

Play It Again: Rock Music Reissues and the Production of the Past for the Present

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The reissue is a significant yet under-studied aspect of the music industries and popular music culture. The continual resurrection of recordings via reissues alters how the music and musicians of the past are understood in the present. This article develops a theory of rock music reissues, analyzing them as cultural artifacts that transform the originals' historical meaning and cultural status. The influential role of paratextual and extratextual materials is closely analyzed through case studies of reissues of the Beach Boys' Pet Sounds, Gary Wilson's You Think You Really Know Me, and the various artists compilation Where the Action Is! L.A. Nuggets 1965–1968. It is argued that the reissue process necessarily decodes a text's past and recodes it for the present, fundamentally altering our understanding of our cultural history.

Introduction

Music reissues are taken-for-granted objects in our popular culture. Practically anyone who owns even a handful of records possesses at least a favorite artist's "greatest hits" collection or an updated CD version of a cherished album. Yet, relatively little scholarship exists that examines how the resurrection of these "old" musical texts affects their meaning and value. That is, each time a recording is repackaged and rereleased, the original text is altered and its cultural status is reconstructed, sometimes a little but often a lot.

Repackaged and re-released sound recordings have been cornerstones of the commercial recording industry since its advent in the early 20th century. Record labels eager for new content to market routinely purchase or license rights to the previously released recordings of both contemporary and historical artists. These recordings are sometimes reproduced nearly identically to previous editions, while at other times reconfigured and repackaged into single-artist anthologies or parceled out to genre compilations. Often, any information indicating that these releases existed in prior incarnations, such as discographical history or original recording dates, is left off the packaging or even purposely obscured in the hopes of attracting a new, wider

audience (Ivey 165). Today, rereleasing an independently issued recording is often the first step in moving an artist to a major label; “greatest hits” collections of famous artists are ubiquitous; and many film and television soundtrack albums are assembled through the licensing of previously released recordings. In recent decades, however, re-releases of old recordings have increased in number and visibility; since the 1980s, music reissues—most commonly in the form of remastered “deluxe edition” albums, rediscovered rare recordings, and artist or genre CD box sets—have become prominently framed explicitly *as* reissues. This move draws on established knowledge and meanings while simultaneously ascribing new value and expectations to reissued recordings, which in turn significantly frames how audiences encounter and interpret these texts.

In this article, I analyze sound recordings as cultural texts, exploring how reissues transform the meaning and value of these “old” texts in the present. Particular focus is placed on the “rock” music genre and how issues of cultural production—namely, the efforts of the recording industry, as well as critics and other cultural intermediaries— influence textuality. Therefore, an emphasis is placed on the role of paratextual (cover art, liner notes, advertisements) and other extratextual (reviews, awards, affiliations) materials in the reissue discourse. It is through these elements surrounding the recording itself that its sense and meaning, or textuality, is created and certain dominant understandings of the music and musician(s) are established.

To be sure, there are industrial imperatives for reissues. They are products of a recording industry operating strategically in a capitalist society, and they serve an integral function in sustaining commercial music markets. Reissues are a way for record companies to exploit back-catalog holdings at relatively low financial cost and risk, as well as to canonize their own albums and musicians, thereby preserving their dominant role in popular music’s past. Yet the selection and production of reissues concerns more than mere profit motive.¹ As Keith Negus explains, “*an industry produces culture and culture produces an industry*” (14, emphasis in original), meaning that, while corporate strategies and business practices influence music reissue culture and discourse, they are also significantly influenced by broader cultural patterns. Reissues are social and historical texts that often re-emerge and are rendered culturally significant at particular times and for particular reasons. They operate in a feedback loop of sorts, reissues often appearing on the market in response to demands and discourses created by fans and critics beyond the recording industry’s control. This is particularly true of rare or otherwise obscure recordings that are independently produced outside the major label system. Thus, consumers do not necessarily read a reissue text in a particular way dictated by the reissue producers. Rather, reissues commonly serve to reaffirm readings that already exist in the broader musical culture, confirming fan discourse and thereby providing “evidence” for fans to marshal. Notably for the argument I present in this article, though, reissues often serve as cultural touchstones of sorts, texts through which previously underground music culture reappraisals are exposed to wider audiences and cemented within the mainstream popular culture. To that end, this article investigates how the discourse

surrounding any and all reissues involves both decoding the text's past and recoding it for the present and future. It is mainly through paratexts that these "old" texts are decoded/recoded for contemporary audiences. In this way, reissuing a sound recording is a form of history writing—an act that fundamentally rewrites its cultural meaning and value.

Toward a Theory of Rock Music Reissues

The phenomenon of reissues has been almost entirely overlooked in the fields of popular music studies, media studies, and musicology. Only a few articles exist anywhere in the scholarly literature that directly address the power reissues and reissue discourse have in reshaping the meaning and value attributed to bygone recordings. The two most notable pieces to date are both case studies of specific albums or genres, namely Katherine Skinner's study of the CD box set reissue of the 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music* and Polly McMichael's examination of the role CD reissues have had in the recent historical revisionism of 1970s and 1980s Soviet Union rock music. Skinner traces how Harry Smith's *Anthology* was elevated from largely unknown text to treasured cultural document due to a mix of forces: public praise from influential cultural intermediaries, including musicians, journalists, and scholars; changes in the organizational structure of the music industry; the "aura of historical significance" bestowed upon it through liner notes and its reissuing institution, Smithsonian Folkways (70); and the emergence of a new genre of music in the 1990s, Americana, that provided a fresh social context in which to evaluate the older text. McMichael investigates how the retrospective repackaging of scarce countercultural Soviet-era rock recordings has been part of a larger effort by post-Soviet audiences to nostalgically rewrite their nation's difficult history, plus establish a legacy that legitimates the contemporary Russian rock music scene. Importantly, both Skinner and McMichael reveal how the meaning and value of musical texts are fluid and how the practice of reissuing enables textual recoding. Neither author, though, attempts to apply her findings beyond her specific case study to develop a broader theory of reissues. Moreover, both highlight rather exceptional cases that have significantly influenced the popular memory of either an entire musical genre or national history. While I do agree that reissues can serve as sites for rewriting music, cultural, and even political history, this is surely not the case for all repackaged and rereleased recordings. Most reissues operate on a smaller scale, reframing the historical meaning of only the musical text itself; any resonance that paratextual decoding/recoding might have for a larger body of music or society is secondary and small (albeit not insignificant). I suggest looking at the more banal, everyday function of ordinary reissues in the popular music culture.

