Types of singing

He reaches into the microphone and moves, gesticulates as if he were speaking from the
pit of his stomach... As Cobain circles round the stage, repetitions, the voice becomes more
mountainous and more reverberant... and he pushes the words as hard as he's able
though he's trying to shout them out.

Rock singing: as in this description of Nirvana lead singer, Kurt Cobain—"is typically thought of in terms of its extreme emotive and
dramatic qualities, its physical presence, its originary authenticity, at times so intense as to occasion pain. It is, so to speak, a natural expression—
by comparison (implicit or explicit) with the trained, disciplined tech-
nique, the pure tone, the objectifying control associated with classical
singing. It is certainly true that in much rock singing the chaotic of low-
larynx technique and of diaphragm-oriented breath-control lead to
relatively speech-like voice production; that individuality of voice
quality needs to be at a premium; and that the resulting directness
of utterance is often taken to be a mark of expressive tend to this
flowing of the rules of 'good singing' lies at the root of many responses to rock—
both approving (by breaking the codes that makes emotional authenti-
city possible) and discursive (breaking the rules preserves the expression
(indiscipline and even immorality)." Nevertheless, it does not take a
great deal of acquaintance with the rock repertoire to suggest that this picture
of rock singing is over-simple. Elvis Presley's rich, sustained baritone
and sound, long-breathed tone, especially marked in his ballad per-
formances are matched for coarseness and lyricism by a whole string of
female stars, from Etta James to Celine Dion. Billy Joel singing
'Just the Way You Are' reminds us of the earlier jazz-influenced tradition
personified by Frank Sinatra rather than what Sinatra himself described
(in 1938) as the 'bouncy, lively, humorous, funny kind of rock 'n' roll,'
son' for the most part by various grotesque styles. Gary's eloquent
head-voice somatizes memories of classical counterpoint; while Ian
Dury sounds as much like a music hall singer as a satirical rocker.

The range of vocal techniques Bennett employed by Annie Lennon, Kim
Bush or Björk suggests, within even an individual style, a capacity
to portray heterogeneous voices quite at odds with any monological

29 Back singing

RICHARD MIDDLETON

The definition of rock vocalism, or the aesthetic of expressive realism that
generally underpins such definitions.

In fact, just as rock as a whole did not overthrow the previous musical
system or reach as fragmented as the best way to divisive rock singing
is as a spectrum of approaches working within a territory structured
through a triangulation of traditions. First, there is the
'mekanik' technique already described, deriving mostly from neo-folk
styles originating in the American South—country music and, above all,
African-American blues and gospel—and with something of a pre-rock
poplar music history attributable to the influence of jazz. Constantly
interplaying with this, perhaps predominant, lineage, we find approaches
inhibited to the vernacular derivations of blues, transmitted mostly
through traditions of 'light' music, Romantic opera and sentimental
ballads. Such of these models, in its own way, is founded on a concept of
'authentically', the first based on the emotional integrity of the performer,
the second on the aesthetic integrity of technique. The child side of the
triangle, however, puts such authenticity in question through techniques
of stylization, derived from traditions of theater, cabaret and carnegi-
eque role-play, where—where star image, performative show and
the protagonist's 'voices' of song texts meet up, overlap and combine:—is
the sphere of pop, rendered all the more powerful by the mediatory roles
of recording studios, film and video.

As in virtually all song, the role and effect of words are crucial. But the
strength of the 'naturalistic' tendency is such that a para-linguistic
dimension is often as important as direct verbal meanings. Another way
of putting this is to say that 'it is not just what they sing, but the way they
sing it, that determines what people mean to us'; 'words work... in
structures of sounds that are direct signs of emotion and marks of charac-
ter.' Indeed, there is research to suggest that some listeners to rock pay
little attention to verbal content. A more typical situation, perhaps, is
where a vocal 'rock' works by bundling together the meaning, resonances
and sound-shapes of the words together with the melodic, rhythmic,
symphonic and timbral dimensions of their sung performance, encapsu-
ating that particular semantic-affective field which will come to be asso-
ciated with the song.

