could relate to and share in the protagonist's grief.

Given the pain, heartbreak and emotional desolation that forms the subject matter of "Past, Present and Future", the use of the 'Moonlight' Sonata takes on an even greater significance. While composing this sonata, Beethoven was in love with a beautiful young woman. He was also suffering increasingly from hearing problems – tinnitus and worsening deafness. For a musician and composer, especially of Beethoven's stature, this represented a tragedy of unspeakable proportions, as it did indeed later become. On October 6, 1802, in a letter to his brothers which has become known as the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, Beethoven wrote at length about the deterioration of his hearing:

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[78] Drake, p. 3.
[79] As reported by Deena Canalle, *Bomp List Archives*, http://bomplist.xnet2.com/0105/msg00205.html (accessed 19 June, 2008).

> But what a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and *I heard nothing*, or someone heard a *shepherd singing* and again I heard nothing. Such incidents drove me almost to despair, a little more of that and I would have ended my life – it was only *my art* that held me back. Ah, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was within me. So I endured this wretched existence...[80]

Almost a year earlier, Beethoven spoke of both his deafness and his love in a letter to Dr Franz Gerhard Wegeler (a physician and friend since childhood), dated November 16, 1801:

> I am living more pleasantly now, since I mingle with more people. You will scarcely believe how lonely and sad my life has been for the last two years. My bad hearing haunted me everywhere like a ghost and I fled – from mankind. I seemed like a misanthrope, and yet am far from being one. This change has been wrought by a dear fascinating girl who loves me and whom I love. There have been a few blessed moments within the last two years, and it is the first time I feel that – marriage might bring me happiness. Unfortunately she is not of my station – and now – it would be impossible for me to marry. – I must still hustle about most actively. If it were not for my deafness, I should before now have traveled over half the world, and that I must do.[81]

This 'dear fascinating girl' was almost certainly Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, who was seventeen when she met Beethoven in 1800 and became one of his piano students.[82] Beethoven dedicated the 'Moonlight' sonata to Guicciardi, and although the exact nature of their relationship remains unclear, it is generally accepted that Beethoven was for some time in love with Guicciardi, and was certainly in love with her in 1801.[83]

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[80] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Briefwechsel: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg, 7 vols., Munich: Henle, 1996-98, no. 70. For a translation of the full text of the *Heiglnstadt Testament* see *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Forbes, v.1, pp. 304-306; this quotation is from p. 305, italics included in Thayer. For commentary, see Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2003, pp. 111-123.

[81] Letter from Beethoven to Dr Franz Gerhard Wegeler, November 16, 1801, reproduced in *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Forbes, v. 1, p. 286.

[82] Kramer, p. 20; Clive, p. 142.

[83] See *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Forbes, v. 1, pp. 288-92; Eric Blom, *Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas Discussed*, London: J.M. Dent, 1938, pp. 107-8. The danger in making too much of the dedication is that Beethoven seemed to not rate the sonata particularly highly. Also he had originally dedicated another work, the Rondo in G Major, Opus 51, No. 2, to Guicciardi, but withdrew the dedication, reassigned the Rondo to Princess Lichnowsky, and dedicated the 'Moonlight' to Guicciardi instead; see Blom, p. 108.

The dedication of the 'Moonlight' sonata to Giulietta Guicciardi has been the subject of much critical discussion, and it has been suggested that it was inspired by his love for her.[84] It has also fuelled speculation that an unaddressed, passionate love letter and two postscripts, all written but unsent by Beethoven, and only discovered after his death, were intended for her. In the second postscript, he addressed his 'immortal beloved', and the fact that all three missives were not dated with a year resulted in well over a century's worth of critical speculation and discussion as to when they were penned and the identity of the 'immortal beloved.'[85] Part of this, as Eric Blom put it, has been 'sentimental commentators insisting on seeing [the 'Moonlight' sonata] as a musical counterpart to the love letter', and therefore Giulietta Guicciardi as a prime candidate for the 'immortal beloved.'[86] The Beethoven/Guicciardi romance ended tragically, however, when in 1803 Guicciardi married Count Wenzel Robert Gallenberg (a composer of ballet music) and relocated to Italy with him.[87] Beethoven's deepening realisation that the social gulf he referred to in 1801 ('she is not of my station') had little hope of being bridged has been suggested as contributing further to the despair evident in the *Heiligenstadt Testament*.[88] Alexander Wheelock Thayer (1817-1897), author of the first scholarly biography of Beethoven, speculated that

> Beethoven at length decided to offer Countess Julia his hand; that she was not indisposed to accept it, and that one of her parents consented to the match, but the other, probably the father, refused to entrust the happiness of his daughter to a man without rank, fortune or permanent engagement; a man, too, of character and temperament so peculiar, and afflicted with the incipient stages of an infirmity which, if not arrested and cured, must deprive him of all hope of obtaining any high and remunerative official appointment and at length compel him to abandon his career as the great pianoforte

[84] Clive, p. 142.
[85] For text of the letter and two postscripts, see *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Forbes, v.1, pp. 533-4, and for a thorough discussion of the 'large and varied literature concerning this famous letter,' see Appendix F in vol. 2, pp. 1088-1093; and see also Ernest Newman, 'A Beethoven Hoax?', *The Musical Times*, 52: 825 (Nov. 1, 1911), pp. 714-717.
[86] Blom, p. 107. It is now generally accepted that the letter and postscripts were written in 1812, and that Guicciardi was not the intended recipient.
[87] Kramer, p. 20.
[88] Clive, p. 143.

> virtuoso. As the Guicciardis themselves were not wealthy, prudence forbade such a marriage.[89]

Guicciardi's marriage with Gallenberg later broke down, and Guicciardi returned to Vienna in 1822. At some point Guicciardi attempted to renew her acquaintance with Beethoven; of this he reportedly said, 'she visited me weeping, but I scorned her.' [90] In the same conversation, he stated that Guicciardi had loved him more than she ever had her husband.[91]

From the moment of its publication, the 'Moonlight' sonata was inextricably bound up with doomed love and tragedy. It was dedicated by the composer to a teenage 'girl who loves me and whom I love,' a love that was a temporary respite from the anguish, isolation and exclusion from society caused by his worsening deafness. The love could not be, though, because Ludwig was not of the same 'station' as Guicciardi; for her, this was the early nineteenth-century equivalent of dating a guy 'from the wrong side of town,' as the Shangri-Las famously put it in "Leader of the Pack", and Giulietta married accordingly. This whole tragic affair was not merely subject matter for squabbling among a group of long-dead Beethoven obsessives, either; it was the basis of a major film, *Immortal Beloved* (1994), starring Gary Oldman as Beethoven, and Valeria Golino as Giulietta Guicciardi.[92]

All these factors contribute to this work possessing, as Beethoven scholar Lewis Lockwood put it, 'a succession of intense emotional atmospheres unlike any other early Beethoven sonata.'[93] On the subject of 'intense emotional atmospheres,' "Past, Present and Future," like "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand), is steeped in reverb and echo. This creates a sense of cavernous space, which emphasises *sonically* the loneliness, devastation, and heartbreak of the protagonist. Amazingly, the *Adagio*

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[89] *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Forbes, v. 1, p. 292.
[90] *Piano sonata op. 27/2: Sonata quasi una Fantasia* (score), with 'Preface' by Peter Hauschild, p. 6. Thayer and Hauschild both contended that this visit took place in 1822, but this is disputed by Clive, p. 143, and Forbes (editor of *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*), p. 290-1, who argue that it took place in 1803, before the Gallenbergs left for Italy.
[91] Clive, p. 143.
[92] *Immortal Beloved*, d. Bernard Rose, 1994, for more details, see http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110116/ (accessed 28 March, 2009).
[93] Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, p. 135.

Sostenuto movement of the 'Moonlight' Sonata comes with the playing instruction, 'the whole piece should be played very delicately and without dampers.'[94] This has resulted in decades worth of controversy about what Beethoven actually meant. Virtuoso pianist Andras Schiff has recently completed recording all thirty-two of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, and has also conducted master-classes on all of them.[95] Of this sonata, he said:

> "Consider the so-called 'Moonlight Sonata...this is a fantastic sonata. The first movement is playable by amateurs, but they tend to think of 'moonlight' instead of actually reading the score, in which Beethoven asks the player to hold down the pedal for the entire movement. Most players ignore this, saying it is not practical on today's instruments. But they never really give it a try. Beethoven was inventing sounds and sonorities that no one thought of before. Using the pedal -- raising the dampers so that the strings continue to vibrate -- allows sounds that do not traditionally belong together to blend into a cloud. He's going against the textbook."[96]

Beethoven's pedalling techniques raised eyebrows at the time – Czerny noted in the early 1800s that the 'partisans' of his rival, composer and pianist Johann Hummel

> 'accused Beethoven of mistreating the piano, of lacking all cleanness and clarity, of creating nothing but confused noise the way he used the pedal, and finally of writing wilful, unnatural, unmelodic compositions.'[97]

Andras Schiff described Beethoven as 'the first great composer of the pedal' and also argued that 'he wanted a very special sonority, a very special sound,' so 'that the harmonies swim together like in a wash, and the overtones are strengthening each other.'[98] Beethoven may have been attempting to create some form of echo and reverb of his own in the first movement of his 'Moonlight' Sonata.

The use of this movement of the 'Moonlight' Sonata as the basis for "Past, Present and Future" creates a whole series of resonances that lend the

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[94] 'Si deve suonare tutto questo pezzo delicatissimamente e senza sordino.' See *Piano sonata op. 27/2: Sonata quasi una Fantasia* (score), with 'Preface' by Peter Hauschild, p. 7.
[95] Andras Schiff, *Schiff on Beethoven*, http://music.guardian.co.uk/classical/page/0,,1943867,00.html (accessed 13 October, 2010).
[96] Stuart Isacoff, 'A Cultural Conversation with Andras Schiff: Lessons From Beethoven and Life,' *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern edition), Oct 31, 2007, p. D.9.
[97] Stanley, p. 10.
[98] Andras Schiff, *Schiff on Beethoven, Part 4, Part 3: Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor, Opus 27, No. 2 ('Moonlight')'*, http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2006/nov/23/schiffonbeethovenpart4 (accessed 15 March, 2009).

song a gravitas by which it transcends its original milieu of mid-60s New York City. It paired an *actual monologue* with a piece of music that utilised a form, sonata, understood to function as a *musical monologue* - personal, intimate and uniquely capable of expressing emotion. It is not really so surprising that, in 1816, Dr Georg Grosheim had the idea of using the first movement of the 'Moonlight' Sonata as the musical setting for a piece of poetic anguish centred on a young female protagonist. As a composer and teacher himself, Grosheim would have been well-versed in the conventions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sonata theory. However, it *is* quite extraordinary that a similar idea occurred to a wild young songwriter and producer from Brooklyn (nicknamed 'Shadow' because of his habit of disappearing all the time, usually into bars) one hundred and fifty years later and in a social, musical and historical context that could not have been more different from early nineteenth-century Vienna. In all likelihood this was largely accidental, and Morton chose the instantly recognisable 'Moonlight' sonata because its melancholy, which is immediately apparent without any knowledge its historical context, suited the Shangri-Las' deeply intense and emotional aesthetic. Nevertheless, its presence in "Past, Present and Future" linked the Shangri-Las' intense emotionalism to nineteenth-century Romanticism, with its emphasis on immersion in emotion as fundamental to the creative process. This is also central to "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)," in which Morton turned on its head the dominant image of the beach in the mid-1960s in order to evoke a much older set of metaphoric associations involving the beach and the sea, evoking an established Western artistic tradition to which the legend of Tristan and Isolde (in its various forms) also belongs. The performances of this material by the group members, and in particular the passionate intensity of Mary Weiss, ensure that the emotional intensity conveyed in both songs is not only believable, but utterly compelling.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Four Last Songs