The other area of academic study that touches upon the importance of the recirculation and reevaluation of musical texts is that dealing with musical canon. While there is a considerable body of work dealing with canons and canon formation in the spheres of "high art," including literature and classical music, canons in rock and

popular music have only just begun to receive significant attention.² In this research the rock canon is primarily seen as being created and perpetuated by artists, academics, fans, music awards, and popular media critics and historians. Reissues and reissue producers are not given a substantial role, if any, in establishing the canonical values and criteria. For instance, Matthew Bannister frames the formation of a 1980s “indie alternative rock” canon as “a history of record collectors,” placing all of the canonizing power in the activities of fans, shopkeepers, and other connoisseurs, while no such power is granted to the actual texts they were collecting or the institutions issuing those texts (81). Elsewhere, Ralf von Appen and André Doehring acknowledge the role of the recording industry in supplying the canon, yet they see popular press lists of the “100 greatest albums of all time” type as the most influential canonizing force. For them, reissues are little more than an industry response to a critic- and consumer-generated demand, and a form of branding designed simply to keep already canonized artists always in the public mind (28). Carys Wyn Jones does cite the selection and availability of recordings for re-release as a factor in canonization (104), yet she too ultimately regards canonization as happening outside the recording industry. Reissues, for Jones, fail to gain traction unless the music culture first develops a renewed interest organically on its own (137). I accept most of these authors’ arguments and agree that fan and critical discourses influence the popular perception of historical albums and artists immensely, and that such discourse is often co-opted by the industry to assign value to new reissues. Nevertheless, these studies diminish or completely ignore questions of how reissues as cultural artifacts (i.e. texts) enable audiences to access the past and, in the process, reconstruct meaning and value. Among other things, it could be argued that reissue paratexts like liner notes are expressly directed at music critics and their aesthetic preferences, since they are the first consumers of the reissued music and their reviews are relied upon to prompt consumers to purchase. Notably, the majority of critics are middle-class white males (Powers), and thus their tastes dominate. This situation leads to the reproduction of particular affinities and ways of seeing.

Media studies scholars have recently contributed a growing body of work on television and film repeats, reruns, and restorations from which a useful framework for analyzing the textuality of music reissues can be constructed. Included here is the work of Derek Kompare on television reruns; Barbara Klinger on the exhibition of “classic” feature films on cable television; both Kompare and Matt Hills on DVD box sets of television series; and Jonathan Gray on film and television DVD bonus materials and other paratexts. For instance, Kompare illustrates how the industrialized repetition of cultural texts functions as “a cultural and historical resource for all generations” (*Rerun Nation* 103), albeit one that brings into being certain canons (including genres, styles, themes) and interpretations (myths and ideologies) at the expense of other texts and ways of thinking. Similarly, Klinger explicates how the cultural industries increase the value of old texts through a variety of techniques, including “forcefully rehistoriciz[ing]” texts through the use of the “classic” label (94). She also likens the recirculation of texts to a form of history

writing, showing how the reappraisal of an old text changes the reputation of the text and its author, as well as producing in the public memory revisionist accounts of social, cultural, and political history (103). Perhaps most importantly, I have borrowed from Klinger (who herself is interpreting Theodor Adorno) the concept of reissue discourse performing the dual task of decoding/recoding: “To achieve sense in the present, [vintage artifacts] must be both decoded to make their past legible to contemporary audiences and recoded, that is, otherwise prepared for life in new circumstances of exhibition” (132). Next, Kompare and Hills both examine how the release of television series on DVD has drastically altered the reception and perception of television, adding additional “filters of meaning” and layers of textual experience not previously available to viewers (Kompare, “Publishing Flow” 349). These authors provide a necessary starting point to explore questions of how audio remastering, enhanced packaging, and other music reissue bonus materials act as signifiers of value. Likewise, I have adapted from Gray’s writing on DVD bonus materials the notion that these music reissue paratexts “append aura, author, and authenticity to the text” (83).

This article focuses on reissue discourse occurring at the point of production, in relation to the industry and cultural intermediaries. I do not wish to imply that audiences unquestioningly accept the industry-inscribed meanings given to reissues. Quite to the contrary, media studies scholars like John Fiske have convincingly shown that the interpretation of a text is dependent upon context and each individual’s own knowledge and experience. Similarly, Stuart Hall’s “encoding/decoding” model establishes that in any mass communication exchange the producer’s preferred meaning (encoded message) is not fixed and audiences can generate meanings (decode messages) in different ways (168). Nevertheless, as Kompare has demonstrated, repeated cultural forms have a long history of structuring people’s experience of culture. The cultural industries, regardless of political or economic motives, produce not just media products but also “cultural and social practices, skills, sensibilities, and ideologies” (*Rerum Nation*, p. xii). Thus, my interest here lies first and foremost with the point of entry into the discursive realm of reissues, that is, with encoding and where textuality begins—or with the ability of reissue paratexts to simultaneously re-circulate (*decode*) for contemporary audiences certain preferred meanings from a text’s past while also proffering (*recoding*) additional new meanings that update the text for modern consumption.

Theories of textuality and paratextuality are central to the analysis presented in this article. Here, I am drawing on the work of Gray and his study of film and television paratexts. While it is tempting to view the text as a physical object (e.g. a vinyl album), Gray, following Roland Barthes, suggests that such tangible objects would be the “work,” whereas “the text is held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse” and “*is experienced only in an activity of production*” (157, emphasis in original). Thus, the text is an assemblage—“a contingent entity, either in the process of forming and transforming or vulnerable to further formation or transformation” (7)—and the meaning of a text is never stable. This is where paratexts come in: they are the texts, created by reissue producers, which support and prepare audiences for

the musical text (25). Paratexts create texts, manage them, and fill them with meaning. In particular, reissue producers use paratexts to “police proper interpretations” (79). Gray divides paratexts into “entryway paratexts,” which introduce audiences to texts and frame their expectations and initial interactions, and “in media res paratexts,” which are encountered after initial exposure (35). Entryway paratexts include promotional materials (posters, advertisements, artist interviews) or album art and liner notes—any material that initiates some understanding or expectation of the musical text prior to audiences actually listening to the work. In media res paratexts include artist or label websites, fan discussion boards, award shows, interviews, and so on, that listeners encounter after the fact, encouraging them to go back and reconsider the text in a different light. As Gray points out, paratexts are always at work creating and recreating the meaning of the text in the mind of the audience: “there is never a point in time at which a text frees itself from the contextualizing powers of paratextuality” (45).

A few additional terms need defining, beginning with “reissue,” which simply indicates any release of a recording, whether it be a song or full-length album, that has been released at least once previously, regardless of the format or issuing institution. For example, a single track that is separated from an album and then compiled within a “greatest hits” collection is regarded here as a reissue. “Recording industry” refers to those institutions most directly involved in the production of musical texts and, along with them, social meaning.³ The recording industry can be grouped among the various cultural industries (television, film, radio, publishing, performing arts), based on Raymond Williams’s definition of culture as “the *signifying system* through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (13, emphasis in original). In addition to the commercial record companies, the recording industry features a wide range of creative, technical, and management personnel involved in the production, distribution, and sale of recorded music, including but certainly not limited to musicians, record producers, publishers, graphic designers, publicists, and even manufacturing plants, retailers, and government agencies. The term “reissue producers” is used to encapsulate this rather large grouping of firms and personnel whose joint efforts bring music reissues into being. Another important set of symbol creators in the reissue discourse are popular media critics, whom Pierre Bourdieu calls “cultural intermediaries” (359). These cultural commentators include journalists, newspaper and magazine editors, and radio and television producers. They are particularly influential tastemakers due to their gatekeeper-like function mediating between producers and consumers. Though they operate relatively independently of the recording industry, these cultural intermediaries are nonetheless located within the cultural industries. Moreover, as suggested above, cultural intermediaries have a tendency to reproduce (but also influence) the dominant readings of reissues offered by producers.