A second triangulation offers a useful way to model the relationships
of words and music in rock singing—but, because of complications in
this relationship of the sort just described, this triangulation maps on to
the first only in a partial, skewed and fluid manner. At one extreme,
words govern the musical flow, working as narrative; the voice tends
towards speech. Bob Dylan's 'Masters of War' or 'Subterranean
Homestick Blues' are examples. At the other extreme, words are absorbed
into the musical flow, working as much as possible, the voice becomes an instrument. Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti," with its rhythmicized "non-sense" (Aphonophonia=Apohemostaty) and "rhyming musical parallelisms" (Rock to the moon, rock to the moon, like the girl that I love), is a good example. In between, words merge with mostly: "nothing" resulting in "inner-expression." This is the sphere where above all, the sub-classical strain in rock-singing makes its home: expressively (sung notably, such as "tutti frutti") but more naturally (oral approach) can sound such as like (or is close, for example, in a good deal of soul music). And this "natural" approach can also imitate not only the pre-Bopistic sound-gestures of "Tutti Frutti" but also the other characteristics of Dylan's "Vocabulary" or of jazz.

The technique of stylization can potentially place the word-music relationship in quotation marks.

Sources

The common perception that rock 'n' roll originated from a coming together of country music and rhythm-and-blues is broadly correct—though in this overview the dominant percentage was black, its inheritance passed on both directly and through previous African-American influences on country. The literature on African-American singing is explored. There is general agreement on the core tendencies: short phrases often falling or circling in shape, usually pentatonic as modal but with much microtonal inflection, pitch bending and glissando, the phrases often repeated; call and response (anti)ideal-relationships between performer, off-key air, or synchrony and rhythmically flexible phrasing; a huge variety of vocal effects (including falsetto) end of little (including notes, voices, vocals, vocals, and vocals, thus much). Overcoming anachronisms are the perceived boundary between sound and speech modes (perhaps deriving from African temporal languages), the insistence on "hearsay," inflection and constant variation, and the loss of heterogeneity of sound (rather than a single sustained timbre). Of course, "speech-like" linguistic effects and "black tones" have high expressive potential, fully exploited in jazz singing as well as in blues and gospel, but they are also symptoms of a "playful" attitude to the voice, conceived as a species of instrumental: just the body using its own resources to make sound (the "vocalized tone" of many African-American instrumentations comprises the other side of this equation).

This said, the variety of African-American singing types is immense—from Louis Armstrong's gravelly voice to Howlin' Wolf's cold, aggressive voice, from Bessie Smith's majestic growl to B. B. King's honeyed mellowness. Voice-production is usually "un fetish" (this is particularly clear in the ecstatic flights of gospel singing, passed on subsequently to soul music (compare Rosetta Tharpe or Mahalia Jackson with Aretha Franklin). However, there is a blues strain where emotional tension tightens the throat; Robert Johnson is at the center, and the influence of his celebrated 1930s recordings permeates the post-War Chicago blues of Wolf, Muddy Waters, Elmore James, and others. This strain can then be identified as the single most important source for the "standard rock vocal"—the arcing, stretching, reaching lead—(of the 1960s and 1970s) (and indeed, Johnhson was an iconic figure for Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant, and many heavy metal singers). At the same time, the warmth, more projected style of the "blue (") singers deriving from the Kansas City tradition (Jimmy Rushing, Louis Jordan) and the Memphis school (B. B. King) offered an alternative approach, taken up, for example, by rock 'n' rollers such as Elvis Presley.

A similar source for the tightened rock that can be found in country music: A singing style characterized by high pitch, voice control, and vocal tone can be traced back to the folk origins of country in the southern mountains (and from there, back to British traditions). Though equally "speech-like," this is far more (at least than typical) African-American approach; it was subsequently often modified as a result of the influence of black singing, the tension can be heard in the recordings of the first great solo singer, Jimmie Rodgers, and, in those of the greatest country proto rock 'n' rollers, Hank Williams. Coming through into rock, such an approach sometimes also brings with it characteristic country vocal harmonies (opera four parts and highly pitched close harmonies; parallel movements: from the Everly Brothers to the Beatles and beyond), and the unique phrasing, rhythmic iconic, and usually narrative pull of folk-ballad story-telling: the latter shows most obviously through the networks of folk-bay singer-songwriters, and most influentially via the image leading from Woody Guthrie to Bob Dylan and radiating out from the early 1960s folk-centered folk protest milieu within which Dylan's career began.