Leaf after golden leaf
Falls from the tall acacia.
Summer smiles, astonished and drained,
Into the garden's dying dream.[1]

When journalist Mitchell Cohen observed in 1974 that 'the commercial success of the Shangri-Las began and ended on the beach,' he was referring completely to the group's Red Bird material. As we saw in the previous chapter, "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand) is thematically linked, in part by beach references, to "Past, Present and Future," which was the last recording by the Shangri-Las to enter the Hot 100.[2] However, the Shangri-Las recorded another, final 'beach' song, late in 1966. Following the collapse of the Red Bird, the group signed (as a trio) with Mercury Records and recorded two more singles; these would be their last released as a group.[3] "Sweet Sounds of Summer" b/w "I'll Never Learn" was released late in 1966, and "Take the Time" b/w "Footsteps on the Roof" early in 1967.[4] Neither single was a commercial success, with "Sweet Sounds of Summer" reaching #123, and "Take the Time" failing to chart at all.[5] As a consequence, both singles are generally perceived to be embarrassing failures, and rarely feature in discussions of the group and

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[1] Richard Strauss, *Four Last Songs*: 'September,' text by Herman Hesse, 1948, in Richard Stokes, *The Book of Lieder: The Original Texts of Over 1000 Songs*, London: Faber, 2005, pp. 562-3.
[2] Mitchell Cohen, 'Shangri-Las: A Teenage Melodrama,' in *Let it Rock*, December, 1974, reproduced at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=7479 (accessed 13/3/2009).
[3] See p. 170 for discussion of the signing of the Shangri-Las to Mercury as a trio.
[4] The Shangri-Las, "Sweet Sounds of Summer" (Lawrence J. Martire) b/w "I'll Never Learn" (Sandy [Hurvirtz, a.k.a. Essra Mohawk]), MERCURY 72645, December, 1966; "Take the Time" (Sal Trimarchi/Ritchie Cordell) b/w "Footsteps on the Roof" (Sal Trimachi/Ritchie Cordell), MERCURY 72670, March, 1967.
[5] John J. Grecco, *Out in the Streets: The Story of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 24 September, 2010).

their recordings, unless being speedily dismissed. Alan Betrock, for example, described these two singles as

> glossy, slick, dishonest pieces of plastic which were as misdirected as the girls themselves were.[6]

Despite this, these recordings are a valuable window into the final months of the Shangri-Las as a recording entity. Their new label, Mercury, attempted to 'update' and reconfigure the Shangri-Las into a group with a young adult, rather than teen, appeal, which involved forcing them into inappropriate markets. Three of the four songs recorded for Mercury by the Shangri-Las ("I'll Never Learn" was the exception) were self-referential in some way, quoting lyrics from earlier Red Bird material, or using similar sound effects and lyrical themes, in what may be understood an attempt to manufacture continuity between the group's existing oeuvre and their new material. "Sweet Sounds of Summer" was a crude attempt to rework elements of "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand) in conjunction with a psychedelic aesthetic. "Take the Time" seemed calculated to reconfigure the group as socially relevant by capitalising on a wave of patriotic fervour and support for the American War in Vietnam. Both singles were fundamentally at odds with the strengths and reputation of the group, with the notable exception being "I'll Never Learn," which was relegated to a B-side. When the new and ill-conceived sounds did not make hits, the Shangri-Las did not receive further opportunities to record, and their professional careers ended.

"Sweet Sounds of Summer" was the first single recorded by the Shangri-Las for the Mercury label, and it was released in December, 1966.[7] *Billboard* reported that 'the girls have a winner with this unusual material reminiscent of their "Remember (Walking in the Sand)."'[8] From the outset, "Sweet Sounds of Summer" was perceived as a companion piece to "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)," and indeed, the beach setting, romantic subject matter and bird-noise sound effects seem deliberately

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[6] Alan Betrock, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound*, London: Omnibus, 1982, p. 109.
[7] The Shangri-Las, "Sweet Sounds of Summer" (Lawrence J. Martire).
[8] 'Pop Spotlights,' *Billboard*, 24 December, 1966, p. 16.

employed to encourage the listener to locate the song in this context. The song was written by Larry Martire, who was listed as 'Personal Management' for the Shangri-Las from at least December, 1964.[9] George 'Shadow' Morton was credited as arranger on the label of the record, which also read 'A Phantom Production by Shadow.' 'Phantom Productions' was a co-operative venture between Morton and Martire, but the exact nature of its operations remains unclear.[10]

By late 1966, when "Sweet Sounds of Summer" was recorded, the landscape of popular music was changing dramatically. Included in *Billboard*'s end-of-year "Top LPs" wrap-up were: The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, and Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde*, in amongst the Mantovani and Tijuana Brass records that were still a dominant presence in the charts.[11] This is a tiny selection of the records released in 1966, but as a representative sample these records were self-penned, and in different ways introspective and psychedelic, with various veiled and not-so-veiled drug references. Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde*, for instance, contains "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35", with its lurching, drunken New Orleans-brass band feel and its 'everybody must get stoned' refrain. On the West Coast, Ken Kesey was in the process of conducting his infamous Acid Tests, and the Grateful Dead became involved in this scene, taking LSD and playing loose, freeform 'psychedelic' music.[12]

In April of 1966, the Byrds released "Eight Miles High", widely considered to be the first psychedelic hit.[13] *Billboard* of course made no mention of its references to drug use, and described the song as a 'big beat rhythm

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[9] Red Bird/Shangri-Las advertisement for "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" and "Maybe", *Billboard*, 19 December, 1964, p. 27.
[10] Email correspondence between John Grecco and Phil Milstein, 23 October, 2003. I will discuss Martire in more detail shortly.
[11] 'Top Records of 1966', *Billboard*, 24 December, 1966, p. 34.
[12] For an overview of the development of psychedelic music in the mid-1960s, see Robert Palmer, 'Eight Miles High', in *Rock & Roll: An Unruly History*, New York: Harmony, 1995, pp. 157-73.
[13] Russell Reising, 'Melting Clocks and the Hallways of Always: Time in Psychedelic Music,' *Popular Music and Society* 32:4 (2009), p. 525.

rocker with soft lyric ballad vocal and off-beat instrumental backing.'[14] The song had its origins as a poem written by Gene Clark, and evolved into "Eight Miles High" with input from Roger McGuinn and David Crosby.[15] Mysterious and enigmatic, its clear acid trip allusions were denied strenuously by group members in the face of radio censure of the song for overt drug references. Despite this, "Eight Miles High" still reached Number 14 on the *Billboard Hot 100*. Years later though, David Crosby commented:

> Did I think "Eight Miles High" was a drug song? No, I *knew* it was. We denied it, of course. But we had a strong feeling about drugs, or rather, psychedelics and marijuana. We thought they would help us blast our generation loose from the fifties. Personally, I don't regret my psychedelic experiences. I took psychedelics as a sort of sacrament.[16]

In July, 1966, *The New York Times* ran an article about the rise of psychedelic culture. The author, Richard Lingeman, discussed at length the manners in which 'psychedelic culture has now made interpenetrations into public society', but commented that

> It is difficult to see how the following (from "Eight Miles High") encourages drug-taking, or anything else:
> *Eight miles high and when you touch down*
> *You'll find that it's stranger than known*
> *Signs in the streets that say where you're going*
> *Are somewhere just being their own.*[17]

This highlights the pitfalls of discussing song lyrics without reference to their musical setting, for lyrics alone do not constitute a song. With music and or songs that might be termed 'psychedelic', there are, as Russell Reising put it, 'common techniques that convey a musical equivalent of a

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[14] 'Pop Spotlights: Top 60', *Billboard*, 2 April, 1966, p. 18. Interestingly, Dylan's "Rainy Day Women No. 12 & 35" was the next single reviewed in the section for that week.
[15] The authorship of this song has been the subject of some dispute, but Gene Clark also acknowledged in 1985 that the song was initially inspired by an 'airplane trip to England,' but was also 'about drugs…because during those days the new experimenting with all the drugs was a very vogue thing to do.' See John Einarson, *Mr. Tambourine Man: The Life and Legacy of the Byrds' Gene Clark*, San Francisco: Backbeat, 2005, pp. 82-7, esp. pp. 83-4.
[16] Quoted in Palmer, p. 166; for a 1966 clip, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoSwOrytf_M (accessed 11 February, 2010).
[17] Richard Lingeman, 'Offerings at the Psychedelicatessen', *The New York Times*, 10 July, 1966, p. 34.

hallucinogenic experience.'[18] Sheila Whiteley has referred to this as 'psychedelic coding':

> These include the manipulation of timbre (blurred, bright, overlapping), upward movement (and its comparison with psychedelic flight), harmonies (lurching, oscillating), rhythms (regular, irregular), relationships (foreground, background) and collages which provide a point of comparison with more conventionalized, ie. normal treatment.[19]

In "Eight Miles High" rhythms are fractured, instrumentation thick and layered, and Roger McGuinn famously attempted to emulate John Coltrane's free-jazz explorations while the overtones produced by his 12-string Rickenbacker simultaneously created a sitar-like effect.[20] Similarly, the Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows" (from *Revolver,* released in 1966) featured sitar, tape loops, irregular drumming, and Eastern-influenced mystical lyrics. As Russell Reising has pointed out, one of the areas in which a 'psychedelic' influence is particularly obvious in music is with timing. Psychedelic music plays with time, emulating the manner in which

> 'the passage of time seems to slow down tremendously when under the influence of acid. A few minutes may seem like hours, a few hours may seem like days.'[21]

Much psychedelic rock and pop music disrupts time in various ways – longer, more drawn-out songs, non-standard rock time signatures, and tempo changes - slowing down and speeding up. Sometimes this took place in conjunction with more overt references to time. "Time Has Come Today" by the Chambers Brothers, originally recorded in 1966 but not released until 1968, opens with the simulated ticking of a clock, and features a long, spaced-out acid-rock middle section in which the ticking and tempo alter drastically.[22] Although "Eight Miles High" is contained

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[18] Reising, p. 524.
[19] Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 3-4, quoted in Reising, p. 524.
[20] See Palmer, pp. 165-6; Einarson, pp. 82-7.
[21] Cam Cloud, *The Little Book of Acid*, Berkeley: Ronin, 1999, p. 11, quoted in Reising, p. 524.
[22] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ms3bYnszDt4&feature=related (accessed 26 September, 2010) for the shortened, single version, which fades out at the end of the psychedelic section; see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpcZrQQM-4&feature=related (accessed 29 September, 2010) for the longer version, with a correspondingly much longer psychedelic middle section. See Donna Gaines, *A Misfit's*

within a short pop-song format, its middle section is slowed-down and sprawling, and the whole song is recognisably psychedelic. That this was popular with a mainstream record-buying audience in mid-1966 is significant, because “Sweet Sounds of Summer” was quite clearly an attempt to ‘psychedelicise’ the Shangri-Las.