These theories of textuality and paratextuality can be applied to any musical text, including the original release of a record, not just its reissue. That is, all records are coded and their cultural meanings and values are constantly changing. My underlying

argument in this article would be that popular music studies scholars should pay closer attention to album packaging, promotional materials, and other apparent “ephemera” across the board. The reissue process deserves particular attention, however, precisely because of the sometimes implicit but more often explicit decoding/recoding that takes place. Some features that are fairly standard for reissue releases, such as third-party liner note essays and even blunt framing devices like “deluxe edition” or “greatest hits,” do not usually accompany the original versions. It is the revisionist capacity of these paratextual and extratextual materials, and the power they have to actively rewrite cultural history (often for a new audience far removed from the original release and its historical context), that necessitates a separate theoretical framework and special consideration for reissues.

Observing the Rock Music Reissue Field

Music reissues come in an array of sizes and forms, just as there are a variety of reissue producers operating under a multitude of motives and there are numerous types of paratexts that can combine in countless ways to create reissue textuality. It is my goal here to show, through an assortment of examples, how previously released recordings are routinely decoded/recoded through the presence of paratexts in the reissue process. The recording industry is a complex site of production, and I propose here a few classifications that may be used to make sense of the reissue field. To begin, there are three general approaches to reissuing old material: the quality historical reissue, the budget repackaged reissue, and the archival reissue. The first two approaches reflect distinctions made by William Ivey about country music vinyl reissues in the 1970s (164–65). I have added the third, archival reissue approach to update the model. The archival reissue exists somewhere in-between the poles of “quality” and “budget.”

Quality historical reissues are clearly distinguished as “special,” “deluxe,” or “expanded” editions, including specialty box sets. These releases typically feature remixed/remastered audio and elaborate packaging with extensive liner notes (essays by critics or historians, recollections from the recording artist, and so on), elaborate photo spreads, and the like. Such enhancements are readily announced to the consumer through advertisements, promotional stickers, and other entryway paratexts. I use the term “quality” here not as an aesthetic measure but rather as a reflection of how reissue producers frame them—that is, as being distinctive, well-crafted, and of superior economic and cultural value to pre-existing versions. To that end, quality historical reissues are almost exclusively aimed at the high-end market of collectors and audiophiles, and they are priced accordingly.

In contrast, budget repackaged reissues are cheaper for the consumer but also much more inexpensively produced. Among these are the ubiquitous single-disc “best of” artist collections, as well as the various artists’ “hits” compilation albums made famous by companies like K-Tel or the *Now That’s What I Call Music!* CD series. Other reissues of the budget variety include the re-pressing of back-catalog titles from one

format to another, such as from vinyl to CD, with minimal or no audio remastering, no bonus tracks added, and no enhancements to the packaging (in fact, the packaging is often minimized).⁴ These re-releases are typically not marked (or marketed) as reissues: the packaging often omits detailed discographical information and they are not subject to promotional campaigns. In general, budget reissues are the epitome of a copyright holder exploiting its intellectual property for sheer profit maximization; as little capital as possible is put into production, and no explicit overtures are made to reframe the meaning of the recording or artist. Certainly, the mere act of issuing a “greatest hits” collection could be viewed as an attempt to legitimate and canonize an artist (i.e. one must have multiple “hits” worth propagating). However, my interest in this article lies primarily with those reissues framed explicitly by their producers as reissues, namely quality historical reissues and archival reissues.

The archival reissue approach is distinct because these represent orphaned, rare, or out-of-print recordings that are usually picked up by a new label and put into wider circulation. Most commonly, these are “lost” or “cult” recordings that were ignored or unknown in their time but which have found a new audience in the present. Like quality historical reissues, archival reissues are usually remastered with bonus tracks and liner notes appended. Like budget repackaged reissues, however, archival reissues typically reproduce the original artwork as faithfully as possible, plus the cost to the consumer is kept relatively low.

Which of these three approaches is taken depends largely upon who is producing the reissue, and therefore a distinction, also adapted from Ivey (163), can be made between small labels and major labels. Small record labels would be those most commonly identified today as “indie,” or independent of the majors in a productive and creative sense. Currently, there are three major labels in the global recording industry: Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group. Drawing a hard line between small and major labels is another difficult task, though, as many indie labels are still reliant on the majors for distribution. And, while there are a number of small labels that work primarily with reissues, such as Sundazed, Rounder, Cherry Red, Numero Group, and Shout! Factory, commitment to the reissue field alone is not a sure indicator of small-label status. Today, most of the majors have dedicated archival or “legacy” divisions, too: Universal has Hip-O, Sony has Legacy, and Warner has Rhino. Furthermore, the category of “small labels” is vast and hardly homogeneous: they can range from the truly small, such as an operation run by a single individual with only a handful of releases, to much larger firms with dozens of employees and hundreds of releases that are technically “independent” but run on a business model nearly identical to the majors.

Nevertheless, the difference between small and major labels can largely be narrowed down to motives: small labels direct releases toward niche subcultural groups and are more committed to preservation, whereas major labels are profit-maximizers that typically seek to reach a broader audience. The majors are going to make an investment of time and money only when it will pay dividends in sales. Small labels are

often satisfied to profit minimally or simply break even. This is partly for ideological reasons: they frequently view themselves as stewards of rock music and its various subcultures, as well as define themselves in contradistinction to the commercialism of the large record companies (Thompson 49). To elaborate, it is rare that a major label will release a reissue that is not already in their back catalog or that is not the work of an artist presently affiliated to the label—that is, they take only the quality historical or budget repackaged approaches to reissuing. However, many of today's most prominent indie rock labels (Merge, Matador, Drag City, Secretly Canadian) release reissues alongside their contemporary releases, a large number of which are *not* their own back-catalog recordings. Instead, they are licensed recordings from previously unaffiliated older artists that follow the archival reissue approach. The reason small labels take this archival approach is two-fold: the owners and staff of these small companies feel a sense of a commitment to preserving the music culture and, in addition, doing so increases the label's cultural capital, bringing them prestige and authenticity.

There are also four main criteria that reissue producers use to create meaning and value for a text: authenticity, social history, geniuses, and masterpieces. Authenticity is perhaps the single most influential evaluative criterion in rock music culture. Rock authenticity is focused on notions of creativity, performance, commerciality, and community (Pickering 201–20; Keightley, “Reconsidering Rock” 131–39). Authenticity assumes that artists write and perform their own music; thus, those recordings with the least noticeable production and the most live-sounding performance tend to be deemed the most authentic. The commercial setting in which a recording is produced also situates authenticity: independent productions are regarded as more authentic, while major label productions are less authentic—hence, the prominence of “art versus commerce” discourse and the indie/major label dichotomy in rock culture.