Within the repertoires of country music and R & B themselves, the occasional amalgamation of sentimental pop ballads brought with it scrivinators to pursue a more classical singing technique. Stemming initially from late Victorian domestic song on the one side, contemporary Tin Pan Alley on the other, this trajectory becomes so strong in a few cases—such as Vonetta Dalhart to Jim Reeves, from Lonnie Johnson to Johnny Ace—as to place them in the margins between "classical" and "mainstream" categories, as well as preserving the manners of nineteenth-century orchestras using for adaptation in rock. More broadly, the work of early classical recording stars—notably Enrico Caruso—and "light classical" singers—such as John McCormack—related with related styles in the
A. Richard mansell

textual themes of Broadway, London and other European crises, maintained a presence in the culture for this tradition, which on the one hand continued to inform mainstream popular singing life coming of the electric microphone enabled canvases from Bing Crosby onwards to approxi- mate the effect without the need for a full orchestra, technical-technique and on the other ensured that rock music would not eclipse it. in the rock ballad at its best, chromatic focus is added to what might otherwise be bland sentiment, but at the same time the chord connecting Elvis and John him Merry Widow, Barbra Streisand and Lisa Stansfield to AlJolson and even Thara Bhatt is palpable. it becomes possible to understand how heavy rockers until Leaf and Patti Smith who could perform with Italiano Panavision and Montserrat Caballé, respectively. Naturally, the theatre is also the biggest single source of stylistic techniques. the music hall approach to the portrayal of character and scene through music-dramatic performance and dramatic accent — pre- served in the years by Groucho Marx and George Formby — defines a segment of British rock, from the Kinks through Madness to Blur. Similarly, it may not be too fanciful to link the tinged generic stereotyping as important in American vaudeville and the performance of early Tin Pan Alley songs (Irving Berlin, for example) with the over-the-top presentation common in heavy metal concerts. Arguably, there is a specific 'blackface' connection — evident in both song and theatrical presentation, and originating in nineteenth-century minstrelsy — running from AlJolson through Elvis Presley to Michael Jackson. at the same time, it seems true that stylistics as an approach has been under some pressure in twentieth-century popular song from the rising strength of an atrheological of aggressiveness. Not the increasing importance of video, TV and film (including musical film), joined with the continued effects of existing traditions of broad Cast theatre (Brecht/Weill, for instance). cabaret and nightclubs, but instead a significant presence in the rock repertoire for techniques of vocal manipulation, lip-sync, and role-play, which can be found in various avenues and in media music (Talking Heads, Bette) singer-songwriters (Randy Newman), art rock (Roxy Music, David Bowie), proto-punk (Alice Cooper, New York Dolls, Iggy Pop) and mainstream pop (Barry Manilow, Madonna). Moreover, present are the ideology of authenticity'苗苗 in the 1980s may signal that stylistics as an art to increase.

Some examples

In influence and historical impact, Elvis Presley's position at the head of rock genealogy is unchallenged, both in relation to musical style and to the image of the male rock star — rebellious, sexy, hedonistic, living life on the edge — that he constructed. his Presley's singing style is not entirely congruent with this image, and it is the mixture of elements brought together in his vocalism that makes him prototypical for a whole strand of development in rock singing. From the start, he sang not only rockers but also ballads — and he sang them with full, rich, wet-produced tone, smooth phrasing and legato tuning (I'll Never Let You Go, 'Blue Moon,' recorded in 1955 and 1954, respectively). But this approach was carried over into up-tempo numbers too — though here it is generally modulated, energized, by the application of techniques which have been called "noise-generation" (off-beat accented, usually in boogie-woogie-like triplet rhythms, and often breaking up words and even syllables), "perception" (analogous to sensations applied to pitch) and "vocal orchestration" (dividing between registers, modulation of physical effort). "This can be heard as early as Presley's first record release (1954), where the R&B song, 'That's All Right, Mama' — given a notably lyrical, sentimental treatment — is coupled with a speedy-up version of the country tune 'Blue Moon of Kentucky,' which is 'hooded' into rock. But the mixture is given classic shape in his first national hit, 'Heartbreak Hotel' (1956), where Elvis's full repertoire of vocal tactics is on display.