“Sweet Sounds of Summer” opens with a repeated echo-laden piano motif that is vaguely reminiscent of “Remember,” but not nearly as heavily intense or ponderous. Accompanying this are twittering birds, but unlike the seagulls in “Remember”, whose cries echo in space and emphasise the loneliness and desolation of the protagonist, these birds seem to perform no identifiable metaphoric function other than as one of the “sweet sounds of summer.” A wandering melodic flute line weaves through the verse, and snippets of fuzz-laden guitar give the song a slightly trippy, psychedelic feel. Another reference to “Remember” (with its repeated, incantational chorus) is present in the backing vocals, immediately preceding the chorus:

> (*Remember*) Sweet sounds of summer
> Guitars are strumming and
> Sea breeze is humming with our song...[23]

Ostensibly, the subject matter of the song revolves around a romantic liaison that took place at the beach, but has now ended, which is familiar Shangri-Las territory. However, instead of the emotional intensity and sophisticated use of metaphor found in “Remember,” the opening verse of “Sweet Sounds” is grammatically clumsy and metaphorically heavy-handed:

> Once I’d wake up, I’d reach out and take your hand
> The sky was our blanket, our pillow was the sand
> And on the beach, that’s where we fell in love
> The only one who shared our love were (sic) the bright stars up above...[24]

Manifesto: the Spiritual Journey of a Rock & Roll Heart: a Memoir, New York: Villard, 2003, pp. 127-8.

[23] The Shangri-Las, “Sweet Sounds of Summer” (Lawrence J. Martire).

[24] ibid.

Locations and emotions are stated rather than suggested, in a manner that is completely at odds with the Shangri-Las' earlier material. Furthermore, the heartbreak experienced by the protagonist as indicated in the lyrics is not reinforced by the musical accompaniment; the jaunty, upbeat, major-key tonality works against lines such as

> Now all I have is my lonely room, and winter's call
> The only sound that can be heard are (sic) my teardrops as they fall.[25]

This creates a great sense of contradiction. By not focussing the constituent elements of the song in a unified direction, the overall effect of the song is weakened, making it seems inconsequential rather than powerful.

"Sweet Sounds of Summer" also contains a psychedelic middle section which, although presaged by the flute and fuzz-guitar in the verses, is still a significant enough departure from the rest of the song to seem a notable disjunction. As the protagonist describes how she was

> So very lost and in love
> So very lost...

the song drops away into a droning high register organ motif, punctuated by backing vocals of 'Quiet!' followed by 'Don't Stop!' and 'More!' placed back in the mix to give the impression of distant voices. A formless organ motif is then regulated with percussive tambourine hits that unmistakably resemble the metronomic ticking of a clock. Handclaps, rumbling drums and snatches of fuzz-laden guitar are introduced as the organ fades in and out, and the overall effect metaphorically likens the headiness of a new summer love to an acid trip. The song then crescendos back into a (final) verse, and back into reality:

> Say life's a game and it hurries by so fast
> So if you find someone to love, do your best to make it last
> We were too young and the summer's come and gone
> Till the time we meet again the memory lingers on.[26]

These clichéd and tritely neat sentiments are at enormous variance with the majority of the Shangri-Las earlier material, which explored themes of

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[25] ibid.
[26] ibid.

emotional devastation and parental conflict in a complex but emotionally direct manner. As we have seen, the performative abilities of the Shangri-Las, particularly Mary Weiss, were particularly evident in material that required a deep level of emotional immersion, with "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)" and its ancient cultural resonances and oceanic imagery especially relevant to this discussion. "Sweet Sounds of Summer" possessed little scope for performative emotionality, and none of the deep cultural resonances of "Remember." The deliberate positioning by Morton and Martire of "Sweet Sounds of Summer" as its companion-piece unfortunately ensured that "Sweet Sounds" appeared impossibly lightweight by comparison.

As noted ealier, Larry Martire is listed as the writer for "Sweet Sounds of Summer," but available evidence suggests that his music industry background involved little in the way of songwriting. Late in 1960, Larry Martire was arrested in connection with a large-scale, mafia-funded record bootlegging operation, the purpose of which had been to 'flood the pre-Christmas market with $1.5 million worth of bogus LPs by Frank Sinatra and Johnny Mathis.' Also arrested in the raids was Gaetano Vastola, an already notorious DeCavalcante mafia figure with shares in Roulette Records and close ties to Morris Levy.[27] Martire, Vastola and four others were indicted in March, 1961; they finally pleaded guilty to charges of 'disk counterfeiting' in May, 1962.[28] A series of FBI wire taps between 1961 and 1965 implicated Vastola in various fraud and extortion conspiracies, and he was convicted and jailed for extortion in 1972.[29] Martire and Vastola would maintain their ties for over twenty years: both, along with Morris

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[27] 'Extend Probe of Bootleg Disk Ring to "Entertainment Field,"' *Billboard*, 12 December 1960, pp. 3, 14; 'Bogus-disk Plot is Smashed Here,' *The New York Times*, 9 December, 1960, p. 21; see also Chapter Four of this study, pp. 163ff. For Morris Levy, see Fredric Dannen, *Hit Men: Power Brokers and Fast Money Inside the Record Business*, New York: Crown, 1990, pp. 31-57.

[28] 'Kings County, N.Y., Grand Jury Indicts Six Charged in Disk Counterfeit Racket,' *Billboard*, 20 March, 1961, p. 2; '9 Accused Counterfeiters Plead Guilty in New York,' *Billboard*, 19 May, 1962, p. 5.

[29] 'Transcripts of F.B.I. Bugging Disclose the Methods and Intrigues of the Mafia,' *The New York Times*, 13 June, 1969, p. 50; 'Extortionist Gets 30 Months,' *The New York Times*, 25 March, 1972, p. 28.

Levy, were charged in 1986 in a famous case involving the sale of 'cutouts'[30] by MCA Records to John LaMonte, a Pennsylvania record dealer who also had earlier convictions for record counterfeiting.[31] Levy and Vastola were charged with making 'extortionate loans,' and Martire with 'teaming to obtain usurious interest payments..."induced by wrongful use of fear and injury to the person and property" of LaMonte,' who was brutally bashed and had his jaw broken by Vastola.[32]

The *American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers* (ASCAP) has no entry for Larry Martire, but *Broadcast Music Incorporated* (BMI) has four songs registered against his name; of these, "Sweet Sounds of Summer" is the only one for which he is credited as the sole writer.[33] He received a co-credit on "Dum Dum Ditty," which was written by Tommy Boyce, Bobby Hart and Steven Venet, professional songwriters most famous for writing much of the material performed by the Monkees. "Dum Dum Ditty" was originally recorded by the Goodies, and later by the Shangri-Las.[34] "Karate Man" was co-credited to Martire and Jerry Ciccone, a musician who played guitar on a Left Banke album (recorded after the departure of singer/songwriter Mike Brown) called *Left Banke Too* (1968), and received an 'assistant musical supervisor' credit on the *Whenever a Teenager Cries* album by Reparata and the Delrons.[35] Martire was also co-credited for "Eye for an Eye" with Joe Simmons, a prolific songwriter throughout the 1960s with over one hundred registered

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[30] 'Cutouts,' are records that a record company decides not to re-press, usually due to lack of demand/falling sales. The record goes 'out of print,' and remaining copies are sold at discount rates to record dealers. The records are distinguished by a hole punched in the corner of the record cover, or the corner of the record cover snipped off.
[31] Jim Bessman, 'N.J. Jury Issues Indictments in Cutout Probes,' *Billboard*, 4 October, 1986, pp. 1, 91; Dannen, pp. 38-9, 53-7.
[32] Bessman, p. 91; Dannen, pp. 53-6.
[33] (ASCAP); Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI); BMI entry for Martire: http://repertoire.bmi.com/writer.asp?page=1&blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&fromrow=1&torow=25&affiliation=BMI&cae=449014954&keyID=909552&keyname=MARTIRE%20LARRY&querytype=WriterID (accessed 13 April, 2012).
[34] See Chapter Three, pp. 133ff.
[35] *Allmusic* entry for *The Left Banke Too,* http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-left-banke-too-r2193266/credits (accessed 13 April, 2012); see also http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/spectropop/message/32266 (accessed 13 April, 2012).

compositions.[36] It seems unlikely that these established songwriters would require assistance from Martire, and far more likely that he received songwriting credits for reasons other than musical contribution.

It is tempting to speculate about why this recording was released as the A-side of an important single. It is likely that Martire and Morton had some form of legal/financial arrangement (Phantom Productions) that allowed Morton to produce and work with the Shangri-Las at Mercury. The Shangri-Las were signed to Mercury; the arrangement (if any) that Morton had with the label is unclear, but he seems not to have been a staff songwriter in the manner that he was at Red Bird. That none of the four sides recorded by the Shangri-Las for Mercury were written by Morton would seem to bear this out. Morton was on board as an arranger and producer (as he was credited on the labels of the records), but perhaps embedded somewhere in the deal was a requirement that Martire would have *his* song recorded and released as the A-side, for which he would take the majority of the royalties, being listed as sole songwriter. Morton likely attempted to work with the material as best he could, and added some of his trademark sound effects and psychedelic flourishes, as well as a psychedelic middle section. This was very indicative of the psychedelic direction Morton would shortly take with the Vanilla Fudge, whose Morton-produced first album, containing "You Keep Me Hanging On", was released in mid-1967.

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[36] BMI listing for Joe Simmons: http://repertoire.bmi.com/writer.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&page=1&fromrow=1&torow=25&querytype=WriterID&keyid=316006&keyname=SIMMONS+JOE&CAE=28762859&Affiliation=BMI (accessed 13 April, 2012). Simmons is obscure enough now for the compiler of this discography to comment that 'I've yet to find anything in print on the man': http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/spectropop/message/38789 (accessed 13 April, 2012). Interestingly, one of these songs, "I'll Believe it When I See it," was recorded by the Sierras and released on George Goldner's Goldisc label. Promotional copies list Simmons as the sole writer; yet the official Goldisc release has the name Grace Goldner (wife of George) added. "I'll Believe it When I See it," promo DJ copy: http://i1.ebayimg.com/04/i/001/64/77/d4bb_3.JPG; Goldisc official release: http://www.usaoldies.com/images/Sierras,I%20ll%20believe%20it%20when%20I%20see%20it.JPG; BMI listing with Grace Goldner as co-writer: http://repertoire.bmi.com/title.asp?blnWriter=True&blnPublisher=True&blnArtist=True&keyID=637638&ShowNbr=0&ShowSeqNbr=0&querytype=WorkID (accessed 13 April, 2012).

It seems likely that Martire and Mercury attempted to capitalise on a proven successful formula – the Shangri-Las, Morton, and the beach. However, Martire's inexperience as a songwriter resulted in substandard material that Morton and the group were contractually obliged to record. So, they did, with Morton incorporating the new influences and directions that he was moving in, resulting in a single that sounded, not surprisingly, like an attempt to paint the superficial trappings of psychedelia onto an existing song. That this song was released as an A-side at the expense of a far more sophisticated and well-written B-side, penned by an experienced and extremely talented songwriter, seems a decision made, yet again, on the basis of selfishness, avarice and the hope of short-term gain, rather than with the best interests of the group in mind.

The B-side of "Sweet Sounds of Summer" was "I'll Never Learn," written by eighteen year old Sandra Hurvitz, who would later be known as Essra Mohawk. Within a few years she would achieve cult fame as a member of Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, and later cement her reputation as a singer-songwriter with a series of critically acclaimed solo records.[37] By the time the Shangri-Las recorded "I'll Never Learn," late in 1966, Hurvitz had enjoyed a brief but well-respected career as a songwriter and performer. In 1965, under the name Jamie Carter, she had released a single on Liberty Records called "The Boy with the Way,"[38] which attracted extremely positive critical attention and two offers of positions as a staff-songwriter.[39] It is likely that this is what brought her to the attention of George 'Shadow' Morton, who was sufficiently impressed with the quality of her work to have the Shangri-Las record "I'll Never Learn," and later

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[37] Several of these have recently been reissued: see Tara Murtha, 'Fate sends Essra Mohawk for another loop,' *Philadelphia Weekly*, 2 March, 2010, http://www.philadelphiaweekly.com/music/local-music/Fate-sends-Essra-Mohawk-for-another-loop.html (accessed 14 October, 2010).