For reissue producers, authenticity is the most difficult quality to achieve and, at the same time, the one they frequently rely upon the most. Hard-core music fans and record collectors are well known for their almost pathological obsession with original pressings, especially of vinyl records (Shuker 50–52). In these small but influential social circles, the more rare and limited the record, the more collectible and authentic it is usually perceived to be (though there are a multitude of factors, including demand and condition, that impact a record's cost and desirability). There is often a predilection among die-hard collectors not only for first pressings but also for imports, misprints, signed editions, and other oddities. The value in this scenario—both the economic value and the cultural value—is ultimately a form of scarcity value, derived from a record's rarity. As such, reissues are often disdained by hard-core fans and collectors for not being originals; any deviation from the original is perceived as inauthentic. Perhaps more importantly, though, die-hards may resent reissues for making the music more readily available and exposing the artist/record to a wider audience. In effect, reissues (and the reviews and other paratexts and extratexts that accompany them) reveal the die-hards' closely guarded secret, reducing the scarcity of

the recordings themselves while also attracting new (i.e. inauthentic) fans in the process. (In an odd twist, though, an artist's newfound popularity sometimes results in skyrocketing demand and prices for the original releases, regardless of the music's availability on reissues.)

Reissues, no doubt, are a point of contestation within the rock music culture. Reissue producers, however, attempt to combat the perception of reissues as less valuable or less authentic by creating new forms of scarcity value. Perhaps the commonest tactic is to add extra B-sides, alternate takes, demo tracks, and other rare or previously unreleased recordings, making the new release somehow "enhanced" or more complete than other existing versions. Indeed, a reissue that does not offer any exclusive or rare content lacks scarcity value, and typically will be perceived as a rip-off, at least by hard-core fans and collectors. Similarly, as discussed with the *Pet Sounds* example below, reissues will regularly tout audio remixing or remastering, and sometimes even reordered track lists and different artwork. These alterations are often presented as corrections to an original that was somehow flawed. While some collectors may view the errors in the original as more authentic, other listeners will uphold the artist's "definitive" version as more authentic and/or simply prefer to listen to the one with better audio quality. Other enhancements may include pressing albums on high-quality, audiophile-grade 180-gram vinyl, including albums from the CD era that were never previously available on the (currently in-demand) vinyl format. Another strategy is to create artificial scarcity through limited edition pressings, hand-numbering, special colored vinyl, and the like. These are just some of the ways in which reissue producers attempt to control or redirect the discourse of authenticity. In a few of these instances, the question may even become less about whether the reissue is more or less authentic than the original release and more about the reissue itself becoming a sought-after, authentic collectible in its own right. (This would certainly seem to be the case with Third Man/Revenant's elaborate *The Rise and Fall of Paramount Records* two-volume "wonder-cabinet" box set, released in 2013 and 2014.)

Ultimately, authenticity is rooted in multiple conditions as well as in the perceptions of the entire audience (not just rarity and the views of hard-core fans and collectors). Another factor reissue producers rely upon is social history. Those performers and recordings that are seen to reflect the social and political interests of particular subcultural or countercultural communities are considered the most authentic (e.g. the 1960s protest movement). In such cases, reissue recordings may also be judged by social history criteria, wherein the objects themselves are regarded as unmediated cultural documents reflecting a subculture's or even an entire nation's past. The author- and works-centered standards of geniuses and masterpieces are obviously related to authenticity, too. In both cases, the reissue is elevated based on the celebration of the musician(s) as a genius and the recorded work as genuine art. Notably, these same criteria are among the main factors used in the process of canon formation (Regev 92). These four standards—authenticity, social history, geniuses, and masterpieces—are used in order to frame reissues for present-day audiences.

And it is through paratexts that these values of authenticity, historical import, author, and aura are attached to a text.

Quality Historical Reissue: The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*

The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds: 40th Anniversary*, a limited edition CD and DVD combo released by the EMI (now Universal) subsidiary Capitol Records in 2006, is a textbook case of a quality historical reissue from a major label. At the outset, it has the appearance of a run-of-the-mill reissue: a special edition "anniversary" release of a widely hailed "classic" album. I intend to show, however, how paratexts work to re-contextualize even hugely popular albums and artists.

The *Pet Sounds* album, originally released on Capitol in 1966, has been widely recognized as one of the greatest rock/pop albums of all time by influential music magazines, including *Mojo* and *NME*. *Rolling Stone* placed it in second position on its "500 Greatest Albums of All Time" list in 2003. In addition to critics, famous musicians have paid homage to the album, Paul McCartney even citing it as "the big influence" on the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (the number one album on *Rolling Stone's* list). Already located firmly within the pop music canon, a high production value reissue is very likely to result in profits for the major label—it is about as close to a sure thing as can be found in the record business. This point is further evidenced by the fact that the *Pet Sounds* album has been rereleased no fewer than a dozen times in the United States in different versions and formats.

Assembled in a green suede case with a book-like binding, the packaging of this deluxe, limited edition version in no way replicates the album's original artwork, nor does it contain a track-listing or any textual information on its exterior. It simply has "The Beach Boys Pet Sounds 40th Anniversary" embossed on the front cover. The presumption here is that the author and work are so well known that no other signifying information is required; the release can even be freed from its now-iconic cover art, an image of the band feeding animals at a petting zoo. Furthermore, the suede exterior packaging marks the release as extraordinary (i.e. this is hardly typical packaging for a CD); the conventions of a mass-marketed product are removed (company logo, barcode, copyright information, etc.); and allusions are even made to the high-culture realm of literature through the book-like presentation. All of this confers upon it the aura of a work of art (a distinction that pop music is rarely given), and the suede case even gives the appearance of a handcrafted object. As Kompare writes about DVD box sets, this attention to design is "a marker of distinction" ("Publishing Flow" 349).

The reissue is not just repackaged but filled with extras as well. Upon opening the case, the listener is presented with a disc fitted inside each cover and a booklet of highly detailed discographical information and extensive liner notes. The 28-page booklet is affixed to the spine, again giving the entire package the appearance of a book. As is standard for reissue liner notes, the main essay, written by documentary filmmaker and Brian Wilson biographer David Leaf, attests to all four of the reissue

criteria: authenticity, historical import, author, and aura. It begins, “*Pet Sounds* is an album that has not only musically stood the test of time better than perhaps any other Sixties release but has become one of the few, true milestones of what is considered to be rock’s most creative era” (6). Thus, *Pet Sounds* is unquestionably positioned as a masterpiece, not only of its era but of any era. The essay goes on to praise the album as a creative *tour de force*—highlighting its original use of sound effects, vocal harmonies, unconventional instrumentation, and recording techniques—and to position songwriter and Beach Boys front man Brian Wilson as the genius behind it all. Indeed, the myth of Wilson as a musical genius, a brilliant but troubled artist, has been well established in pop music history (Gaines 152). That myth is consistently validated in the paratexts surrounding this reissue, including Leaf’s liner notes and “The Making of *Pet Sounds*” video (one of four video segments on the DVD, which also contains a photo gallery).