From the start, Presley's skillful control of threedimensional sound suggested, as would become clear in his later recordings, that he was above all a self-aware performer. In 'Don't Be Cruel to Me' (1956), 'All Shook Up' (1957) and similar later songs, boogieification was exaggerated, perhaps even parodied, into mannerism; but this tendency — related to take rock too 'seriously' — can be heard in his earliest recordings: 'Baby Let's Play House' (1955), for instance. His expanding repertoire displays an 'authentic' multiplicity of genres and approaches, and, rather than treat the later focus on slick film performances and schmaltzy ballads as a decline, it is better to see him, throughout his career, as pioneering one important response to the challenge of being a rock singer: Elvis constructed his persona as that of the romantic hero, updated for a modern consumer society, and, while he no doubt believed in it (at least at first), he also knew well the techniques of stylization that would produce its effects, enabling other singers (Cliff Richard, John Lennon, Tom Jones) to try them on for size.

Presley's debt to blues singing derives mostly from the controlled projection of the 'jump' blues vocalists and big-band barbers. the more 'soulful' style which came up from Mississippi to Chicago R&B did not really feature in white popular music before the sixties — but its thickly textured rapping timbres, its melodramatic outpourings of desire and self-assertion, then became central to a whole stream of 'hard' rock. the link between this vocal tradition and the obsessive, often eccentric,
34 Richard Maltby

(for women) oppression made sexual expression that has been so crucial in rock ideology has been driven off enough. But, whereas a notable feature of rock culture, this tradition – from Jagger to Coltrane, via Jimi Hendrix, Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, Aretha Franklin, etc to Bob Dylan, singers. One effect is to revive and popularise the 'blue-collar' singer, delineated through 'wants' and 'interactions' with rock - influenced rock. An alternative is to attempt to appropriate the masochistic style – as exemplified in the work of Lenny Kravitz.

John Lennon's 'I'm only smiling' – which was taken over from his late-60s mantra of contempt, his gender inversion was exactly hard to live to and to sing, John's been at the heart of 'Overload', a fusion of Chicago R & B and the heavy rock of such bands as Cream; in her finest Smith sensation 'Turtle Blues', so in its shades impossibly into a feedback-rich, guitar solo. Even in these recordings, though, exotic energy is always threatening to shift into that undidicate swelling any playing the role of 'role of the boys': a throat-tightening appropriation of packaging, loss and suffering, and in this dialectic – dependence victimised, subject forced into subdomain identification – that dominates much of John's most celebrated performances – 'Hey Baby', 'Get It While You Can', 'Ball and Chain' – where lyrics, apart from the occasional duetrophic phrase, disappear into streams of fragmentary emotive outpourings, incoerent shrieks and ungrammatical moans. The characteristic timbre at these moments is tiles on bits. Thus, although he has actualised a remarkable range of voices – listen, for example, to the rich mellismat, warm phrasing and reduced head-and-face effects of 'Try (Just a Little Bit Harder), almost like a solo singer Anita Ford; that is what is most striking is how he focuses almost always ends up on the worn-out vocal chords of hard livin', passioned victimhood. Illness Willis points out, perceptively, that John's 'unnamed blues' concerning so reject blues sensibility.' Silent catharsis – self-protection distance' – giving way to the softening expressionism of the aloofly, detached quality of hard rock, but inevitably struck harder at a won and John's ultimate death, certainly a symptom of an unsatisfied need, echoed the music's source.

Vocal self-aboraison (replacing the vocal sharing typical of blues – a cultural performance which also the art of living) represents the attempted condensation of art and life, a core element of the rock myth of truth of course, it degrades a effective performance and listener interpretation of the appropriate style conventions (lived-in voice, cracked notes, etc.). Nowadays there are some 'street' in the most extreme forms possible – was at the same time the product of careful (and equally extreme) aesthetic construction and marketing hype – especially in the bands of Sex Pistols manager, Malcolm McLaren. Moreover, the object of the attack was not only mainstream society but established rock as well as its perceived elevation of style over substance, certainly, but also its apparent self-regard – its reproduction of musical skill, its commodification of 'feeling' by pushing through the limits, punk revealed the cracks in this aesthetic and commercial 'consensus' by its very inauthenticity, punk, inside the existing rock culture (including existing rock music) seem like a trick.]