[38] Jamie Carter, "The Boy with the Way" (Hurvitz) b/w "Memory of Your Voice" (Hurvitz), LIBERTY 55815, 1965. Audio only at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB8vPrQijcc (accessed 14 February, 2010.

[39] These were at Koppelman & Rubin and United Artists; Hurvitz declined both; http://www.essramohawk.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53 (accessed 15 February, 2010).

include two of her songs on *Renaissance*, the third Vanilla Fudge album, which he produced, in 1968. In short, unlike Larry Martire, Hurvitz was a young, talented and extremely competent songwriter.

"I'll Never Learn" sits effortlessly within the Shangri-Las Red Bird oeuvre, with themes of anguish, loss and regret. Like "Past, Present, and Future," with its clear links to the classical tradition, "I'll Never Learn" eschews standard pop music instrumentation and heavily features stringed chamber instruments, predominantly violins and cellos. Mary Weiss's vocals are intense and urgent, soaring high in the mix as she sings of dreaming in pained delirium of her lost lover, with terminology that is a clear move in a more psychedelic direction:

> Here I am in a dream
> Immersed in liquid sea of love
> Shimmering rainbow bubbles
> From the sky above
> A looking glass that reflects
> The past...[40]

The instrumentation during the verses consists of delicate, lilting phrases with long notes and minimal, syncopated jazz-like drumming, with brushes. The unusually placed backing vocals are ethereal and heavily overlaid with echo, creating a slightly unsteady, dream-like atmosphere which complements the half-spoken, skat-like lyrics. All this drops away for the chorus (in the manner of "Remember"), during which the protagonist is awake in reality, rather than the dream-like state of the verse:

> But I wake up
> Sit here thinkin', thinkin' about
> The happy times we used to have
> Now they're gone forever
> I still have to wait for their return
> No
> I'll never learn, I'll never learn
> My eyes they burn

[40] The Shangri-Las, "I'll Never Learn," (Hurvitz).

From sleepless crying...[41]

This changed emotional state is reflected musically by minimal chamber instrumentation, a non-syncopated rhythm and a canon-like, cyclic four-chord repeated phrase with long notes that slow the tempo of the song momentarily. Mary Weiss conveys these contrasting states in a completely convincing manner, imbuing the material, which is a perfect vehicle for her strengths as performer, with her trademark emotional power. “I’ll Never Learn” ends with an extraordinary staggered echo of the word ‘hell,’ and is as dark, impassioned, and bleak as any of the Shangri-Las finest Red Bird material.

What “Sweet Sounds of Summer” seemed to strain for cumbersomely, “I’ll Never Learn” managed with grace. It located the Shangri-Las in familiar territory of emotional anguish and lost love, achieving a seamless continuity with their existing oeuvre, and giving the group material that spoke to their strengths and enabled them to shine. It also extended the experimentation with song structures that characterised recent work, like “Past, Present and Future,” and continued the classically-styled instrumentation that helped locate the group in a wider artistic tradition, as we saw in the previous chapter. “I’ll Never Learn” also functioned as an elegant bridge between their earlier material and a more psychedelically-oriented direction that, if pursued, might well have enabled a different outcome for the group, especially had their first outing on Mercury been an even moderate success. Instead, in what was a clear conflict of interest, their management selfishly and short-sightedly relegated “I’ll Never Learn” to the B-side of a single that had been penned by their manager, who had not distinguished himself elsewhere as a songwriter, before or since.

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[41] The Shangri-Las, “I’ll Never Learn,” (Hurvitz).

The final release for the Shangri-Las was “Take the Time” b/w “Footsteps on the Roof”, released on Mercury in March, 1967. It was written by Sal Trimachi and Ritchie Cordell, two professional songwriters who had written “It’s Only Love” for Tommy James and the Shondells in 1966, a song for which Morris Levy, mobster and owner of Roulette Records, also received a songwriting credit.[42] In the next couple of years, Trimachi and Cordell would become famous as bubblegum writers for the Buddah label, which was an arm of Artie Ripp’s Kama-Sutra company. This may explain the Kama-Sutra credit on the record label of “Take the Time”, as a payment for the involvement of Cordell and Trimachi. Morton was credited again as producer and arranger, and, bewilderingly, George Goldner as musical supervisor. It is almost inconceivable that the ensuing recordings were the results of a collaboration by such a collection of musical heavyweights; it is far more likely that, as had been happening throughout the Shangri-Las’ recording career, royalties and publishing shares were being parcelled out for various reasons that had little, if anything, to do with the group.

Billboard reviewed “Take the Time” favourably, noting that ‘tambourines shake out the driving rhythm lending solid, easy dance beat support to the girls’ strong vocal workout.’ It also possessed what *Billboard* described as in a tellingly non-specific way as ‘powerful lyrical content.’[43] Although the lyrics do not refer to this conflict by name, it is quite clear that “Take the Time” patriotically supported American involvement in the Vietnam War. When asked by Billy Miller (owner of Norton Records) in a 2006 interview about “Take the Time”, which he referred to as ‘weird, a pro-Vietnam record,’ Mary Weiss replied:

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[42] A picture in *Billboard*, 20 August, 1966, shows Trimachi and Cordell signing ‘an exclusive writing pact with the Robbins-Feist-Miller combine’, otherwise known as the Big 3. This was a massive publishing company. *Billboard*, 20 August, 1966, p. 3. The implications this had for the Shangri-Las are not clear, but this demonstrates that Trimachi and Cordell were high-profile songwriters.
[43] ‘Pop Spotlights’, *Billboard*, 25 March, 1967, p. 16.

> I never wanted to record that song. I was completely against the Vietnam War and I protested accordingly. Still, the Shangri-Las supported our servicemen and women and I've done many shows for them.[44]

Miller's comment demonstrates the degree to which hindsight informs perceptions of the relationship between the Vietnam War and the popular music released during the time of American involvement. John Grecco, author of the online Shangri-Las article *Out in the Streets*, also commented

> Another single, "Take the Time," was finished and readied for release in 1967. A patriotic song, it unfortunately seemed to condone U.S. action in Viet Nam, at a time when many wisely disapproved of any involvement. With a theme like this, the reason it didn't chart should be obvious.[45]

If this assessment was accurate, and 'the reason it didn't chart...obvious', it would indeed be a bewildering logic that governed the recording and release of such a single, and tantamount to sadistically consigning the Shangri-Las to commercial suicide. However, a closer examination of the historical and musical context into which "Take the Time" was released reveals a more complex set of circumstances than these two cited assessments would indicate.

Kenneth Bindas and Craig Houston have described the manner in which 'the 1960s is remembered as 'an era of swirling change and social protest' with the perception that 'the decade's music fostered a social revolution and spoke for the ideals of young people.'[46] They point out that rock and pop music, despite being (perceived as) anti-establishment, was by no means unanimous in its condemnation of the Vietnam War.[47] David James also commented that

> what is remarkable about late 60s rock, not least in the San Francisco Renaissance, is that its central instrumentality in countercultural formation

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[44] Miriam Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las: Good-Bad, But Not Evil*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/06.html (accessed 16 February, 2010). I have been unable to locate any other references to the Shangri-Las or Weiss performing shows for 'servicemen and women.'
[45] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 19 February, 2010).
[46] Kenneth J. Bindas and Craig Houston, '"Takin' Care of Business": Rock Music, Vietnam and the Protest Myth,' *Historian* 52:1 (Nov. 1989), p. 1.
[47] Bindas and Houston, pp. 1-25; see also Lee Andresen, *Battle Notes: Music of the Vietnam War*, Superior WI: Savage Press, 2000, pp. 104-137.

> coincided with a virtual absence of any cogent analysis of the war or even critical attention to it.[48]

This assessment is supported by veteran Lee Ballinger, who remembered that

> 'despite what some may choose to think, rock and roll was never fundamentally *anti*war; it was a soundtrack for the entire process, of which opposition was only a part.'[49]

In his study of the relationship between popular music and the Vietnam War, Lee Andresen commented that

> those who supported the war were far from silent musically and there are many recordings, both well-known and obscure, that propagated the "hawkish" philosophy.[50]

Hawks, this is, who were in support of the war, as opposed to 'doves,' who opposed it. Historically, popular songs recorded or published during the twentieth century largely supported US military policies, and it was during the Vietnam War that this began to change.[51]

Folk singers were amongst the earliest protestors against the Vietnam War. By 1963, older, more established performers, including Pete Seeger, Peter Yarrow and Malvina Reynolds, openly questioned US involvement. Younger singers - Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan - followed suit, but still spoke to a limited, non-mainstream audience.[52] This could not be said of Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction," however, which entered the *Billboard Hot 100* at #58 on 21 August, 1965.[53] It was written by P.F. Sloan, a nineteen year old West Coast singer/songwriter/session

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[48] David E. James, 'The Vietnam War and American Music,' in John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg [eds.], *The Vietnam War and American Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 241.
[49] Lee Ballinger, 'Deja Vu,' in *Rock & Roll Confidential*, ed. Dave Marsh, New York: Pantheon, 1985, p. 210.
[50] Andresen, p. 70.
[51] B. Lee Cooper, 'Popular Songs, Military Conflicts, and Public Perceptions of the United States at War,' *Social Education* 56:3 (1992), p. 160.
[52] Terry H. Anderson, 'American Popular Music and the War in Vietnam,' *Peace and Change* 11 (July 1986), pp. 52-54; Bindas and Houston, pp. 6-7; James, pp. 234-6.
[53] For 'live' studio version, with accompanying car wreckage and interpretive dance, see Barry McGuire, "Eve of Destruction," *Hullabaloo* 1965, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwYNWYaS3bI (accessed 10 October, 2010).

musician.[54] McGuire's gravelly voice bristled with frustration and anger as he spat out vitriol against a litany of issues, beginning with

> The eastern world, it is exploding
> Violence flarin', bullets loadin'
> You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'
> You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'...

The song also attacked impotent politicians, racial disharmony, nuclear war and religious hypocrisy, argued strenuously that 'this whole crazy world is just too frustratin,' and that ultimately, the world was apocalyptically 'on the eve of destruction.' It lacked subtlety, was rather heavy-handed, and was accused of attempting to cash in on the 'protest' bandwagon.[55] Accompanying the lyrics were ominous drums, steel string acoustic guitar and enough Dylan-esque harmonica to firmly link the song musically to the folk/protest tradition, and the trappings of authenticity this carried with it. Despite the objections raised about the song, McGuire undeniably believed in what he was singing, and conveyed that convincingly, as he remembered:

> Phil [P.F. Sloan] wrote those songs that were just tailor-made for me. To have a songwriter that wrote so specifically what I felt to be true...I discovered a lot of truth in those songs.[56]

"Eve of Destruction" struck a chord with a vast sector of the record buying public, was a huge hit, and ignited great controversy.

The front cover of the 21 August, 1965 issue of *Billboard* had as its leading article 'Rock + Folk + Protest = A Erupting new Sound,' and noted that

> With many notable exceptions, folk music has been more concerned with the message and the narration than the sound...the latest development has been to take the rock sound and instrumentation and use folk oriented lyrics. The singer or group has something to say.