Furthermore, *Pet Sounds* is depicted as Wilson’s masterpiece alone, not the band’s. In Wilson’s own words, it was his “special project,” a departure from the group’s earlier music (5). Leaf repeatedly describes Brian’s “vision” (7), his “studio mastery” (8), and his determination to make a “perfect” album (9). For one, this narrows the creativity down to the talents of a singular genius. This is also significant, however, for establishing rock authenticity. Prior to *Pet Sounds*, despite being one of the most popular musical acts of the 1960s, the Beach Boys were famous for glossy, smooth, rather frivolous pop songs about surfing, driving cars, and dating (“Surfin’ U.S.A.,” “I Get Around,” “California Girls”). It was hardly the kind of music that the rock culture, as defined above, would judge authentic. Hence, the departure to more serious, almost avant-garde sounding material with deeply introspective lyrics was a stark change. The fact that the album did not sell particularly well upon its initial release further positions it as anti-commercial, as well as validating its artistry and authenticity. Leaf heightens the tension, too, by alluding to the recording industry as an inherently corrupt industrial system. The label cares only about hits, and its deadlines and demands for “product” are interruptions to Wilson’s artistic genius (8). Here, Leaf is drawing on a common rock authenticity trope, that of the innocent rock-star protagonist pitted against a greedy, manipulative industry (Keightley, “Manufacturing Authenticity” 175). The text’s authenticity is further enhanced by its being framed as an honest, intimate work created for the fans: in the booklet, Wilson states that “I needed to get this one album out to my fans and the public from my heart and soul” and concludes that “this album is personally from me to you” (5). In total, all of these various bonus materials surround the text “with a paratextual veneer of artistry, aura, and authority” (Gray 115). Moreover, the entire reissue project is presented as being conducted “with Brian Wilson’s approval” (3), a move that further authenticates this new rerelease.

Authorial endorsement is especially important in light of the fact that the recording is being remastered in stereo, which some fans and critics are sure to view as an alteration of the original work, recorded in mono. Notably, the “original mono program” is presented front-and-center on the first disc, whereas the not one but two

different stereo mixes (one in “Hi-Res 96 kHz/24-bit PCM Stereo” and the other in “Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound”) are presented on the bonus DVD. Hence, priority is given to presenting the album in a manner that appears faithful to the original—and yet the mono mix is remastered and there is a bonus track added (“Hang On to Your Ego”). For Klinger, this is the dual task at hand in the restoration of classic films: for the sake of authenticity the original work must be faithfully reproduced according to the author’s intentions, while at the same time, in order for it to be marketable in the present, it needs to be enhanced to take full advantage of new technologies (119–22). Ordinarily, adds Klinger, this means delivering a “new, improved” version of the work that noticeably alters it; however, these changes are framed as enhancements that maintain “the spirit of the original” while realizing the author’s unfulfilled vision (21). This often means correcting audio-visual problems resulting from the technical limitations of the past, which the superior technology of the present can fix. There are in fact two essays in the *Pet Sounds* booklet from reissue engineer Mark Linett describing the technical production of the reissue. Linett narrates at length the difficulties of transferring an album from mono to stereo, including the loss of a few vocal parts from the original. Yet, he is quick to remind readers that Wilson was consulted on and approved all of the changes, and that a number of the omissions in fact correct changes that were made to Wilson’s original mix, thereby bringing this re-release closer to the author’s intended vision (24). Ultimately, Linett concludes that the new stereo mix has “added another dimension to the music” (one that is superior even to the previous 1996 stereo mix) and “creat[ed] a new way to hear a great musical masterpiece” (4). Thus, the re-release version is actually offered as being better—and more authentic—than any of its predecessors, including even the original, since it is, with the author’s supervision, bringing to completion a work that was previously incomplete.

If paratexts like liner notes aim to convince audiences that old recordings are aesthetically and historically significant and thus worth revisiting, the emphasis on “digital wizardry” (Klinger 122) drives home that the newly remastered reissue is *the* version to own, superior to other previous re-released editions. Also included on the *Pet Sounds* reissue is a plethora of session and discographical information. Many of these production notes indicate why a specific version or mix of a song was selected, which thereby marks it as the “official” and superior version. Even more, bits of commentary interspersed throughout provide listeners with a mix of historical anecdotes and advice on how to appreciate each song. Notes tell listeners what is “musically notable” about different tracks, highlighting certain elements of instrumentation or composition. For instance, the vocal to “God Only Knows” is declared to be “without question . . . one of the prettiest vocals ever recorded” (20). Returning to the technical: every performer and piece of instrumentation on every track is accounted for; the exact date, location, and engineering personnel responsible for every recording are listed; and an assortment of other notes addressing the recording, mixing, and release history of each track are provided. It would be easy to look past this overabundance of technical and historical information—most of it absent from the original pressing of the album—as

being of interest only to the most die-hard fans and audiophiles. That would be a mistake, however, as the presence of this information reflects an “archival consciousness” (Klinger 117) that further monumentalizes the text and aids in the rhetorical construction of *Pet Sounds* as a landmark achievement, a cultural artifact that deserves to be safeguarded as pristinely as possible.

Here, too, is an example of the feedback loop between cultural intermediaries and reissue producers. Retrospective reviews, “greatest of all time” list rankings, and other accolades from cultural intermediaries generate public interest in an artist and/or specific recording. This is especially true of older and rare texts that become scarce or simply forgotten with time, at which point the (re)assessments of a select group of cultural intermediaries get handed down as “common knowledge” due to a lack of access to the original texts among the wider public (Kompore 108). Once a release achieves “classic” status, record companies respond with high-end, quality historical reissues. This move is then reciprocated by the cultural intermediaries by way of even loftier praise during the reissue promotion cycle (reviews, interviews, sometimes even reunions and tribute concerts or albums). The reissue is thusly legitimated through all this paratextual and extratextual discourse, and the artist/album’s legacy is further cemented. The circle is tightened even further when, as described above with David Leaf, notable third parties are brought in to pen liner notes that historicize and authenticate the author and work from what is seemingly an objective position of expertise.

The *Pet Sounds* reissue encapsulates the concept of reissue paratexts performing the work of both decoding and recoding. The liner notes, various “making of” and promotional videos, photo gallery, and even the presence of the “original mono program” serve to present (*decode*) a vision of how it really was back in 1966—that is, what the text supposedly meant for audiences at the time. Simultaneously, these materials work to inscribe (*recode*) new meaning to the text, offering contemporary audiences particular ways to listen to the recordings and regard the author(s). Even though the audience for a reissue of this nature (a pricey upgrade of an album that exists in many other, cheaper formats) is not likely in need of being convinced that Wilson is a genius and the album is a masterpiece, the presence of these paratexts reaffirms fans’ existing comprehension of the album’s value. Indeed, the reputation of *Pet Sounds* has changed considerably in the decades since its initial release, and even though reissues are not entirely responsible for bringing about that shift in opinion, each subsequent re-release has brought with it more praise, thereby reaffirming the album’s status in the public memory as one of the “greatest albums of all time.”