In the Sex Pistols' most celebrated recordings – 'Starry Starry Night', 'God Save the Queen', 'Pretty Vacant', 'Holiday in the Sun' – Johnny Rotten's basic singing voice: one of narrative delivery: all appeal of musical technique seems to be refused. Yet on closer inspection, the 'naturalistica text is revealed as overconventional, as distorted, as to be examined. The punched-out, mechanical rhythms, together with the grating timbres, alternate the listener – just as the performance tactic of 'gobbling' was designed to do, in competition with the performance tradition developed in Brechtian music theatre. Rotten's recounting and pitch contours are often radically at odds with the natural shape of the verbal phrases, 'technique' especially marked in his bizarre and typical upward-curving pitch bend on the final syllable of a phrase. The ends of words are often also given a lengthening, extension ('...er extension', suggesting the rhetorical address and the duplicity?) both of political speech and the street trade. The exaggerated 'coarse English' diction – most dramatic in artificially prolonged diphthongs – might suggest street realism, but actually – against the mid-Atlantic norm of the rock music culture – comes over as intensely stylised. Rotten's tendency to switch between different vocal modes – conversational gabbling, public declaration, brief bursts of picked song – rejects any attempt at listener identification, just as shifts within lyrics in the lyrics often refer clear indications of who is addressing whom. Transfixed by this performance, we find the words sliding past in a blur, an effect interacted with the voice (as most memorably in 'Holiday in the Sun') disappears into the mix. The Pistols' overall rhetorical thrust is confirmed in the cover of 'My Way' (made famous by Frank Sinatra a decade before), when Sid Vicious, taking over the singing and many of Rotten's mannerisms with it, brings down the curtain on punk rock, demolishing the pretensions of vocal 'self-expression' in his uptempo, punked-up version of the song, and perpetuate this with a wicked
36 Richard McMillan

grandly of 'jazz' singing which manages to consolidate the pop cantil
tradition and the classical heritage tugging behind it. As Glenn Miller
writes, 'It's not funny and all be taken

While white rock (especially in its core period of) 1960s-1980s especially
even though it had, is black. It's geese that in its own way also fly.

The larger-than-life personas of the great singers, from Wilson Pickett
to Aretha Franklin down to Prince and Michael Jackson; the centrality
dozen and dozen; the importance of interaction characterises to a vocation of musical activity as conscious.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the voice of James Brown, famed
for introducing the call-and-response patterns and making the

a formal structure of which were in 1956, Brown along with Ray Charles, was largely responsible.

The fabled 'Papa's Got a Brand New Bag' (1965), the descending

occasionally on a final syllable, often into a drawn-out

ground-breaking 'Papa's Got a Brand New Bag' (1965), the descending

descending Brown vocal with its harsh timbre especially to its characteristic

punctuated by crescendos and construction through semi-improvised variation

the tenor sax like a conventionally strong sax. All the material

subsequent classics — 'Cold Sweat', 'I Can't Stand Myself' (1967), 'Say It

'One More Time' (1966) — were paradoxically laid out and varied

singers a wide spectrum of other white vocal para-language effects (Browne's

spectral range and almost incredibly high pitched all being widely sampled by

The tendency to 'unnaturalize' the voice results in recordings that are virtually instrumental ('Funky Drummer'

be 'Cut Up, Get into it, and Get Involved' (1970) and 'Sex'

Power! (1971) the band is mixed as high and the vocal call-and-response
between Brown and a supporting singer so low (relatively) that the latter
be seen part of what is in effect a percussion ensemble: the words, even
dough they read at times to the listener as music, register only subliminally.