This 'hybrid,' noted *Billboard*, 'is selling across the board.'[57] Of particular note was

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[54] Richie Unterberger, *Turn! Turn! Turn! The 60s Folk-Rock Revolution*, San Francisco: Backbeat, 2002, pp. 167-8,171.
[55] Unterbrger, pp. 169-70.
[56] Quoted in Unterberger, p. 168.

> Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction", released last week on Dunhill. The beat is solid, but the lyric, aimed at teen-agers, deals with the dropping of a nuclear vomb (sic. Since b is next to v on the keyboard, it must be assumed that 'bomb' was intended by the author.) [58]

"Eve of Destruction" reached #1 on 25 September, 1965, and as Richie Unterburger pointed out, the success of this record was extremely noteworthy:

> Although "Eve of Destruction" was blunt in its delineation of civil rights clashes, war, and nuclear proliferation leading society to the brink of apocalypse, it was nonetheless remarkable to bring even the faintest discussion of such issues to commercial radio in 1965.[59]

The success of this record prompted a significant backlash, contributing to a degree of polarisation about overtly polemical releases. One San Francisco-area jukebox operator, Henry Leyser, said that

> Out of personal conviction...I do not program this music. I wouldn't dream of programming it because, first and foremost, it is not entertainment. It's an indirect slap at the government. Let those who wish to hear it, listen to it at home.[60]

A significant number of explicitly patriotic releases followed in the wake of "Eve of Destruction," attempting to counter its success, influence, and 'message.' Almost immediately, a group called the Spokesmen released an 'answer' record called "Dawn of Correction."[61] However, one of the most famous and successful pro-military recordings was "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by Barry Sadler, released early in 1966.[62]

On 22 January, 1966, "The Ballad of the Green Berets" was the subject of a full-page colour advertisement (with font in two shades of green) in *Billboard*, announcing that this record was

> As timely as today's headlines! Backed by heavy consumer advertising, here is a hot new single with a ready-made market of millions who have

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[57] Aaron Sternfield, 'Rock + Folk + Protest = A Erupting new Sound,' *Billboard*, 21 August, 1965, pp. 1, 14.
[58] Sternfield, p. 14.
[59] Unterberger, p. 168; for further discussion of the impact of "Eve of Destruction", see pp. 167-173.
[60] Ray Brack, 'Many Operators Shun 'Protest' Music', *Billboard*, 23 October, 1965, p. 57.
[61] See Unterberger, p. 169.
[62] SSgt. Barry Sadler, "Ballad of the Green Berets" (Sadler) b/w "Letter from Vietnam," (Sadler), RCA 47-8739, 1966.

> read the bestselling book, "The Green Berets." Composed and sung by Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler who served with the Green Berets in Vietnam, here is the glory and heroism of the men who make up the U.S. Army Special Forces. Sadler's set for an appearance on the Ed Sullivan show January 30.[63]

It reached #1 on the *Billboard Hot 100* in March, 1966, and remained there for five weeks.[64] Musically the song is, as the name indicates, a ballad, a form associated with folk and traditional musics, which carries with it notions of directness and authenticity. In addition, the song was penned by Sadler, whose singing is clipped and speech-like, with a marked lack of singerly flourishes; syllabic delivery rather than melismatic. This gives the song a speech-like air of a restrained but imploring directive. The song begins with a rolling snare drum accompanied by clipped rhythm guitar that follows the beat closely. This minimal marching rhythm is maintained throughout the song, while the gradually-introduced backing vocals and revivalist-style organ convey a sense of a divinely-ordained call to arms. In the final verse, the addition of brass instruments brings the song to a rousing climax. In their analysis of the war song tradition, Les Waffen and Peter Hesbacher commented that

> War songs are at their most stylized when they consist of spoken word against instrumental background. Conventionally, "America", "Battle Hymn of the Republic", "Onward Christian Soldiers" or "Taps" is performed with trumpet and fife and drum...this traditionally patriotic or "seasonal" arrangement of war songs is supplemented by other styles of popular music.[65]

The author, performers and arrangers of "The Ballad of the Green Berets" have consciously located this song within an existing genre of patriotic war songs by utilising its conventions and reference points.

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[63] "Ballad of the Green Berets," RCA advertisement, *Billboard*, 22 January, 1966, p. 2.
[64] For lengthy discussions of this recording, see Andresen, pp. 132-6 and R. Serge Denisoff, 'Fighting Prophecy with Napalm: "The Ballad of the Green Berets", *Journal of American Culture* 13 (Spring 1990), pp. 81-93; see also Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *The Vietnam Experience: A Concise Encyclopaedia of American Literature, Songs and Films*, Westport CT: Greenwood, 1998, pp. 25-28.
[65] Les Waffen and Peter Hesbacher, 'War Songs: Hit Recordings During the Vietnam Period,' *ARSC: Association for Recorded Sound Collections* 13 (1981), p. 6.

In one television studio appearance, Sadler's performance commences with the camera lingering on the insignia of the United States Army Special Forces, which consists of two crossed arrows, a sword, and the motto "De oppresso liber."[66] Sadler, in full dress uniform with a green beret upon which is pinned a miniature version of the insignia, then mimes the song while filmed in a series of carefully constructed iconic placements. Sadler first stands next to and is studiously balanced with a large model of the insignia, the background black and stark to ensure that nothing distracts from the seriousness of the song's content. For the next verse, he is filmed from the shoulders up, perfectly centred against the black background; together with Sadler's fundamentally motionless delivery, this recalls the iconic imagery of the sculptured bust. This staple of military representation originated in the first-century Roman republic, and included the shoulders and upper chest to enable the inclusion of armour and other indications of military prowess.[67] In this instance, it enabled the viewer to focus on Sadler's face, the 'silver wings upon [his] chest', his epaulettes and other indicators of military rank. For the next verse, the camera angle is a profile close-up, which evoked another form imperial portraiture, the coin.[68] At times, Sadler turns and faces the camera close-up, addressing his audience directly and intimately. The final shot places Sadler next to the insignia, restating his placement earlier in the performance clip.

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[66] This may be the aforementioned Ed Sullivan appearance; unfortunately the details of when this performance aired are not supplied with the clip: see Barry Sadler, "Ballad of the Green Berets," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LH4-tOqLH94 (accessed 1 March, 2010). 'De oppresso liber,' according to the United States Army Special Forces, when 'translated from the Latin...instructs these brave and honorable Americans "to liberate the oppressed"'; see http://mcconnell.senate.gov/Releases/MAR03/03292003.htm (accessed 1 March, 2010). However, according to Latin and Classics scholar Graeme Miles, the literal translation of 'De oppresso liber' is actually 'free regarding the oppressed one.' Inaccurate Latin notwithstanding, McConnell stated that 'their motto, "de Oppresso Liber", accurately describes the goal of America's efforts.' Email correspondence with Dr Graeme Miles, 1 March, 2010.

[67] *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Art* ed. John Boardman, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 224, 249.

[68] *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Art*, pp. 252-4.

Visually, this is a carefully manufactured series of stylised shots that unequivocally reinforce the 'message' of the song, which is that the elite 'green berets' are 'fearless', 'brave', 'America's best,' with 'courage deep.' This imagery, along with the 'Latin' motto, also located this soldier, and the current war, within a wider historical trajectory of military campaigns, which served to emphasise its supposed legitimacy, and lend the conflict, and its participants, greater gravitas. The camera's continued return to the insignia repeatedly associates these men with 'liberation from oppression,' that is, the freedom of which Sadler sings:

> Silver wings upon their chest
> These are men, America's best
> One hundred men we'll test today
> But only three win the Green Beret.
>
> Back at home a young wife waits
> Her Green Beret has met his fate
> *He has died for those oppressed*
> Leaving her this last request
>
> Put silver wings on my son's chest
> Make him one of America's best
> He'll be a man they'll test one day
> Have him win the Green Beret.[69] (italics mine)

This was in line with standard government rhetoric concerning the war in Vietnam. In March, 1964, President Johnson reviewed his first hundred days in office in a television interview. When the discussion turned to the war in Vietnam, Johnson was asked whether, like President Kennedy, he believed in 'the falling domino theory; that if Vietnam were lost that other countries in the area would soon be lost.'[70] Johnson replied that

> I think it would be a very dangerous thing, and I share President Kennedy's view, and I think the whole of Southeast Asia would be involved and that would involve hundreds of millions of people, and I think it's – it cannot be

[69] SSgt. Barry Sadler, "Ballad of the Green Berets" (Sadler).
[70] 'Transcript of Johnson's Assessment in TV Interview of His First 100 Days in Office,' *The New York Times*, 16 March, 1964, p. 18.

> ignored, we must do everything that we can, we must be responsible, we must stay there and help them, and that is what we are going to do.[71]

Johnson then went on to emphasise the preservation of freedom as a guiding principle and justification for combat:

> We have problems in Vietnam as we have had for 10 years...we are very anxious to do what we can to help those people preserve their own freedom. We cherish ours and we would like to see them preserve theirs...we are patient people, and we love freedom, and we want to help others preserve it, and we are going to try to evolve the most effective and efficient plans we can to continue to help them. [72]

The rhetoric of freedom is also reflected in the State Department White Paper on Vietnam, from 27 February 1965, which described the war in Vietnam as

> a new kind of war...a totally new brand of aggression has been loosed against an independent people who want to make their way in peace and freedom.[73]

As we have seen, this was reflected in mainstream pro-Vietnam songs like “The Ballad of the Green Berets,” and, although not explicitly stated, this sentiment is an assumption underlying a song by the Shangri-Las that pre-dated “Take the Time.”

Early in 1966, while still signed to Red Bird, the Shangri-Las had some success with “Long Live Our Love,” a song that took the separation of lovers, a theme familiar from their earlier material, and located it within a current ‘wartime’ context.[74] A pair of young lovers, ‘childhood sweethearts,’ had ‘vowed to love each other,’

> But something's come between us,
> And it's not another girl,
> But a lot of people need you,
> There is trouble in the world.[75]

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[71] ‘Transcript of Johnson’s Assessment...’, p. 18.
[72] ‘Transcript of Johnson’s Assessment...’, p. 18.
[73] "Aggression from the North," State Department White Paper on Vietnam, February 27, 1965.
[74] “Long Live Our Love” (Jackson/Barnes) b/w “Sophisticated Boom Boom” (Morton) RED BIRD 048, February, 1966.
[75] “Long Live Our Love” (Jackson/Barnes).

A spoken section (a device familiar to the Shangri-Las' audience, and associated with intimacy and directness) explicated the situation further:

> It's the fighting that has come between us
> And it's taken you far, far away.
> But please don't wonder if I'll be faithful
> You're in my heart both night and day.
> So, darling, I send my love to you,
> While you are fighting overseas,
> And I know one day if we are lucky,
> God will send you back to me.[76]

In a live television performance of this song on *Hullabaloo*, from 1966, Mary looks and speaks directly into the camera, as if personally reassuring her lover.[77] A similar sentiment was at work in the 1962 hit for the Shirelles, "Soldier Boy," in which the protagonist assured her lover that

> You were my first love
> And you'll be my last love
> I will never make you blue
> I'll be true to you...[78]

The young girlfriend or wife waiting at home while her soldier was fighting overseas is a well-established image in war songs, and was also employed by Sadler in the "Ballad of the Green Berets."[79] "Long Live Our Love" was another in this long tradition of 'war' songs revolving around romantic separation, and the Shangri-Las performed the song on *Hullabaloo* surrounded by life size cut-out models of soldiers, simplified into cartoon-like figures, dressed in uniforms from an earlier era. In this manner, they functioned as a form of 'everysoldier', and located the song

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[76] "Long Live Our Love" (Jackson/Barnes).
[77] The Shangri-Las, "Long Live Our Love," *Hullabaloo*, 1966: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbkqTk-H65A (accessed 18 February, 2010).
[78] The Shirelles, "Soldier Boy," 1962, audio only: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy79-ww27sw (accessed 28 September, 2010).
[79] 'Back at home a young wife waits...' In "My Sweetheart is Somewhere in France", from 1917, the protagonist also maintained a vigil for her soldier:
'Every day I kiss his picture,
And tell him I'll be true,
Just as he is to his country,
And the old red, white and blue.' See B. Lee Cooper and Wayne S. Haney, *Rock Music in American Popular Culture III: More Rock 'n' Roll Resources*, New York: Haworth Press, 1999, 127.

and the war that it referred to in a wider historical context, while keeping references to the Vietnam War oblique rather than direct.