Quality Historical Reissue: *Where the Action Is! L.A. Nuggets 1965–1968*

Another example of a quality historical reissue from a major label is the *Nuggets* series of CD box sets produced by the Warner Music imprint Rhino Records. A series of various artist compilation albums that anthologize garage and psychedelic rock singles from the mid-to-late 1960s, *Nuggets* originated in the 1970s and has turned

into a popular and influential franchise, even inspiring copycat series (*Pebbles*, *Boulders*, *Rubble*, *Gravel*). In 1998, Rhino reissued the original 1972 *Nuggets* LP collection in an expanded CD box-set format, and the label has followed it up with four additional multi-disc box sets. Here, I am focusing on the most recent edition, *Where the Action Is! Los Angeles Nuggets 1965–1968*, a four-CD, 101-song set released in 2009, placing particular emphasis on the promotional sticker attached to it for retail sale.

Promotional album stickers are a ubiquitous component of record packaging for retail stores. These are the stickers affixed to record covers in order to promote certain special values or features of the release. Typically, they invoke extratextual appeals, such as press quotes, awards, “hit” singles, or a performer’s affiliation with celebrities. They are ephemeral by design: attached to the plastic shrink-wrap, they are intended to be thrown away after purchase. Nevertheless, while this might seem a marginal graphic phenomenon, these stickers frame the reissue text for shoppers, telling them what to expect. As an advertising tool, these stickers are intended to simultaneously expand the potential audience while directly hailing the hypothetical target market. Notably, many potential listeners will simply browse their local record shop, read the promo sticker, and move on, choosing not to buy the reissue. As Gray observes with regard to film and television posters, ads, trailers, and the like, many people who encounter these entryway paratexts will never actually view the movie or program. For them, the paratext becomes their only understanding of the text (79). With this in mind, it is worth looking closely at the full text of the promo sticker on *Where the Action Is!*.

The CD box set, packaged in a 9 × 11.5-inch book-style case, features a large 3 × 5-inch red promo sticker on its front cover. In the particular case of reissue or anthology releases, promo stickers have a tendency to proclaim the historical importance of the artist(s) or genre featured within, framing the release as something extraordinary. *Where the Action Is!* is no exception; the full sticker text reads:

4 CD set! 101 mind blowing rarities from the Golden Age of the Southern California music scene. An alternate history of '60s music, with loads of psych, folk rock, fuzzed out freakbeat, sunshine pop, and moreFeaturing: The Doors/Love/The Beach Boys/Buffalo Springfield/Jackie DeShannon/The Byrds/Nilsson/The Electric Prunes/Lee Hazlewood/The Standells/Gene Clark . . . and many others. Includes 3 previously unissued tracks! Also features an amazing 48 page book with insightful essays, artist commentaries, '60s L.A. club guide, and scads of unseen photos.

The first few lines alone set up 1960s rock music as original and authentic. The reference to a “Golden Age,” in particular, evokes nostalgia as well as alludes to a superiority of the old over the new. As Kompare remarks about the myth of the Golden Age of television, it implies “a narrative of innovation and achievement, followed by a grand fall into mediocrity and vulgarity” (*Rerun Nation* 108). The music is further authenticated by being described as obscure and subversive—these are “rarities” that require historical revisionism in order to be properly acknowledged.

Indeed, Klinger, in her discussion of classic film curation on cable television, describes the mere act of selecting old movies for contemporary exhibition as a form of history writing (94). Thus, the sticker's suggestion that this music is being re-historicized in the current moment to present "an alternate history of '60s music" is surprisingly astute.

The middle section of the promo sticker spotlights artists who are well known, including the Doors, the Beach Boys, Buffalo Springfield, and the Byrds. These names are obviously included to draw in as wide an audience as possible. Nevertheless, a number of less famous but critically acclaimed groups are included too, such as the Electric Prunes, Love, and the Standells, presumably to add an air of authenticity. The shrewdness of the sticker selection is made clearer when one considers the acts present on the compilation but not on the sticker: Sonny & Cher, the Turtles, Randy Newman, Rick Nelson, Jan & Dean, the Monkees, and a number of other more famous names. Interestingly, the inclusion of many of these famous groups seems somewhat contradictory; these musicians are hardly alternative to the now-accepted history of 1960s rock and roll. But lumping everything together under the one label neutralizes the past to a degree, diminishing such criticisms.

The past sufficiently decoded, the last section of text recodes the music for the contemporary record-buying audience. First, it is announced that this is a new release with new material (i.e. "previously unreleased tracks" and "unseen photos"). Second, it is presented as more than just an album: it is a cultural and historical resource full of essays, commentaries, and photos. Again, this box set is packaged as a book; it is not a repackaged "hits" disc that just anyone is going to pick up. The implication is that there is depth here, and this is a set for people who are seriously interested in the history of rock music. As such, the sticker aims to interpellate its target audience. Indeed, promotional stickers reveal the reissue producer's assumptions about their audience. *Where the Action Is!* is a \$65 (US) box set of relatively obscure 1960s rock music; it is clearly a niche product, and the producers seem keenly aware that they must appeal primarily to record collectors (concerned with authenticity and obtaining rare tracks) as well as wealthy baby boomers on a nostalgia trip (hence, bonus materials such as the "60s L.A. club guide"). The high-end pricing of a reissue box set like this one can further increase its cultural value (Gray 106), the cost making it appear even more valuable and exclusive.

The *Nuggets* series of compilation albums has a storied reputation for documenting the rock music culture of the late 1960s. They are well-researched, painstakingly assembled, high-production-quality releases that are regarded among fans and collectors as something of a popular archive of rock music history. The *Where the Action Is!* set is no exception, and, much like the *Pet Sounds* reissue, its packaging and liner notes go to great ends to imbue the text with aura and authenticity. I have focused my analysis on the promo sticker, however, as a means of highlighting how such a seemingly banal and insignificant entryway paratext can in fact play a strong role in introducing and establishing expectations, meanings, and interpretations for a reissue text.

Archival Reissue: Gary Wilson's *You Think You Really Know Me*

The 2002 reissue of Gary Wilson's *You Think You Really Know Me* album exemplifies an archival reissue from a small label. In this case, a rare, long out-of-print album from an obscure artist was resurrected by a small independent label, Motel Records, 25 years after its initial release. The artist and album not only found an audience and fame that they had never obtained before, but, through the backward gaze of the reissue process, a new historical account of not only the album and Wilson's career but also of music history was produced. Here, I am particularly interested in examining how reissues reframe historical meaning and how "lost" albums and cult artists are made. The work of a few key cultural intermediaries is crucial in this process, as are paratexts, which do the work of exhuming these obscure cultural artifacts and presenting them as texts deserving of immediate attention.