There were many strands of black music in the 1960s and 1970s, and
James Brown represents the 'harder', most rhythmically articulated, most
'musicalised' vocal tendencies; yet he foregrounded many subsequent
developments in funk, hip-hop and white as well as black dance music of
the 1990s. In his music we hear a quite different concept of vocalisation
from that current in white rock; not so much personal feeling translated
into song, more the assertions of a 'vocal body'. There is no lack of emotion
— indeed, the extreme use of the voice constantly produces signifiers of

just, then this being treated as a focus in itself, it is put

within the concept of public action — corporatised, socialised.

Within the rock pop mainstream of the 1980s and 1990s, whatever the

loosers of punk were learned and those of black music (soul, funk, disco
and then hip-hop) registered, the rock aesthetic of 'self-expression' could
be contained only with difficulty, as in the case of Kurt Cobain, for
instance, or U2's 'The Boy'. Or, as it were, at a distance, through self-aware
'framing' techniques (the approach in much indie music: listen to

Morrissey, or Michael Stipe of R.E.M.) or else — more often dramatic — in

mentation rock; through irony, at least through explicit modes of self-

presentation. The last strategy is exemplified particularly clearly by

Madonna.'
20 Richard Medrano

'Veritable' by the site of 'Dreams of an Early Death', from the musical
Brill (1966), a connection with the traditions of opera (inspired by
the American musical) is explicit.20

Medrano, as an opposition to identity, is concentrated in one way, of course.
In his film, the instance in the primary reference, Dick Tracy (1990)
also as in Elvis — emerges musically in perhaps the clearest form in
songs presenting his through the title role.21

Dawson and (1990), in addition to the backing vocals, features both Medrano's semi-spoken
and soul-like styles, and also brevity, interpolation. 'Like a Finger' (1991)
is structured sound's centro, between the three keyboard lyrics by the verses
and colored, gospel-like在这里, it is in the chorus, creating divergent
modes of quasi-religious incantation. In the introduction to 'Vogue'
(1990) fat from the Dick Tracy-derived album 'I'm Bruised', we hear
Medrano ask: "What are you looking at?" and instruct us to 'strike the
poet's end in the song's vividly and nicely called of Hollywood green
—from Astaire to Monroe — connecting himself to a historical aesthetics
of the genre.

The alignment of screen fantasy and dance-floor (the
after as object of desire, the dance as setting for erotic display) provides
the context for the dialogue in Medrano's performances between
mainstream musical-theatrical traditions on the one hand (dallal, musical,
Hollywood, and black music and youth subcultures on the other), like
Elvis Presley, who also brought together rock, bodily gesture and clasical
mimicry, he constructs himself as a 'romantic hero' — one appealing
especially to girls and women, his film, bridging cultures, merging
histories.

Aesthetics

The sphere of 'authenticity' dominates mainstream rock vocalists: 'real
experience,' expressed with 'liveness,' is regarded as the indispensable
basis of good (that is, 'honest') singing. The tendency to autobiography
(for an illusory autobiography) towards which this position is
illustrated as its most extreme by the work of 'confessional' singer-songwriters,
from Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen down to Tracy Chapman
and F. H. Harvey. As Steve Voig has pointed out, 22 what happens here is
that the two distinctive vectorial levels — that of the 'text' and that of the 'inter-
pretation' — are conflated; thus the subject of the song's lyric (of the 'artist' or
literary theorist's call it) is identified with that of the performance (the
representation). When letta logics argue about 'me and Shirley MacLaine' in
her famous recording of the Emily Kristofferson song with this title, most
listeners probably identify the 'me' as logics, and, similarly, when Elvis

20 Rock singing

Presley sings that's all right mama, that's all right with me; the 'me' is heard as being Elvis. But such elision is by no means universal. In
"Howlback Fresh," Elvis identifies the 'broken-hearted lovers' variously
as 'they' and 'you' as well as 'I,' opening up a gap between danced and
consciousness, and when James Brown insists that 'peopel get a really new
bag,' it would seem that we hear Brown, the performer, looking at and
descrying himself as 'peaple. When Johnny Horton, in 'Holiday in the Sun,'
admits that 'I don't understand this bit at all,' the gap is consciously
manipulated.

Obviously, such divergences complicate patterns of relationship
between listenents and singers. But it needs to be remembered that the rock
voice not only carries a grammatical position; it is of course also a singing
voice, working in a genre where it is almost always totally dominant.