This is consistent with other techniques employed in this song, which begins (and ends) with snatches of 'When Johnny comes marching home again, hooray...hoorah...' in sombre, slow, and what can reasonably described as mournful tones. Bookending the song in this way underlines that the subject matter is serious and worthy of contemplation, since "Long Live Our Love" is upbeat and sprightly, with a marching beat, and, ultimately, positive and hopeful. It also locates the song within a wider historical context, since "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" was first published in 1863, and was popular with both sides during the American Civil War.[80] It was regularly revived during wartime(s), particularly during the Spanish-American War of 1898, and was also a popular marching song with the American Army in France in 1918.[81] It is generally accepted to be a patriotic song that celebrates the return of the victorious soldier:[82]

> When Johnny comes marching home.
> Get ready for the Jubilee,
> Hurrah! Hurrah!
> We'll drink him a toast or two or three,
> Hurrah! Hurrah!
> The laurel wreath is ready now

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[80] *Songs of the Civil War*, comp. & ed. Irwin Silber, New York: Columbia University, 1960, p. 175. The song's origins are uncertain but it is credited to Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, an Irish-American bandmaster and composer who published it under the pseudonym Louis Lambert. It is generally accepted to be related to an Irish anti-war ballad, "Johnny, I Hardly Knew You," but claims that this existed before the Civil War version remain unsubstantiated. See Frank J. Cipolla, 'Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore,' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie & John Tyrrell, 2nd ed., London & New York: Grove, 2001, p. 871; Silber [ed.], pp. 124-5, 174-5; John Anthony Scott, *The Ballad of America: The History of the United States in Song and Story*, Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, [1966] 1983, p. 327.

[81] Scott, p. 327. It appears on such varied war-themed CD compilations as "American Pride: Sixteen Stirring Patriotic Themes" (2001), "American Songs of Revolutionary Times and the Civil War Era" (1993), "Remember Pearl Harbour: Classic Songs of World War II" (2001), "Paralysed Veterans of America Presents 4th of July Favourites", and a 5CD set called "Good Morning Vietnam" (2002), to name a few: see http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=17:4829422~1~T000 (accessed 21 Febraury, 2010).

[82] William Emmett Studwell, *The National and Religious Song Reader: Patriotic, Traditional, and Sacred Songs from Around the World*, Binghamton NY: Haworth, 1996, p. 23.

To place upon his loyal brow
And we'll all feel gay
When Johnny comes marching home.[83]

The use of the soldier's name, Johnny, encourages the audience to connect with the song on a more personal level.[84] Many Shangri-Las' songs also used names – Mary, Betty, Jimmy – and just before the final chorus of "Love Live Our Love", there is another short spoken section in which Mary implores, over a reprise of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home":

Please Lord, don't let anything happen to him, please
I'm waiting for you, *Johnny*, I'm waiting...(my italics).

This makes an explicit connection between the protagonist's 'Johnny' and the older 'Johnny' who presumably marched home after fighting in the Civil War. Mary is not just singing to her Johnny, she is singing for all the wives and girlfriends whose 'Johnnys' were and had been away fighting and would, Lord willing, come marching home. In this, it is unmistakably patriotic, locating this personal experience of war, and the (Vietnam) war itself, in the context of a longer trajectory of heroic, self-sacrificing men, and American military involvements. This is further reinforced by the use throughout the song of tin whistles in a march tempo, and flourishes of brass reminiscent of a military band.[85] The brass arrangement used in the *Hullabaloo* performance, which, according to John Grecco, aired on 10 January, 1966, is even more obviously bombastic than the treatment on the recorded version. The single sold well, but was not an enormous hit. John Grecco suggested that this was because

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[83] Lee Andresen (pp. 261-2) has noted that 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again Hurrah, Hurrah' was used during the Vietnam War on a poster of soldier in full uniform, on crutches and missing a leg. At the bottom the poster read, 'Stop the crippling. Stop the Killing. Stop the war. Write, wire or call your congressman today.' The power of quoting this song lies in the traditional understanding of it as a representation of a soldier's triumphant return home; this ironic use makes the point that for this soldier, such a return is anything but triumphant.
[84] Studwell, p. 23.
[85] See Les Waffen and Peter Hesbacher's comments about the use of 'trumpet and fife and drum' in the 'traditionally patriotic' war song: p. 6.

> Although a decent and well done record, it was ahead of it's (sic) time for the fact that awareness of the Vietnam War had not fully impacted us yet, therefore, the record buying public did not really identify with the song.[86]

However, "Long Live Our Love" peaked at #33 on the *Billboard Hot 100* on 5 March, 1966, when "The Ballad of the Green Berets" was at #1.[87] The record buying public was, in fact, very much aware of the Vietnam War, and demonstrated this by making "The Ballad of the Green Berets" an enormous hit, a 'smash.' The simultaneous success, albeit more modest, of "Long Live Our Love," demonstrated that in early 1966, pro-war sentiment was certainly not a hindrance to mainstream record sales.

In June, 1966, an article in *Billboard* entitled 'The Vietnam Conflict Spawning Heavy Barrage of Disk Tunes,' noted that

> Since January, well over 100 Vietnam records have been released, with five making the Billboard Hot 100 and a dozen making Billboard's country charts...
>
> Reasons for the large number of Vietnam songs are largely political. While other U.S. wars have had a groundswell of public opinion behind them, *the Vietnam War has split the public into two camps – one the supporters, the majority*; the other, an articulate minority opposed to U.S. participation. And *the event songs about Vietnam fall into two categories – the patriotic song*, generally aimed at the country market, and the protest song, generally aimed at the draft age youngster with folk song leanings. *The first category leads by far in number of releases and in total sales*.[88]

At this point, it should be noted that ideas about the war were not quite as neatly polarised as the war-themed records, and this article, would indicate. Paul Lyons cautioned against

> a dualism of doves and vets...the Sixties generation is divided into those who served their country and those who opposed its policies.

Lyons went on to point out that there was 'a sizable group' of baby boomers who fit neither category, a 'silent majority' who 'stood on the

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[86] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas3.htm (accessed 19 February, 2010).
[87] *Billboard*, 'Hot 100', 5 March, 1966, p. 18.
[88] Aaron Sternfield, ''The Vietnam Conflict Spawning Heavy Barrage of Disk Tunes,' *Billboard*, 4 June, 1966, pp. 1, 10 (italics mine).

sidelines.' [89] Nevertheless, later in 1966, Everett McKinley Dirksen, a Republican Senator from Illinois, recorded an album called "Gallant Men" which sought to contextualise the Vietnam War as the latest in a long line of heroic battles fought for America by 'gallant men.' Dirksen explained that, 'I feel it is an answer to the beatniks, draft-card burners, and those who are opposed to our efforts in Vietnam.'[90] It sold so well that Capitol Records had to 'rearrange its pressing schedule to accommodate consumer demand,' prompting Capitol's president, Alan Livingston, to comment that 'Senator Dirksen's album has taken off like a Beatles record.'[91] This enormity of demand is a clear indication that condemnation of the Vietnam War was yet to become mainstream at the conclusion of 1966.

In this context, the Shangri-Las' last single, "Take the Time," was released early in 1967.[92] The song begins with a clock ticking, but this use of the notion of 'time' is very different to the psychedelic understandings discussed earlier. In this context, the ticking clock creates a sense of anticipation and immediacy, and signals that what follows is timely, worthy of attention, and the audience should take note. This is heightened further by the introduction of a rolling snare drum which is suggestive briefly of a march, after an understated strumming guitar. It is apparent almost immediately that this song eschews complex production values and emotional intensity in favour of a more minimal, easy-listening approach that hints at a folk aesthetic and allows the emphasis to be placed on the lyrics:

> Did you ever take the time
> A moment or more?
> To stop and thank the ones we left behind
> On some foreign shore

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[89] Paul Lyons, *New Left, New Right, and the Legacy of the Sixties*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996, pp. 73-4.
[90] Quoted by Andresen, pp. 129-30.
[91] 'Dirksen in Landslide - Cap. Presses Rolling', *Billboard*, 17 December, 1966, p. 6.
[92] The Shangri-Las, "Take the Time" (Trimarchi/Cordell) b/w "Footsteps on the Roof" (Trimachi/Cordell), MERCURY 72670, March, 1967.

> To hear from no more.[93]

At this point, the narrative becomes more personal, but not to the same degree (first name basis) as "Long Live Our Love":

> I can picture one of many boys
> Very brave and so alone
> Giving up the life that he enjoys
> Protecting what he has back home.[94]

Patriotic fervour is emphasised by military band style brass flourishes, and a jaunty upbeat march tempo. The commonly employed rhetoric of personal sacrifice for greater good and preservation of freedom is espoused, reminiscent of President J.F. Kennedy's famous call to 'ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.'[95] The bravery of the boy who is 'giving up the life that he enjoys' is contrasted implicitly with those who 'shrink from this responsibility.'[96] A few months earlier, in August, 1966, Gil McDougall wrote an article entitled 'California: Gangs, Vietniks and Surfers' in *KRLA Beat*, a Californian music paper aimed at teenagers. McDougall, an English journalist, appeared to be sending up outsiders' supposed perceptions of California, facetiously describing protesters against the Vietnam War as 'Vietniks' who were

> usually college students, and [they] come in various sizes – with or without guitars...Vietniks dislike draft cards, the local police force, Barry Sadler, Lyndon B. Jonson (sic), and Hell's Angels. Vietniks like beards, long hair, casual clothes (spelled s-l-o-p-p-y), Barry McGuire, folk music and the Beatles....Vietniks often organise protest parties – anyone welcome but be sure to bring a supply of well-worded protests – and the party will sometimes culminate with select members of the group burning their draft cards. After this ceremony the draft card burners will demonstrate their vocal capabilities as they are dragged away by the FBI. Colour them red.[97]

Young people protesting against the American presence in Vietnam and the draft were portrayed as sloppy, lazy and by definition aligned with the

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[93] The Shangri-Las, "Take the Time" (Trimarchi/Cordell).
[94] The Shangri-Las, "Take the Time" (Trimarchi/Cordell).
[95] Quoted in Christian G. Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*, Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993, p. 65.
[96] Quoted in Appy, p. 65; on this theme, see James, pp. 245-6.
[97] Gil McDougall, 'California: Gangs, Vietniks and Surfers', *KRLA Beat*, 13 August, 1966, p. 10.

perceived enemy – ‘red.’ Furthermore, the two top selling musical Barrys - Sadler, of the “Green Berets”, and McGuire, of “Eve of Destruction” – were diametrically pitched against each other in opposing alignments.