In 1977, Wilson self-released his debut album, *You Think You Really Know Me*, on vinyl LP in an edition of only a few hundred copies. The music, described in retrospect by the *New York Times* as "a wonderful, odd . . . [combination of] pop, proto new wave, jazz, avant-garde composition and electronic music" (Strauss E1), failed to gain much attention upon its release. Wilson and his band, the Blind Dates, played around the Northeastern United States for a few years but parted ways sometime in the early 1980s, effectively leaving the music business altogether. The album was little known to begin with, and by the 2000s it was all but forgotten, except that it came to the attention of Adrian Milan and Christina Bates, the owners of a small New York City-based independent record label, Motel Records. Milan and Bates tracked down Wilson and got permission to rerelease *You Think You Really Know Me* on CD. The CD reissue features remastered audio and a booklet with liner notes and photographed memorabilia, although the release otherwise closely resembles the original and is sold at a standard CD price. Thus, this release is a typical archival reissue, and Motel is a representative small label. The recording is not a back-catalog property and the main motive here would appear to be a mix of fandom and preservation rather than profit, since there is little to no built-in audience for it.⁵ Indeed, if Milan and Bates are to be taken at their word, they approached this reissue project with a "missionary zeal" to share the album with other "fans of 'outsider music'" (liner notes 12). Even though the reissue proved to be critically successfully, if not also profitable, it was only ever destined to appeal to a niche audience of underground music fans numbering in the low thousands. In other words, releasing archival reissues of "lost" albums by unknown artists must, almost by necessity, be a labor of love.

Nevertheless, the obscurity of Wilson and *You Think You Really Know Me* provided the perfect setting for creating an aura of the cult hero and object. Since the album was barely promoted and received almost no press coverage or radio airplay upon its initial release, it is almost as though it (and Wilson) had no history. The past, in effect, *needed* to be (re)written, and that is exactly what the reissue producers and Wilson himself did in 2002. And they did it through paratexts: liner notes, press releases, a few carefully selected photographs and documents, and interviews. The liner notes begin:

“Gary Wilson should have been a superstar. A truly unique artist whose songs are capable of transporting the listener to a surreal world within his lyrical conjurings” (2). And it goes on like this, painting a picture of Wilson as a genius and the album as a masterpiece (quote: “one of the greatest vanity pressings of all time”), as well as contextualizing his music aesthetically and historically, guiding the listener as to how to appreciate it and where to place it within the scope of music history. Moreover, Wilson is depicted as authentic because he is an eccentric, an industry outsider. His music uniquely mixes genres, and thus defies categorization. He is all the more authentic precisely because he is unknown, and he is unknown because he was both ahead of his time and simply did not care about commercial success. For example, the CD booklet includes reprints of a few fan letters written to Wilson by radio stations in the 1970s and 1980s, requesting interviews and begging to get recordings of more of his music. The implication is that he ignored them; even with success knocking at his door, he turned it down. All of this paratextual discourse assigns authorship, aura, and authenticity to the reissue text.

Furthermore, the liner notes are one long exercise in myth-making, establishing “the story of Gary Wilson” (5). Even though Wilson did interviews following the re-release, he tended to remain guarded and stuck to the script, repeating his slight biography as it had previously been told. With little else to go on, publications from small fanzines up to the *New York Times* repeated the myth almost verbatim. Nearly every feature story or review of *You Think You Really Know Me* recites the same few facts: Wilson’s upbringing in middle-of-nowhere upstate New York; the development of his virtuoso-like musical talent at a young age; his “strange, otherworldly persona” (7) and bizarre performance style; his encounters with avant-garde composer John Cage; his years spent living in his parents’ basement, recording his one and only album; his eventual disappearance from the rock scene, eking out a living as a lounge act musician and sex-shop worker in San Diego; and his eventual rediscovery by Milan and Bates, who reportedly hired a private detective to locate him. All of this made for good copy, and seems to have been accepted at face value and reproduced in the press unquestioningly. The reviews of the *You Think You Really Know Me* reissue are almost entirely positive. Less than two years after the reissue was released, journalists were calling “seminal” (Bones 180) an album that at most a few thousand people had ever heard until 25 years after its initial release.

The reissue did reintroduce Gary Wilson to a new, much larger (albeit subcultural and still relatively small), and more appreciative audience. Wilson has even gone on to release more recordings and perform live shows. A documentary film about his life, *You Think You Really Know Me: The Gary Wilson Story*, also came out in 2005. But the question of “why?” still remains. Why did this particular text, one of literally hundreds of thousands of obscure, old sound recordings, re-emerge at this particular time? Though chance may have played some small role, the efforts of cultural intermediaries and the emergence of new musical genres and evaluative criteria no doubt did as well.

Cultural intermediaries played a crucial role in rediscovering Gary Wilson. Most notably, *The Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, Questlove of the Roots, and the

musician Beck were proclaimed fans prior to the reissue. Beck, famously known as somewhat of a liminal figure between the underground and the mainstream, was known to cite Wilson as an influence in interviews and in concert, and he name-checked Wilson in his 1996 single “Where It’s At.” The Beck lyric is even printed in the *You Think You Really Know Me* reissue booklet, and it has been prominently used in Wilson’s publicity materials (Girlie Action, par. 3). Nearly every Gary Wilson record review mentions Beck. As a celebrity and tastemaker, Beck’s assertion of the value of Wilson’s music brings it to the attention of a wider audience and guides them in appreciating it. And Beck has made something of a career out of his eclectic tastes. There is little reason to doubt that Beck is genuinely a fan of Gary Wilson’s music. But what purpose does it serve him to name drop a musician that almost no one has heard of? It may gain him some underground credibility and authenticity, to be sure, but that will only go so far if even most people in the underground are unfamiliar with the reference. Timothy Taylor suggests that contemporary musicians like Beck cultivate interest in obscure early musicians like Wilson not out of nostalgia or a pure aesthetic appreciation but instead because it allows them “to discover a musical past for themselves, or to join a preexisting tradition” (67). Thus, Beck citing Wilson as an influence allows him to position himself as an heir to Wilson’s legacy as an outsider, a genre-bender, and an “un(der)appreciated solitary genius” (67). This makes sense considering Beck’s reputation as a sonic chameleon—blending folk, hip hop, funk, punk rock, bossa nova, country, soul, and new wave—and an outlier in the mainstream music industry.