According to Steven Cohan, the trail left by this amiotic voice itself as
the focus of listeners' identification, empathy and desire. 2

To, etc. Cablin points out, this trope also (and inevitably) leads to an abstract
- that of the real person, the real body, whom we can never possess. This gap is, one
might suppose, only internalized by the way that the recording process
debates the form of any voice of the singer -- though, arguably such
'dovement' can't stimulate the imagination too, an activity simply
coupled not only by cultural knowledge (for example, of voice types and
their associations) but, by sheer exponential growth in the surrounding
visual apparatus (film, TV, video, publicity photos). Moreover, the
recording process also may be used to amplify and monetize personal
personality (through mixing, double-tracking, echo and other electronic
techniques), creating larger-than-life effects and bringing the star 'closer'
/or the listener. Given that rock was the first musical genre to be crafted for
and through recording, this is clearly important. But the potential of
such techniques and usages is manifold and varied, and smooth pat-
tterns of connection between/advisory must be guarded. Furthermore, while the rock
voice may often possess a stylistic coherence, this is, as we found earlier,
not always the case. Elvis Presley's vocal orchestration and boogying
Jackies, James Brown's para-linguistic extremes, Madonna's multiple
characterizations, Johnny Horton's self-exploding mannerisms -- all frag-
ment the singing subject, and, with it, the positions of response available
to listeners. Arguably, it is within this whole multi-faceted nexus of
self-consciousness that the play of the unconsciously on the constitution
of 'vocal subjectivity' is to be located.

This play has been theorized by Roland Barthes through his analysis of
the 'song-of-song.' By contrast with the 'lyric-song' -- which covers every-	hing in the performance which is in the service of communication, repre-
sentation, expression -- the 'gene-song,' or 'voice of the voice,' concerns
that synthetic dimension where the voice's 'very austerity' - the volubleness of its sound signifies its desire to an erotic pleasure that disrupts the boundaries of the essential subject. Morphet's theory has been mostly discounted within rock studies, but seldom applied analytically - and with reason, perhaps, since the image of the de-personalized material body is not as much a product of romantic wishful thinking as its approximate opposite, the all-consuming phreno-scopy beyond the ideologues of authenticity. This is not to deny the centrality of the 'social body' to rock music effects. Indeed, rock might be described, in its most typical form, as over-the-top's 'voice machine' - heavily in its domination, culturally and structurally, by singers, but also in its takeovers from African American models of ways of treating instruments as would the voice, a tendency often embedded by electronic technology (punch-backs, violins, wha-wha, etc.). This suggests that it might be better to continue the process of desire and identity surrounding rock in terms not so much of 'lack', as of performativeness and the 'dialogical' account of semiotics and sub-identity offered by the German theorist Michael Baxandall. We might then describe the ever-present interactivity of rock singing - its multiple references to other songs, other voices, a variety of vocal traditions, a range of vocalizing techniques - as a symptom of a state of, as to speak, over-completion.

Needless to say, much of the argument in this section is pertinent to all singing. However, it seems especially relevant to rock because this is a genre which almost always presents itself as performance. While admittedly, performances, in the concert arena to mimic their pre-existing recordings, the records offer themselves, architecturally as 'performances', even if they are seldom studied much to produce. Generally, performances create, or participate in creating, their own material. 'Composition' taken at their delivery, performance-like evocativeness, the usual delivery of the song is integral to their editorial status. Thus, the role of the singer and other performers, as protagonists relating both to their material and to their listeners, are critical. Simon Frith argues that these dimensions of the singer's role should be distinguished. First, the singer plays the role required for the song 'which may relate to a first-person position in the lyric or may not'; second, he or she plays the role of star, and must relate to the performance to their pre-existing star persona; and third, the singer enact the gestures of a real person, physically present (visually, socially, bodily), a site of audience desire. As a role these dimensions partly, or sometimes wholly, overlap - the different protagonists move together and map on to each other; at times, though, they may be held apart - by performance techniques or by listening strategies.

In its mainstream tradition, rock singing, under the sign of 'authenticity'...