The dominant ideological justification for the American presence in Vietnam, and the Cold War threat of encroaching Communism and the necessity of its containment was reflected in the next verse of “Take the Time”:

> Don’t you wish that you can do your part
> For this country proud and tall
> If we don’t finish what we did not start
> There’ll be no country left at all.[98]

“Take the Time” is a heavy-handed, jingoistic espousal of governmental justifications for the war in Vietnam:

> This country that we’re living in
> Knows only that we’ve got to win
> No matter what the cost may be
> Our loss is keeping you and me
> Free...[99]

As an attempt to perhaps take the Shangri-Las in a more ‘meaningful’ direction, “Take the Time” was not a success. However, as is indicated by the context of its release, the reasons for its failure are more complex than the adoption of a pro-war stance. “Take the Time” was not an anomaly in a sea of protest music. It was not a success (on any level, artistically or commercially) *not* simply because it supported the American war in Vietnam – as we have seen, there were many examples of patriotic pro-war hits from this time. It failed to a large extent because it was musically unmemorable, heavy-handed and browbeating, which worked well enough for a former Vietnam soldier singing personally of his experiences of being a “Green Beret,” but was a completely unsuitable and inappropriate technique for a group of young female singers whose reputation rested on impassioned renderings of complex narratives of teenage emotional devastation. The Shangri-Las were a pop group, with

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[98] The Shangri-Las, “Take the Time” (Trimarchi/Cordell).
[99] The Shangri-Las, “Take the Time” (Trimarchi/Cordell).

no history of folk/protest music involvement, or anything vaguely connected to any kind of political statement. The notable exception was "Long Live Our Love," a patriotic war/romance song that had been moderately successful, although quite out of character thematically with the rest of their material. Arguably, the song utilised enough elements, both from the tradition of war songs, and from the Shangri-Las' own oeuvre - including a refashioning of their anti-hero figure into a soldier - to locate it in familiar enough territory to work. Moreover, public opinion had not yet turned against the war, and clearly, there was an enormous market of record buyers who patriotically supported American endeavours in Vietnam.

Given the context just explored, it is possible to see that, from the perspective of a corporate major label record company, it might seem quite logical to think that a song like "Take the Time" *might* actually sell well, take the group in a new direction, give them something to say with 'powerful lyrical content,' and reconfigure the group as one with a more adult appeal. After all, "Take the Time" built upon and extended thematically the sentiment of "Long Live Our Love," while increasing the patriotic fervour, as other successful records were doing. Furthermore, the Shangri-Las had *mainstream* appeal – and *mainstream* sentiment supported the war. From the misguided perspective of the marketing department at Mercury, in early 1967, when the full horrors of the War were yet to become apparent, "Take the Time" almost certainly would have seemed much less a commercial risk than a 'Vietnik' protest record.

This reading is strengthened by the attempts to reconfigure the image of the group at this time. While the Shangri-Las were at Mercury, promotional pictures of Mary Weiss were taken in which her hair was styled by Monti Rock, a celebrity hairdresser who made appearances on the Johnny Carson show.[100] The manner in which he styled Mary's hair

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[100] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 16 July, 2010). Rock later

was very fulsome and glamorous, reminiscent of Veronica Lake, but as far as Mary was concerned, she commented, 'I look stupid. I didn't like it at all.'[101] Clearly, this look was not one with which Mary felt comfortable, or that she had chosen. It suggests strongly that the management at Mercury may have been attempting to move the group away from their 'teen' image into something that they perceived to be more 'grown up' and sophisticated, especially since a page from a 1966 magazine reproduced on the Norton Records website showed the Shangri-Las in 'before' (from 1964) and 'after' shots.[102] It is likely that Monti Rock was responsible for all three 'after' hairstyles, given that the shot of Mary is identical to the 'Veronica Lake' photograph discussed above. Betty sported lustrous, bouncy, heavily-styled curls, and Mary Ann a short but softening, slightly teased and mussed-up style that seems more consciously 'feminine' than her previous styles. A photo of the group in elegant matching white pantsuits – trouser-pants and blazers, not leggings – appears to be from the same sessions.[103] The styles are decidedly grown-up, and their attire less figure-hugging and more understated than their "Leader"-era outfits. Most tellingly, all three members wear broad, sunny smiles, as though they had been neatly laughing (not too uproariously) at a tasteful joke. These shots seem to be presenting a new, grown-up, happy Shangri-Las, who have moved on from teenage devastation and into an adult world in which they will now perform songs about times by the sea and support for their country's war effort. While a plausible enough marketing strategy, and in keeping with the musical material recorded at this time which clumsily attempted to push the group into new markets, these attempts were ultimately unsuccessful.

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made disco records and appeared in *Saturday Night Fever* as a DJ; see http://www.parsec-santa.com/montirock/MontiRock_2.html (accessed 12 September, 2009).

[101] Miriam Linna noted the Lake resemblance during the interview: http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 12 September, 2009); two of the photos under discussion are reproduced here.

[102] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 16 July, 2010). I have not been able to locate a copy of this magazine.

[103] Linna, *Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las*, http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/05.html (accessed 16 July, 2010). I am referring to the photograph on the left of the *Cash Box* "Leader of the Pack" shot.

Although he produced their two Mercury singles, the partnership of George 'Shadow' Morton with the Shangri-Las appears to have run its course by early 1967. Through no fault of their own, many vocal groups like the Shangri-Las, who had formed in an earlier era dominated by doo-wop and vocal harmonising, found themselves quite suddenly out of vogue. Since their record label had no concept of the group as artists, and had them on a virtually non-stop treadmill of recording and touring, it is difficult to see how they could even have had the time to catch their breath and notice this happening. In a 1979 interview, Morton had declared that he 'bowed out' of working with the Shangri-Las because 'it was boring.'[104] Although there were almost certainly other factors involved, it seems clear that Morton was hamstrung by forces greater than he was able to control, since none of the material he recorded with the Shangri-Las at Mercury is characteristic of their earlier, tremendously fruitful collaborations.

Moreover, the landscape of popular music had changed drastically since 1964, and by 1967 was increasingly dominated by singers and groups who played instruments and performed self-penned material. Singer-songwriters, most famously Bob Dylan, were achieving increasing prominence and the idea of the artist performing self-penned material as an artistic expression of introspection was becoming 'central to rock ideology,' as Jacqueline Warwick put it.[105] The directions pursued by Morton are entirely consistent with these trends, but simultaneously in keeping with his earlier work with young female singers. He recorded and produced a teenaged singer-songwriter, Janis Ian, who had played him a song called 'Society's Child.'[106] It is narrated from the point of view of a young white woman forced by America's deeply embedded racial mores to end her romance with a young African-American man:

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[104] Ralph M. Newman, 'Only the Shadow Knows: An Interview by Ralph M. Newman,' *Time Barrier Express* 26 (Sept/Oct 1979), pp. 40-46.
[105] Warwick, p. 95.
[106] Janis Ian, "Society's Child," (Ian), 1967, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW_rYLoIR08 (accessed 18 July, 2010).

> When she was finished, I [Morton] said, "Do you believe that?" She said, "If I wrote it, I believe it." I said, "OK, you've got a deal. We're going into the studio with that. And make no mistake about it, this one's going to be tough."[107]

It was a sophisticated, adult song, and, with her acoustic guitar and hair pulled back plainly, Ian unmistakably evoked the folk/protest song tradition. With Morton, she recorded an *album* of self-penned material; this too is significant, as the album was fast becoming the format of the artistic rock statement. At a time when the Civil Rights movement was steadily gaining momentum and gathering increasingly vocal support, this collection of material, but particularly "Society's Child," was socially relevant and made a political statement. That Morton recorded this song, and Ian's album, late in 1966 while Red Bird was collapsing and the Shangri-Las began to undergo their clumsy attempts at remodelling at Mercury, is surely telling.

Furthermore, "Society's Child" received considerable publicity, and its significance did not go unnoted at the time. Robert Shelton, in *The New York Times*, wrote that

> "Society's Child" marks a new boldness in popular music while also proclaiming the radiant new talent, Janis Ian. Those who care about the upgrading of popular music and its freedom of expression will watch closely both Miss Ian's song and the issue of censorship that it has so forthrightly raised.[108]

Morton, in a manner entirely consistent with his earlier career, was looking ahead to capitalise on future music industry directions and market trends.[109] Ian, critically acclaimed in *The New York Times* for breaking new ground, vindicated Morton's championing of her and her self-penned songs. Significantly for the Shangri-Las, Shelton also noted that, due to the controversy surrounding the song and its subject matter,

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[107] George 'Shadow' Morton, quoted in Newman, p. 44.
[108] Robert Shelton, 'Censors and the "New Reality"', *The New York Times*, 25 September, 1966, p. 535.
[109] See p. 102 of this study.

> Larry Martire, an associate of the record's producer, George 'Shadow' Morton, said, 'I've never had so much trouble promoting a record in my career.'[110]

It seems that the promotional effort was going into the hot, current, topical Janis Ian, and not into the Shangri-Las. John Grecco has also noted that Mercury did not promote either of the singles the Shangri-Las recorded for the label, and commented that

> There were no calls to come into the studio, no hype from Mercury on the girls, and it now seemed that Shadow was occupied producing two new acts, Janis Ian and The Vanilla Fudge.[111]

The Vanilla Fudge were an all-male heavy psychedelic rock band, recorded and produced by Morton. Their debut album was released in 1967, and consisted entirely of dramatically slowed-down cover versions, most famously the Supremes' "You Keep Me Hanging On".[112] This constitutes a fascinating bridge between an earlier vocal group / professional songwriter tradition, which has been examined in detail in the previous chapters, and the introspective, LSD-infused, sprawling psychedelic rock jams that would become standard fare in the late 1960s.

The B-Side of "Take the Time" was "Footsteps on the Roof," by the same pair of songwriters who wrote "Take the Time." It is a lively, upbeat song whose protagonist is

> Waiting here so patiently
> My love will soon be here for me...[113]

Like "Take the Time", it favours simpler, guitar-based arrangements rather than the complex productions that George 'Shadow' Morton was more famous for. There are repeated references to 'the silence of my room,' but the musical accompaniment is so relentlessly cheery that no convincing sense of melancholy is conveyed. Just as "Sweet Sounds of Summer" was set up as a companion piece to "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand), so was "Footsteps on the Roof" linked with "Dressed in Black," a darkly

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[110] ibid.
[111] Grecco, http://www.redbirdent.com/slas4.htm (accessed 27 April, 2012).
[112] The Vanilla Fudge, "You Keep Me Hanging On," 1968, Ray Anthony Show, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_aWFaZgwerY (accessed 18 July, 2010).
[113] The Shangri-Las, "Footsteps on the Roof" (Trimachi/Cordell).

intense Morton co-composition of devastation and lost love from mid-1966. “Dressed in Black” ends with a spoken coda over the barest accompaniment of double bass and minimal percussion:

> I climb the stairs
> I shut the door
> I turn the lock
> Alone once more
> And no one can hear me cry
> No one.[114]

In a clear and unmistakable reference, a spoken middle section of “Footsteps on the Roof” has Mary intoning

> I climb the stairs
> I shut the door
> I turn the lock
> Alone once more
> I sit and stare
> At the stars up above
> And dream of the moment
> I’ll run to my love
> Come to me
> Come to me...

The devastated realism for which the Shangri-Las were famous is reconfigured here into a trite, happy and completely unconvincing ending. Since “Dressed in Black” was the B-side of “He Cried,” which peaked at #65 on the *Billboard Hot 100*, it is difficult to see this appropriation as a reminder of the group’s earlier hit-making prowess. It may have been an attempt to manufacture continuity between their earlier material and current direction, or even simply a short-sighted recycling. Whatever the logic, it sat awkwardly with the group, and failed to connect with their audience.