Similarly, the popularity of avant-garde-leaning pop music like Beck’s along with a revival of new wave/post-punk in the late 1990s and early 2000s helped set the stage for Wilson’s re-emergence. Rock music audiences in 2002 were much more attuned to Wilson’s “proto-new wave” (Stones Throw, par. 1) style of experimentalism and musical bricolage than they would have been in the late 1970s. Katherine Skinner described a similar situation with the reissue of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, observing that the emergence in the 1990s of a new roots-based musical genre, called Americana, produced an increased interest in earlier forms of folk music. Since the 1950s, the modern audience had become better educated about early folk music history, through scholarly and journalistic writing, and developed new evaluative criteria for roots-based music, making them highly receptive to the *Anthology* reissue (70–71). Likewise, the music scene in 2002 gave *You Think You Really Know Me* a new context; it sounded fresh again. Moreover, it sounded so much like new music being made at the time—bands like the Unicorns and Liars, music that was considered original and unprecedented—that Gary Wilson suddenly seemed like a long-lost forebear, hence the rapid rise of his album to near canonical status and of him to the stature of cult hero. As mentioned before, *You Think You Really Know Me*’s reissue paratexts drew heavily on contemporary sources, linking this historical recording with the present. In this way, for a reissue text to succeed (at least one of an artist or album not already in the canon), it needs to reflect the styles and tastes of the current music scene, and thus its meaning and value are transformed to conform to those views.

Conclusion

The repetition of previously released musical texts in our culture helps, on the one hand, naturalize the consumption of recycled recordings and, on the other hand, serves many purposes other than just maximizing industry profit. Reissue texts tend to re-emerge and gain cultural significance at particular times and for particular reasons. Moreover, the meanings and values ascribed to past musical texts change constantly. The important point, though, is that they do change. Meaning is always being contested; it is never concrete. Reissues can be purchased and played—a CD box set can be bought from a store and stuck on a shelf—but their meanings will continue to change. Paratexts play an influential role in developing and maintaining that meaning: promotional stickers create expectations; artwork and packaging convey status; liner notes direct listener attention and (re)write history to bolster artistic integrity. Certainly, audiences can and do resist these proffered meanings, interpret them differently, and create new meanings of their own. But the meanings and values put forth by reissue producers can be very pervasive, as paratexts exist to introduce and establish certain boundaries around the text, while guiding meaning and regulating interpretation.

With this article, I have sought to draw attention to the role that reissues play in shaping our understanding of our collective musical past, as well as develop a theoretical framework for studying these cultural texts. My case studies have been particular but hopefully also archetypal. Archival reissues like the Gary Wilson example are especially plentiful; small underground rock/pop labels are constantly uncovering previously unknown or forgotten artists and albums—Vashti Bunyan, Shuggie Otis, Betty Davis, Rodriguez, and Death, to name just a few relatively recent examples—and introducing them to new audiences, rewriting music history in the process. However, reissues can also be sites for substantial critical reappraisals of already famous artists. For instance, the Carpenters' *From the Top* box set (A&M, 1991) marks a turning point in the popular perception of the brother-and-sister duo. Once the epitome of saccharine, middle-of-the-road 1970s soft rock, the group came to be regarded as underrated talents following the reissue, even unlikely pioneers of the moody, fragile pop style that defined the grunge era. (The 1994 alternative rock tribute compilation *If I Were a Carpenter*, featuring Sonic Youth and Sheryl Crow, among others, is evidence of the group's revised image.) In the late 1990s, the singer-songwriter and composer Burt Bacharach's reputation was elevated from schmaltzy easy listening balladeer to Cole Porter-like status in the wake of the three-CD anthology *The Look of Love: The Burt Bacharach Collection* (Rhino, 1998) and a number of reissues of his 1960s film soundtracks, as well as with championing from cultural intermediaries like Elvis Costello. Years earlier, *The Fire Escape in the Sky: The Godlike Genius of Scott Walker* anthology (Zoo, 1981), compiled by the musician Julian Cope, effectively moved the former 1960s teen-pop star Scott Walker from forgotten footnote to cult idol status. Even the early 1990s Rykodisc CD reissues of David Bowie's pre-1983 catalog, including the *Sound + Vision* compilation box set

(1989), arguably went a long way to recuperate Bowie's reputation as a "serious artist" following a commercially successful but mostly critically disparaged career stretch in the 1980s. While multiple cultural factors were surely involved, in each of these cases reissues played at least some part in the shift in the meaning and value attached to these popular artists.

There are a number of concerns that are beyond the scope of this article, but which I would encourage future researchers to take up. More work could and should be done on audience engagement with reissues, as well as the way other texts (in particular, artist memoirs and film/television documentaries) work intertextually to either destabilize or reinforce reissue textuality. In the future, too, scholars studying the rock canon should pay closer attention to reissues as a site where the canon is maintained and subverted. Lastly, audience engagement with reissues and reissue paratexts is shifting because of the internet, especially the widespread use of social media and streaming music services. While I have addressed exclusively physical formats in this article, the concepts and theoretical framework discussed here can also be applied to reissue texts in the online digital space. The paratexts for someone listening to *Pet Sounds* on Spotify are surely different from those described in the *40th Anniversary* CD + DVD set analyzed here. It would be a mistake, though, to presume that the digital version lacks textuality or paratexts. Quite to the contrary, there is a proliferation of paratexts on the internet; the CD + DVD set's liner notes and video segments may be absent from the Spotify page but it is very likely they can be located elsewhere online, along with a plethora of other videos, essays and reviews, fan discussion threads, and so on.

The reissue discourse, as Klinger points out (118), not only constructs a very particular view of the past, it also establishes a relationship between past and present. That is, reissue producers almost always explain themselves, providing justifications as to why a musical text needs to be repeated in the culture. In addition to praising the author and ascribing an aura to the text, the reissue process (remastering, restoration, etc.) is narrated through liner notes and promotional materials that further portray the historical work as supremely authentic, a part of the cultural heritage that cannot be replicated and thus needs to be preserved. At the same time, new uses for the text are offered. Not only is its audio enhanced for modern consumption, it is positioned as offering contemporary audiences something that the current cultural climate is missing. That could be anything from providing a sense of tradition—a way of establishing continuities between past and present and rooting the present culture in a historical lineage—to a simple model worthy of replication now and into the future.

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Notes

- [1] To be clear, my argument here is that limiting reissues and the actions of reissue producers to economic motives and marketing logics alone risks overlooking the cultural meaning and value of popular music.
- [2] Special issues of the journals *Popular Music* (25.1) and *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (22.1) sit alongside Carys Wyn Jones' book *The Rock Canon* as three of the most notable efforts made so far toward addressing the question of canons in popular music.
- [3] I deliberately use the term "recording industry" over "music industry" in this article because I am defining musical texts as *recordings* rather than musical compositions more broadly. Though the recording industry is its largest component, the music industry (or *industries*, to be more exact) would also include sectors not directly related to the production of recordings, such as live performance, management, and retail sales.
- [4] This type of on the cheap re purposing was especially common in the early years of the CD in the 1980s and 1990s. It has also been replicated in the Internet era, as record companies have simply made their already digitized back catalogs available as digital audio files often without enhancing the content in any significant fashion.
- [5] In fact, Motel Records has since gone out of business, and *You Think You Really Know Me* is again out of print. Milan and Bates's "labor of love" narrative is propagated in the documentary film *You Think You Really Know Me: The Gary Wilson Story*.

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