The four last songs the Shangri-Las recorded for Mercury were, with the exception of “I’ll Never Learn”, crudely conceived and realised attempts at reconfiguring the Shangri-Las into a group with adult rather than teen

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[114] “Dressed in Black” (Gorman/Michaels/Morton), RED BIRD 053, 1966.

appeal. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to abandon their earlier image as angst-ridden, heartbroken teenagers, and the material foisted upon the group by their new label, Mercury, reflected this. The new songs were not chosen with the Shangri-Las' particular abilities and strengths – emotional intensity, unwavering conviction - in mind. Instead, a combination of what were perceived to be winning formulas was haphazardly employed. The results were tellingly unconvincing, the polar opposite of what the Shangri-Las could always be relied upon for, which was emotional sincerity. An understanding of this 'logic' helps explain the otherwise bewildering choices of material and decisions made about the direction of the group – bland, easy-listening material that was self-referential, superficially psychedelic, supported the Vietnam War – with the aim of bringing the group in line with perceived market directions. It is not a coincidence that the only artistically persuasive song released during the Shangri-Las' tenure at Mercury, "I'll Never Learn," was written by a prodigiously talented young woman and was not crassly attempting to capitalise on inappropriate market trends.

CONCLUSION

Mary and Betty Weiss, and Marguerite and Mary Ann Ganser grew up in Cambria Heights in Queens, New York, an area marketed to young white families as an affordable suburban paradise in the years following WWII. In the early 1960s, drawn together through their love of singing and harmonising, the Ganser and Weiss sisters formed the singing group that would become known as the Shangri-Las. They absorbed a variety of influences from records, radio, and the streets surrounding their homes, where, as Mary Weiss has testified, a lot of doo wop singing took place. At the time the Shangri-Las began singing together, this was the primary mode of musical expression for teenagers, and their considerable abilities as singers and the unique qualities of their voices eventually resulted in a collaboration with George Morton, with whom they would go on to record the body of work for which they are justifiably famous.

While signed to the Manhattan-based Red Bird label, from mid-1964 until late 1966, the Shangri-Las recorded and released their small but enormously influential body of material, and became internationally famous pop stars. They were a constant presence in the *Billboard Hot 100*, on television and on radio, and performed with the the Supremes, the Beatles, the Ronettes, the Beach Boys, Dusty Springfield, James Brown, the Zombies and countless others. The Shangri-Las toured extensively, particularly with Dick Clark's Caravan of Stars, and participated in numerous Murray the K revues at the Brooklyn Fox Theatre. They endorsed Revlon Natural Wonder makeup for the 'Swingstakes' competition in 1965, and enjoyed an enthusiastic and devoted teen following.

Endless touring followed, and as a consequence the group members stopped attending high school, which was a disruptive and destabilising experience common to other teen recording artists. The tours were long, chaotic, dangerous affairs in many cases, characterised by a lack of

adequate security, supervision, and attention to basic requirements of health and well-being, including sleep and regular meals. The physical and psychological strain of all this was immense, and many used alcohol and various drugs as means to cope, causing damage from which some never recovered. This untenable situation worsened considerably for the Shangri-Las when the Red Bird label collapsed in mid-1966, largely as a result of George Goldner's gambling, record bootlegging and a complex morass of mafia involvement. As a consequence, the Shangri-Las signed as a trio with Mercury Records, a move that in retrospect was disastrous. After the release of two unsuccessful singles in 1967, and more touring throughout 1968, the group disbanded. The fallout was immense and would play out for years afterward, most tragically in the death of Mary Ann Ganser in 1970.

As very young women, the Shangri-Las had relatively little agency within a male-dominated recording industry that perceived teenagers as fodder for manipulation and exploitation. Groups were regarded primarily as a vehicle for the performance and dissemination of material written by professional songwriters, and overseen by producers. Typically, this has been used as an excuse to devalue the musical input of the group members, and the Shangri-Las have been trivialised in a variety of important and lastingly influential ways by mainstream rock criticism. I have examined the complex, interconnected and coded ways in which this has received expression in the critical reception of the Shangri-Las, which has been dominated by their rigid inclusion within an anachronistic 'genre' known as 'girl groups.' Through a close examination of primary source material and by unpacking the origins of this terminology, I have demonstrated that 'girl group' was not in use as a term denoting a specific genre (as it is currently understood) until the early 1970s, when it gained currency among rock journalists in conjunction with particularly problematic understandings of the place of girls and women in rock music. This has played a significant role in marginalising the group, in addition to closing off other potentially productive lines of enquiry.

This has been demonstrated in this study through a close examination of key recordings. “Leader of the Pack” reflected with sophisticated complexity the panics over juvenile delinquency that characterised understandings of teenage rebellion in the middle of the twentieth century. The motorcycle rider, ‘Jimmy,’ was a complex figure that became a recurrent presence in the Shangri-Las’ repertoire and their signature ‘guy’ – a silent, misunderstood type whose essential blankness enabled him to fulfil complex roles within their songs. He reappeared in “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” and “Out in the Streets,” and is implied in “I Can Never Go Home Anymore.” This ‘Jimmy’ figure was arguably inspired by a loose amalgam of the experiences George Morton claimed with bike, street and gang culture, interspersed with his own perception of being an outsider. Morton projected this back onto himself and became the ‘Shadow’ of his nickname, an elusive, enigmatic figure whose very ability to elide clarification enabled him to actively develop a mythic, larger-than-life persona.

Although Morton has repeatedly presented himself as someone who ‘accidently’ found himself in the business of making records, it is clear from his experience prior to working with the Shangri-Las that he aspired to be a producer and actively and consciously worked towards this. The Shangri-Las’ working partnership with George ‘Shadow’ Morton was central to the success of both Morton and the group, and Morton has repeatedly acknowledged the unique ability of the Shangri-Las to interpret, convey and deliver the material he wrote specifically for them in an emotionally convincing manner. This was particularly evident in “Past, Present and Future,” in which Mary Weiss employed a direct, spoken mode of address to convey emotional devastation with the utmost conviction. The use of opening movement of the ‘Moonlight’ Sonata created a whole series of resonances that link the Shangri-Las’ intense emotionalism to nineteenth-century Romanticism, with its emphasis on immersion in emotion as fundamental to the creative process. This was

also central to “Remember (Walkin’ in the Sand),” in which Morton turned on its head the dominant image of the beach in the mid-1960s in order to evoke a much older set of metaphoric associations involving the beach and the sea, evoking an established Western artistic tradition to which the legend of Tristan and Isolde (in its various forms) also belongs.

The four last songs the Shangri-Las recorded for Mercury were, with the exception of “I’ll Never Learn”, crudely conceived and realised attempts to reconfiguring the Shangri-Las into a group with adult rather than teen appeal, and drive them into inappropriate markets, with disastrous results. Nevertheless, an examination of these recordings provides valuable insights into the demise of the group, and demonstrates that a close examination of songs as historical documents can provide a unique windows into the culture that produced them. The Shangri-Las’ tenure as recording artists at Mercury was in many ways an appropriate metaphor for the manner in which the recorded music industry regarded young performers within a larger capitalist economy. Although the group recorded only four songs over a period of a few months, they remained contracted to the company for another ten years. Shackled to a label that had no particular interest in utilising their strengths, nor any realistic conception of how to record and market them in a rapidly changing musical environment, they were nevertheless unable to leave, ensuring that if Mercury could not enjoy revenue generated by the Shangri-Las, no other label would either. This was purely and simply an economic decision - musicality, artistry and talent did not enter the equation. Despite their abilities, the Shangri-Las remained structurally weak in the face of the recorded music industry, which quickly disposed of them, and whose intellectual apparatus – rock journalism – was equally happy to marginalise them. However, despite the structural disempowerment that the Shangri-Las were obliged to endure while working, the group possessed tremendous cultural and aesthetic power, as reflected in their popularity, the sales of their records, and their enduring influence in an variety of musical and artistic contexts.

More work needs to be undertaken on this much neglected era of popular music, from approximately 1956-1964, which has been traditionally dismissed as a dead spot between Elvis and the Beatles. There is scope for several scholarly studies of doo wop (which was tremendously popular with teenagers during this period) from musicological, historical, theoretical and cultural perspectives. Literature on doo wop is for the most part extremely dated, out-of-print, does not incorporate analyses of scholarly themes, including race, gender, whiteness, and class, and consists mainly of lists of groups and their recordings. While this material is useful, its capacity to make claims for the musical and cultural significance of the art form (which is considerable) is limited. A study that included female groups (without resorting to the 'distaff doo wop' descriptor, which is a staple of doo wop literature that needs to be dismantled and abandoned), and, following on from my work in Chapter One, included the groups currently known as 'girl groups,' would be particularly welcome.

As Laurie Stras has also pointed out,[1] individual studies of various significant singing groups from this era, both male and female, are needed. The Shirelles, the Ronettes, and Martha and the Vandellas were tremendously popular and influential, but they, like the Shangri-Las, have been marginalised within the gendered 'girl group' genre. Among the other issues discussed in Chapter One, this rigid categorisation has flattened out important differences between the groups, making individual studies seemingly unnecessary. I hope that my deconstruction of this category and its attendant assumptions will help pave the way for more individual studies of female vocal groups from this era.

The career and musical output of Frankie Lymon (with the Teenagers, his doo wop group, and as a solo artist) is a rich area for further study that would shed light on the workings of the music industry during this period,

[1] See p. 20 of this study.

and would be a valuable contribution to scholarly work on doo wop. It has applications for more informed understandings of the plight of other teenaged performers, including the Shangri-Las, as I have briefly demonstrated. Furthermore, Lymon's tragic story is inextricably linked with race, class, poverty, and the exploitation of child stars, particularly by the music industry. On this point, a scholarly study of the mechanics of recording contracts during the 1950s and 1960s would be an invaluable contribution to the literature on popular music of this period. These contracts were routinely exploitative in the extreme, and in many cases, including that of the Shangri-Las, made the sustaining osf a musical career impossible, or at the very least, untenable.

This reappraisal of the Shangri-Las is long overdue. The group and their recordings have been repeatedly marginalised in traditional rock narratives, and the subtleties in their work consistently overlooked. I have examined the Shangri-Las within wider social, economic, artistic and musical contexts than those within which the group is routinely considered, and dismantled the notions of authenticity and genre through which their work has been traditionally understood. In doing so, this thesis restores the Shangri-Las - Mary Ann and Margie Ganser, and Betty and Mary Weiss - to contexts in which their considerable artistic achievement is acknowledged, respected, and understood with greater clarity. Furthermore, this study emphasises their spectacular abilities as singers, workers and performers, whose musicality and emotiveness elicited massive popular reaction. This provides new frameworks through which to understand the significance of the Shangri-Las and their recordings, resulting in an overhaul of their perceived musical and artistic achievement, and their place in the narratives of popular music.

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The Shangri-Las

Note: The recordings by the Shangri-Las chronologically listed below are those that I have made reference to in the preceding thesis. For a complete Shangri-Las discography, see: http://www.nortonrecords.com/maryweiss/discog.html (accessed 11 October, 2010). All the Shangri-Las singles that I have discussed, with the exception of their first two pre-Red Bird releases (audio links supplied below), are available on *The Best of the Shangri-Las* (MERCURY/POLGRAM) http://www.amazon.com/Best-Shangri-Las/dp/B000008220/ref=ntt_mus_ep_dpi_1 (accessed 11 October, 2010).

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